



COURT OF
**MASTER
SOMMELIERS**
Americas

ADVANCED AND MASTER SOMMELIER
HOSPITALITY & SERVICE

EXAM STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

ADVANCED AND MASTER SOMMELIER HOSPITALITY & SERVICE EXAM STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

Excellence in beverage service requires more than technical skill—it is the artful combination of deep theoretical knowledge, a trained palate, precise vocabulary, polished demeanor, respectful salesmanship, and flawless service mechanics. The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas, has established the following Service Standards as a benchmark for candidates preparing for the Advanced Sommelier and Master Sommelier Diploma examinations. These standards build upon the foundation established in the CMS-A General Hospitality & Service Exam Standards and Guidelines, providing an elevated framework for those pursuing the highest levels of achievement in wine service.

The service mechanics outlined here serve as the foundation for delivering precise and polished service in a fine-dining setting. However, true mastery extends beyond mechanics—it lies in the ability to anticipate guests' needs, exceed expectations, and apply strategic salesmanship to create a seamless and memorable dining experience.

We recognize that these Service Standards are more formal and exacting than those found in many restaurants. However, we believe that by mastering the highest level of precision and professionalism, sommeliers gain the ability to thoughtfully adapt their approach to suit a variety of service environments while maintaining the integrity of world-class hospitality.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS DOCUMENT

- General Hospitality Standards
- General Service Standards
- Sparkling Wine Service
- Decanting Service
- Other Wine Service Standards
- Beer Service
- Sake Service
- Aperitif and Digestif Service
- Cocktail Service
- Food and Beverage Pairing

GENERAL HOSPITALITY STANDARDS

Philosophy

At its core, hospitality is about making guests feel welcomed, valued, and understood. Hospitality is essential to a sommelier's success as it seamlessly complements the expertise and technical skills required in the profession. When delivered with excellence, hospitality elevates the dining experience, fostering guest satisfaction, which supports business success.

Given the deeply personal nature of wine, a skilled sommelier goes beyond product knowledge by taking the time to understand each guest's preferences and expectations. True hospitality is reflected in the ability to engage in meaningful conversations, quickly discern a guest's tastes, and thoughtfully recommend selections that align with their desires. Without this level of attentiveness, the experience risks falling short, potentially leading to guest dissatisfaction, revenue loss through discounts or comped items, and even long-term business impact through negative reviews or diminished guest loyalty.

Tableside Presence

A sommelier's greeting should be warm and approachable, setting the tone for a welcoming experience. When speaking with guests, the sommelier should adjust their language to match each guest's comfort and level of knowledge. Technical or overly complex terms can confuse or distance guests. Expertise is best shared in a way that feels natural, friendly, and easy to understand.

Price Point

Price is an important factor in both guest satisfaction and successful sales, shaping the overall experience. A skilled sommelier balances thoughtful recommendations with strategic salesmanship that aligns with the guest's budget. Suggesting a more expensive option must come with a clear explanation that shows added value and builds trust. This ensures guests feel confident and cared for.

Guest Satisfaction

Guest satisfaction is the ultimate goal of hospitality, and a skilled sommelier must be attuned to verbal and nonverbal cues to ensure a seamless experience. Achieving this requires active engagement, such as checking in with guests when appropriate, listening to their tone and wording, observing their physical cues, and maintaining presence from arrival to departure. When issues arise, swift and thoughtful resolution is essential.

Suggested Steps for Problem Resolution:

1. **Acknowledge the issue** – Recognize and acknowledge the problem; listen actively as the guest describes the issue.
2. **Apologize sincerely** – Focus on the guest's experience and how it made them feel.
3. **Act quickly and kindly** – Resolve the issue graciously and professionally.

GENERAL SERVICE STANDARDS

Introduction

These standards and guidelines apply to all types of wine and service styles. They are designed to ensure that every guest receives consistent, professional, and high-quality service.

Mise en Place Pre-Service Setup

- Beverage lists are clean, accurate, up-to-date, and easy to read.
- Glasses are clean, spotless, and free of any odors.
- Glasses are polished using clean linen and steam.
- Serviettes (napkins) are folded and prepared for service.
- Underliners are clean and polished.
- Other service tools, such as trays, ice buckets, stands, and decanters, are clean, polished, and ready for service.
- Only glassware, plates, serviettes, silverware, and underliners should be placed directly on the tablecloth. Bottles, decanters, pitchers, carafes, ice buckets, and corks should be placed on a clean underliner.
- Glassware and other service items should be brought to the table using a clean, professional-looking tray while being mindful of stemware safety.
 - If the service tray is not non-slip, it must be lined with a clean serviette.
- Beverage service tools are organized before service begins.
- Beverage service tools may be carried in the pockets of the sommelier's clothing, on a tray, or on a gueridon.
- Beverages are stored in an organized manner.
- Beverages are stored and served at the correct temperature.
- Side stations should include tools, such as ice buckets and decanters, to help maintain proper beverage service temperatures.

General Guidelines

- Whenever possible, beverage service is performed from the guest's right side.
 - If serving from the guest's right side is not possible, select the side that does not disrupt the guest's personal space or conversation.
- Always move around the table in a clockwise direction.
- Select glassware that is appropriate for the beverage. If unsure, ask the guest for their preference.
- Hold a serviette in your hand or place it neatly on your forearm during service.
- Never place a serviette in your pocket or on your shoulder.
- Use a serviette to prevent and catch drips for all beverage service, whether at the table, side station, or gueridon.
- Pay attention to the table's overall appearance. When needed, offer to remove dirty plates, glassware, or other used items.
- Complete all tasks smoothly and efficiently, working at a steady pace that matches the demands of a busy service environment.

GENERAL SERVICE STANDARDS

Taking the Order

- When approaching the table for the first time, identify the host—the guest leading or overseeing the table. This person may or may not be the one placing the beverage order.
- If possible, stand to the right of the guest placing the order.
- Use a warm, professional approach and thoughtful salesmanship to help guests choose their beverage(s).

Confirming the Order

- Repeat the order back to the guest to confirm accuracy.
 - If needed, write down the order to make certain all details are correct.
- Use clear language and wait for verbal or nonverbal confirmation.
- When repeating the order, include the following details (when applicable):
 - Vintage
 - Producer name
 - Cuvée or proprietary name
 - Type, style, or quality level as listed on the beverage menu
- If more than one beverage has been ordered or if multiple guests have placed orders, indicate clearly which beverage is for which guest.

Glassware Placement

- Bring the appropriate glassware to the table using a tray.
- Use your right hand to place glassware on the guest's right side, provided it does not interfere with the guest's experience.
- Be consistent when placing glassware for all guests.
 - Place each glass in the same position for every guest, usually next to or in line with the knife so it is easy for the guest to reach.
- Begin glassware placement with the host or the guest to the host's left, then continue clockwise around the table regardless of gender.
- When multiple glasses are needed, arrange them in a line, a diagonal, a diamond, or a cluster, depending on the available space on the table.
- If a second bottle of the same wine is ordered, bring the host a clean glass for tasting.
 - Place the tasting glass to the right of the original glass. Remove it after the new bottle is served.
 - Be prepared to bring fresh glassware if the host or guests request replacements.

GENERAL SERVICE STANDARDS

Bottle Presentation

- Present the bottle from the right side of the ordering guest and confirm the order with the following details (when applicable):
 - Vintage
 - Producer name
 - Cuvée or proprietary name
 - Type, style, or quality level as listed on the beverage menu

Bottle Opening

- Cut the foil cleanly with two cuts just below the second lip of the bottle.
- Remove the foil and place it into your pocket.
- Wipe the top of the cork with a clean serviette.
- Insert the corkscrew or similar tool into the cork.
- Remove the cork with minimal bottle movement and as quietly as possible.
- Wipe the top of the bottle again with a clean serviette to remove any remaining residue.
- Present the cork on an underliner to the right of the ordering guest.

Wine Pouring

- With the label facing the ordering guest, pour a 1–1.5 oz./30–45 mL taste for approval.
 - Use your right hand to pour from the guest's right side, provided it does not interfere with the guest's experience.
- Wait for approval, then confirm that you may proceed with service.
- After approval, and unless the guest requests a different order, pour wine for the rest of the table:
 - Start with the guest to the left of the ordering guest.
 - Move clockwise around the table, regardless of gender.
 - If there is a guest of honor, serve them first.
 - The ordering guest is always served last.
- Pour an appropriate amount based on the number of guests and the ordering guest's instructions.
- Pour for each guest individually before moving on to the next; do not go around the table multiple times.
- After completing service, ask to remove the cork and any extra service items from the table.
- Repeat the full presentation for additional bottles, including the opening and pouring steps.

SPARKLING WINE SERVICE

Introduction

Sparkling wine service requires care and precision to ensure both guest enjoyment and safety. Proper serving temperature, correct opening technique, and steady pouring to preserve bubbles all show professionalism and help prevent accidents.

Guest Table Mise en Place

- **Glassware selection and placement**
 - Bring the appropriate glassware (flutes or wine glasses according to the guest's preference) to the table using a tray.
 - Use your right hand to place glassware on the guest's right side, provided it does not interfere with the guest's experience.
 - Be consistent when placing glassware for all guests.
 - Place each glass in the same position for every guest, usually next to or in line with the knife so it is easy for the guest to reach.
 - Begin glassware placement with the host or the guest to the host's left, then continue clockwise around the table regardless of gender.
- **Ice bucket and bottle**
 - Position the ice bucket with a stand to the right of the host. It should be close enough for the host to reach, but not so close that it interferes with the sommelier's movement.
 - If no ice bucket stand is available, place the ice bucket on the table using an underliner with a serviette underneath.
 - For efficiency, the bottle should be placed in the ice bucket when brought to the table.
- **Serviettes**
 - Two clean serviettes are required for sparkling wine service.
 - First Serviette: Use for presenting the bottle, drying it after removal from the ice bucket, and during the opening process.
 - Second Serviette: Use for wiping the lip of the bottle before and after pouring, and to catch any drips while serving.
 - Serviette Placement:
 - Serviettes may be placed on the ice bucket or draped neatly over the sommelier's forearm during service.
- **Underliners**
 - Two underliners are needed:
 - One is used for the bottle.
 - One is used for the cork.

SPARKLING WINE SERVICE

Bottle Presentation

- Remove the bottle from the ice bucket while holding it at an angle above the bucket to let excess water drain off.
- Wipe the bottle with the first serviette, keeping it above the bucket to catch any drips.
- Once the bottle is dry, present it to the ordering guest with a serviette.
- Do not place the dry bottle back into the bucket before opening unless opening in the bucket (see methods below).

Bottle Opening

- **Methods**
 - Both of the following methods are acceptable:
 - In-Air Opening:
 - Present and open the bottle while holding it in the air.
 - If the bucket is placed on the table, the bottle must be opened in the air.
 - In-the-Bucket Opening:
 - Present the bottle in the air, then open it in the bucket with a stand.
- **Opening steps**
 - Remove the foil covering the wire cork and cage by cutting it cleanly below the cage with the blade of a corkscrew; do not use the pull tab.
 - Put the cut foil into your pocket.
 - Place the serviette over the cork and cage.
 - Position your thumb firmly on top of the serviette, covering both the cage and cork.
 - Twist the wire tab (muselet) to loosen the cage.
 - Do not remove the cage; the cage and cork will be removed together.
 - Once loosened, never remove your hand or thumb from the cork. A firm grip must be maintained on the cork and cage at all times in case the cork pops out unexpectedly.
 - While firmly holding the cork and cage, begin turning the bottle—not the cork.
 - Allow the pressure in the bottle to help push the cork and cage out slowly, controlling it with your grip. The cork should release as quietly as possible. Avoid letting it pop or make a loud sound.
 - While opening, tilt the bottle to a 45-degree angle if possible.
 - This increases the liquid's surface area inside the bottle, allowing CO₂ to escape more gently. This reduces the pressure on the cork and minimizes the chance of a sudden pop or spill.
 - Keep your serviette ready in case of overflow or spraying.
 - The ideal sound is a soft hiss; anything louder is undesirable.
 - Remove the cage from the cork and put it in your pocket.
 - Present the cork to the ordering guest by placing it on the underliner.
 - You may place the bottle on the underliner on the table or return it to the bucket if desired while presenting the cork.

SPARKLING WINE SERVICE

Pouring Sparkling Wine

- Retrieve the bottle from the underliner or bucket.
 - If removing from the bucket, dry the bottle using the appropriate serviette.
- Using the second clean serviette, wipe the lip of the bottle before pouring.
- Hold the bottle with your right hand using a “handshake” or “bottom” grip. Do not hold the bottle by the punt.
 - For magnums or large format bottles, you may use your left hand to support the neck of the bottle.
- With the label facing the ordering guest, pour a 1–1.5 oz./30–45 mL taste.
- Wait for approval, then confirm that you may proceed with service.
- After approval, and unless the guest requests a different order, pour wine for the rest of the table:
 - Start with the guest to the left of the ordering guest.
 - Move clockwise around the table, regardless of gender.
 - If there is a guest of honor, serve them first.
 - The ordering guest is always served last.
- Pour an appropriate amount based on the number of guests, considering the instructions provided by the ordering guest.
 - Pour each glass with no more than two pours.
 - Pour for each guest individually before moving on to the next; do not go around the table multiple times.
- If wine remains in the bottle, offer to leave it in the ice bucket or on the table.
- If the bottle is empty, offer to leave it on the underliner with the label facing the guests.
- Ask to remove the cork and any extra service items from the table.

DECANTING WINE SERVICE

Introduction

Decanting plays an important role in wine service, enhancing a guest's enjoyment when executed with precision, grace, and efficiency. A sommelier should assess the specific needs of the wine and, before proceeding, confirm with the guest to ensure their preferences are respected. While offering professional insight and guidance, the sommelier should ultimately allow the guest to make the final decision and provide the best experience for their selection.

Primary Goals of Decanting

Decanting can be used for three main purposes:

- **Aeration**
 - Decanting helps a wine open up more quickly, allowing its aromas and flavors to develop.
 - It can reduce any unpleasant smells (such as reductive aromas) that may be present.
 - Aeration is most often used for young wines or wines that seem closed or tight.
- **Removing sediment**
 - Decanting is the primary method for separating wine from sediment or other solids.
 - This is most often needed for older wines, but can also be helpful for young, unfiltered wines.
 - For wines with visible particles, such as cork pieces or heavy sediment, tools like cheesecloth, fine strainers, or special screens can help filter the wine while pouring.
- **Temperature adjustment**
 - Decanting can raise the temperature of a given wine by 1 to 3 degrees.
 - Typically used when a guest expresses displeasure about the temperature of a wine.

DECANTING WINE SERVICE

Decanting for Sediment

Gueridon Mise en Place

- **Decanter**
 - Clean decanter of an appropriate size for the bottle being served.
- **Light source options**
 - Candle and odorless lighter
 - Small flashlight or electric lamp
- **Serviettes**
 - Three clean and folded serviettes are needed:
 - First Serviette: Used to line the cradle
 - Second Serviette: Used to wipe the lip of the bottle before and after removing the cork and to catch drips from the bottle after decanting.
 - Third Serviette: Used to catch drips while pouring for the guests.
- **Cork removal tools**
 - Wine key
 - Additional tools (if needed, based on the bottle) such as an Ah-so or Durand.
- **Decanting basket or cradle**
 - Used only when decanting for sediment.
 - Use a decanting cradle, if needed, to keep the bottle stable while pouring.
 - If using a cradle, line it with a clean serviette for presentation and support.
- If decanting on the table or at a side station (not a gueridon), this mise en place should be set up in that location.

Guest Table Mise en Place

- Bring the appropriate glassware to the table using a tray.
- Use your right hand to place glassware on the guest's right side, provided it does not interfere with the guest's experience.
- Be consistent when placing glassware for all guests.
 - Place each glass in the same position for every guest, usually next to or in line with the knife so it is easy for the guest to reach.
- Begin glassware placement with the host or the guest to the host's left, then continue clockwise around the table regardless of gender.
- Underliners
 - Three underliners are needed, one each for the following:
 - Cork
 - Bottle
 - Decanter
 - Place the underliners on the table within easy reach of the ordering guest.
 - Underliners may be placed on the gueridon before rolling it to the table or brought with the gueridon and placed on the table during setup.

DECANTING WINE SERVICE

Decanting for Sediment

Bottle Preparation Steps

- Carefully retrieve the bottle from the cellar (if ordered from the list) or from the table or side station (if it was pre-set or placed there by the guest).
 - **If the bottle was resting on its side or at an angle:**
 - Assume the sediment has settled along the side of the bottle and needs time to move to the bottom so that the clear wine can be decanted without disturbance.
 - Gently place the bottle into a linen-lined cradle at an angle to minimize movement.
 - If it was stored on its side, place it that way in the cradle even if the label is not facing up.
 - **If the bottle is standing upright:**
 - Assume the sediment has settled to the bottom and needs to be decanted without disturbing it.
 - Keep the bottle upright. **DO NOT** place it in a decanting cradle.
 - Handle the bottle gently, keeping it upright to avoid disturbing the sediment until it is time to decant.
- If using a candle, light it at this point.
- Roll the gueridon to the table, positioning it to the right of the ordering guest.
- Gently lift the bottle from the gueridon and present it to the guest from their right side.
 - If the bottle is in a decanting cradle, present the bottle and cradle together.
 - If the label is not facing up due to how the bottle was stored, explain that the label will be shown after decanting. Present the bottle in its current position.
- Return the bottle to the gueridon and position it for decanting.
 - You may carefully rotate the bottle and cradle to accommodate your preferred hand for decanting.
- Cut the foil cleanly below the second lip of the bottle without moving the bottle.
- Remove the foil and place it in your pocket or on an underliner on the gueridon.
- Wipe the top of the cork and the lip of the bottle with a clean serviette.
- Remove the cork slowly and carefully to avoid drips and spills.
- Wipe the lip of the bottle again with a clean serviette.
 - You may gently brush the inside of the bottle's opening with the serviette.
 - Never use your finger to remove cork or sediment particles.
- Place the used serviette on the gueridon.
- If using a flashlight or other light source, turn it on now.
- Carefully remove the bottle from the decanting cradle to minimize disturbing the sediment.
- Hold the bottle at an angle above your light source so you can clearly see the shoulder of the bottle.
 - Do not touch or rest the bottle on or inside the decanter.

DECANTING WINE SERVICE

Decanting for Sediment

Steps in Decanting for Sediment

- Pour the wine into the decanter slowly and in one smooth motion.
 - Avoid creating air pockets or making a “glugging” sound, which can disturb the sediment.
- If using a candle, hold the bottle at a safe distance above the flame.
 - Take care not to burn the label or warm the wine.
- Using the light source, watch closely for sediment as it approaches the shoulder of the bottle.
- Keep your eyes focused on the bottle the entire time; **do not** look away while decanting.
- Unless the guest gives specific instructions, assume that only the clear wine will be served.
- Stop pouring as soon as fine sediment reaches the shoulder of the bottle.
- Do not let the wine bottle touch the decanter.
- When you have finished decanting the clear wine, place the decanter on the gueridon.
- Keep the bottle positioned above the decanter to prevent drips onto the gueridon.
- Use a clean serviette to wipe the lip of the bottle to catch any drips.
- If you are using an electric or battery-powered light source, turn it off now.
- Place the bottle and cork on their underliners on the table with the bottle label facing the ordering guest.

Wine Pouring

- Pour a 1–1.5 oz./30–45 mL taste from the decanter for the ordering guest to approve.
- Wait for approval, then confirm that you may proceed with service.
- After approval, and unless the guest requests a different order, pour wine for the rest of the table:
 - Start with the guest to the left of the ordering guest.
 - Move clockwise around the table, regardless of gender.
 - If there is a guest of honor, serve them first.
 - The ordering guest is always served last.
- Pour an appropriate amount based on the number of guests and the ordering guest’s instructions.
- Pour for each guest individually before moving on to the next; do not go around the table multiple times.
- Wipe the decanter with a clean serviette after each pour to avoid drips.
- After pouring, place the decanter on an underliner within easy reach of the ordering guest.
- Ask if they would like the bottle to remain on the table or be removed.
- Ask to remove the cork and any extra service items from the table.
- Return the gueridon back to the side station:
 - Extinguish the candle if used.
 - Clean the top of the gueridon and return service tools neatly and in an organized manner.

DECANTING WINE SERVICE

Double Decanting

Double decanting is when wine is poured from the bottle into a decanter and is then returned to the original bottle.

When to Use Double Decanting

- The wine needs more aeration than a single decanting provides.
- There is limited space at the table for a decanter.
- Multiple decanters are not available.
- The guest prefers the wine to be decanted but served from the original bottle.

Steps in Double Decanting Service

- **Decant the wine**
 - Open the bottle and decant the wine following the method appropriate for that wine.
 - If the wine was decanted to remove sediment, the bottle must be cleaned before the wine is returned.
- **Rinse the bottle**
 - Pour any remaining wine or sediment from the bottle into a glass or container at the table, on a gueridon, or at the side station.
 - Wipe the lip of the bottle with a clean serviette.
 - Offer the guest a choice between using the decanted wine or a similar type of wine for rinsing. Do not use water.
 - Use only a small amount of wine, just enough to rinse the bottle thoroughly.
- **Return the wine back to the bottle**
 - Once rinsed, the decanted wine must be poured back into the original bottle.
 - The preferred method is to pour the wine back into the bottle directly from the decanter without using a funnel, provided the decanter's lip ensures a clean pour.
 - If necessary, a funnel may be used to pour the wine from the decanter back into the bottle.

DECANTING WINE SERVICE

Splash Decanting

Splash decanting is a method of pouring wine into the decanter with as much “splash” as possible to achieve the maximum amount of aeration.

When to Use Splash Decanting

- This method is typically used for young, full-bodied red wines that seem closed or tight upon opening to aerate the wine quickly.
- This method is not suitable for older or more delicate wines.
- This method should not be used when decanting to remove sediment.

Splash Decanting Steps

- Present and open the bottle without taking any steps to consider or manage sediment.
- Pour the wine rapidly into the decanter with a strong and energetic motion to create a noticeable yet controlled splash.
 - It is acceptable to fully invert the bottle into the neck of the decanter.
 - Do not let the bottle touch the decanter to maintain cleanliness and prevent breakage.
 - Offer to swirl the wine in the decanter to increase aeration, if appropriate.

OTHER WINE SERVICE STANDARDS

Non-Cork Closures

- For wines with a non-cork closure, follow the General Service Standards but do not present the closure.
- For wines with a screwcap:
 - After presenting the bottle, grip the capsule just below the cap. Hold the base of the bottle and turn counterclockwise while keeping the label facing the guest.

Large Format Bottles

- When decanting magnums or other large format bottles, carefully consider whether the decanter is the right size.
 - If an appropriately sized decanter is not available, or one single decanter is not large enough, is it acceptable to decant into multiple decanters.
 - Be mindful of disturbing sediment when stopping the flow of decanting to switch decanters.
- It is acceptable to use both hands to stabilize the bottle when pouring from large format bottles or decanters.

Priming or Conditioning Decanters and Glassware

- Note: This service is not standard or expected and should only be offered if the guest specifically requests it.
- If a guest asks for their glassware or decanter to be primed:
 - Ask the guest if they would like the glassware primed with the wine to be served or a similarly styled wine.
 - Pour a small amount, 1–2 oz./30–60 mL, into the decanter.
 - If only conditioning glassware, begin with the first glass instead of the decanter.
 - Gently swirl or roll the wine inside the decanter or glass to coat all interior surfaces.
 - After conditioning the decanter or first glass, pour the wine into the next glass.
 - Use a clean serviette to catch drips while transferring wine between glasses.
 - Repeat until all glassware has been conditioned.
 - Pour out the used wine into a dump bucket or other appropriate container/receptacle.

OTHER WINE SERVICE STANDARDS

Coravin Service

The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas recommends that sommeliers understand the use, maintenance, and proper service techniques for all Coravin systems, including:

- Timeless
- Pivot
- Sparkling

Coravin Service Standards

- Sommeliers should be familiar with the following tasks for each system:
 - Pouring wine using the Coravin
 - Recharging bottles (for sparkling wine systems)
 - Cleaning the system properly
 - Replacing gas canisters
 - Changing the needle

Coravin Steps of Service

- Before using the Coravin, purge the system by briefly pressing the valve. This ensures that no wine or oxygen remains in the needle.
- Hold the bottle at a slight angle so the needle is fully submerged in the wine.
- Gently press the button to pour the desired amount.
 - Depending on the style of service, it may be appropriate to pour into an AP (all-purpose) glass first and then transfer the wine into the glass that will be presented to the guest.
- Once the desired amount has been poured, remove the Coravin by gently pulling it sideways out of the bottle.
- Press the valve again to purge the system, clearing it for future use.

BEER SERVICE STANDARDS

Introduction

Proper beer service enhances the aroma, flavor, and appearance of the beer, ensuring a high-quality and consistent experience for guests. Mastering correct pouring techniques, using clean glassware, and serving at the ideal temperature demonstrate respect for each beer's unique characteristics. These standards also help minimize waste and improve guest satisfaction.

Beer Service: Temperature and Pre-Service Preparation

Good beer service begins with preparation (mise en place) that includes checking that the beers are properly chilled, ensuring glasses are clean, and confirming everything is ready for service. Note that cold beer helps reduce foaming and makes pouring easier and cleaner. Always follow the FIFO (First In, First Out) method. This means the oldest stock should be served first so that all beers are enjoyed at their optimal freshness.

Steps of Beer Service

- Repeat the order back to the guest to confirm accuracy.
 - If needed, write down the order to make certain all details are correct.
- When repeating the order, include the following details (when applicable):
 - Brewery name
 - Beer style
 - Proprietary or brand name as listed on the beverage menu
- Ask about pouring preference
 - If not already specified, ask whether the guest would like the beer poured at the table.
- Prepare the beer
 - Retrieve the bottle or can.
 - Wipe it down to remove water or condensation.
 - Open the beer at the side station.
- Select and prepare the appropriate glassware for the beer style.

Glass Type

Pilsner Flute

Weizen Glass

Goblet/Snifter

Tulip

American Pint

AP Wine Glass

Beer Style Examples

Pilsner

Hefeweizen, dunkelweizen, wheat-based beer

Belgian strong ale, Trappist ale

IPA, barleywine, imperial stout, porter

Appropriate for most other beer styles

Note: All-purpose wine glasses are suitable for many beer styles

- Glassware should be clean, free of detergent, oils, or residue that can affect foam retention and beer flavor.

BEER SERVICE STANDARDS

Steps of Beer Service (continued)

- **If beer is poured at a side station:**
 - Pour the beer slowly and carefully using the proper technique (see below) and then proceed to tableside service.
- **If beer is poured tableside:**
 - Set up a service tray with:
 - The beer bottle or can
 - The selected appropriate glassware
 - An underliner for the bottle
 - Glassware Placement
 - Bring the appropriate glassware and an underliner to the table using a tray.
 - Use your right hand to place glassware on the guest's right side, provided it does not interfere with the guest's experience.
 - Be consistent when placing glassware for all guests.
 - Place each glass in the same position for every guest, usually next to or in line with the knife so it is easy for the guest to reach.
 - Bottle Presentation
 - Present the bottle from the right side of the ordering guest and confirm the order with the following details (when applicable):
 - Brewery name
 - Beer style
 - Proprietary or brand name as listed on the beverage menu
 - Beer Pouring
 - Pour the beer slowly and carefully using the proper technique (see below).
 - A tap spout or bottle should never touch the guest's glass during beer service.

Beer Pouring Technique

A correct beer pour creates approximately 1 in./2–3 cm of foam. This foam is not just for appearance, it also traps and slowly releases the beer's aromas, enhancing its overall flavor. In addition, the foam also helps regulate carbonation, preventing the beer from becoming too fizzy or going flat too quickly.

There are two acceptable techniques for pouring beer.

- **Tilted glass technique:**
 - Hold a clean glass at a 45-degree angle about 2 in./5 cm below the tap spout or bottle.
 - Pour the beer slowly down the side of the glass.
 - As the glass fills, gradually straighten it to an upright position, allowing a controlled amount of foam to form.
- **Steady pour technique:**
 - Similar to pouring Champagne, a slow and steady pour down the center (toward the far side of the glass) ensures the best balance of foam and carbonation.
 - With practice, you may not need to tilt the glass.

BEER SERVICE STANDARDS

Tableside Beer Pouring Methods

- **Method 1: Pour with the glass on the table**
 - Place the beer glass on the table to the guest's right with your right hand.
 - Pick up the beer bottle or can from the tray with your right hand.
 - Keep the tray in your left hand (not under your arm or leaning against your hip).
 - With the bottle label facing the guest, gently pour the beer down the middle toward the back side of the glass, using a steady, slow stream to prevent excess foaming.
 - If excess foaming occurs, wait for the foaming to subside and pour the rest of the beer.
 - Leave about two fingers 1 in./2–3 cm of foam with the final pour.
 - The beer bottle must not touch the guest's glass during pouring.

- **Method 2: Pour with the glass on the tray**
 - Keep the beer glass on the tray.
 - Gently pour beer down the middle toward the back side of the glass with a steady, slow stream to prevent excess foaming.
 - If excess foaming occurs, wait for the foaming to subside and pour the rest of the beer.
 - Leave about two fingers 1 in./2–3 cm of foam with the final pour.
 - The beer bottle must not touch the guest's glass during pouring.
 - Place the beer-filled glass on the table to the guest's right.

- **Method 3: Pour in the air**
 - Place the underliner and beer glass on the table to the guest's right.
 - Return the tray to the side station.
 - Bring the bottle back to the table.
 - Present and confirm the order with the guest.
 - Pick up the beer glass and pour in the air, keeping the label facing the guest.
 - Leave about two fingers 1 in./2–3 cm of foam with the final pour.
 - The beer bottle must not touch the guest's glass during pouring.
 - Place the beer-filled glass on the table to the guest's right.

Handling Remaining Beer

- If the bottle contains more beer than fits in the glass, consider how to serve the remaining beer with care. Ask the guest for their preference.
 - Place the bottle on the table using an underliner with the label facing the ordering guest.
 - Offer an ice bucket, similar to sparkling wine service, so the guest can keep the beer chilled if they wish.

BEER SERVICE STANDARDS

Other Beer Service Considerations

Sediment Considerations

Some beer styles, such as Belgian witbiers, German hefeweizens, aged Lambics, and Gueuze, are intentionally brewed to be hazy. This cloudiness often results from suspended yeast or other ingredients that contribute to the beer's unique flavor and texture. These beers may contain sediment, which can affect the taste and mouthfeel. When serving such beers, it's important to ask the guest whether they prefer the sediment to be included in the pour or left behind in the bottle. If the guest is unsure, offer a brief explanation of how the sediment influences the beer's characteristics to assist them in making an informed choice.

- **Guest decides:** Leave the bottle on the table so the guest can choose whether to pour the final ounces that contain the sediment.
- **If the guest prefers no sediment:** Pour the beer carefully until only about ½ in./1 cm remains in the bottle, then stop. Remove the bottle from the table.
- **If the guest would like sediment included:** Retain the last 1 in./2-3 cm in the bottle. Gently swirl the bottle to mix the sediment, then pour it through the foam so it blends evenly into the beer.

SAKE SERVICE STANDARDS

Introduction to Modern-Style Sake Service

In modern-style sake service, all-purpose or white wine glasses are often used instead of traditional cups. This style is commonly seen in Western-style restaurants that focus on wine.

- Follow white wine service standards (see CMS-A General Hospitality & Service Exam Standards and Guidelines), whether serving by the glass or by the bottle.
- If the sake has a screwcap or other alternative closure, the cap is not presented to the guest.

Mori Koboshi / Mokiri Service

This is a traditional Japanese by-the-glass service style that symbolizes hospitality and generosity. The sommelier overfills the small cup (ochoko) so that sake spills into the wooden box (masu), representing abundance and care.

Note: In traditional sake service, it is customary to pour using both hands as a sign of respect, even when using small format bottles.

Steps of Service:

- At the side station, place each ochoko (small cup) inside a masu (wooden box), one set for each guest.
- Bring the masu and ochoko sets to the table and place them to the right of each guest.
- Bring the sake bottle and present it with the label facing the table.
- Pour sake into each ochoko, allowing it to overflow into the masu by about halfway.
- Serve all guests in a clockwise direction, finishing with the ordering guest.

Nigori Sake

Nigori is a cloudy sake that contains kasu (rice lees) and needs special care for proper service.

Steps of Service:

- Before opening and pouring, gently turn the bottle upside down, then swirl or shake to mix the kasu to create an even texture.
- Before topping off glasses, swirl or shake the bottle again to keep the kasu evenly distributed.

Note: These service styles are intended for chilled or room temperature sake only and are not appropriate for hot sake.

APERITIF AND DIGESTIF SERVICE STANDARDS

Introduction

Aperitifs and digestifs are traditionally served from a tray or a gueridon. The choice of service method, temperature, and glassware should match the specific beverage and the guest's preferences. Always confirm how the guest would like their drink served before pouring. If a guest is uncertain, offer appropriate options and provide brief descriptions to assist with their decision.

Side Station Pouring

- Repeat the order(s) back to the guest to confirm accuracy.
- Select the appropriate glassware for the beverage being served:

Glassware

Small Tulip or Copita
Rocks Glass
Snifter

Beverage

Fortified wines, grappa, eau de vie, neat liqueurs
Liqueurs or spirits served over ice
Neat, oak-aged spirits (e.g., brandy, aged rum, Calvados)

- Pour the appropriate amount at the side station with a jigger when available.
- Add ice if requested.
- Bring the beverage on a tray and approach the guest from their right-hand side.
- Confirm the order before placing the drink on the table.

Tableside Pouring

- Repeat the order back to the guest to confirm accuracy.
- Select the appropriate glassware and prepare additional accompaniments (such as a water back or side rocks). Assemble all items on a tray.
- Place glassware and accompaniments on the table to the guest's right.
- Present the bottle with the label facing the guest and confirm the order.

There are two acceptable methods for pouring.

○ **Method 1:**

- Bring the bottle and accompaniments to the guest on a tray.
- Still holding the tray, present the bottle with the label facing the guest and confirm their order.
- Pour the beverage directly into the guest's glass while it remains on the tray.
- Place the filled glass and any accompaniments on the table to the guest's right.

○ **Method 2:**

- First, place the glassware and accompaniments on the table to the guest's right from a tray.
- Return to the side station to retrieve the bottle.
- Present the bottle with the label facing the guest and confirm the order.
- With the bottle in hand, pour the beverage into the guest's glass, similar to general wine service.

APERITIF AND DIGESTIF SERVICE STANDARDS

Gueridon Service

Gueridon service is typically used in fine dining settings where personalized attention and elegant presentation enhance the guest experience. Beverages are prepared and served tableside in full view of the guests, adding a sense of elegance and ceremony. This method is ideal for serving premium aperitifs, digestifs, specialty cocktails, or highlighting classic preparation techniques.

Mise en Place

- Clean, linen-lined gueridon
- One folded serviette
- Jigger
- Appropriate glassware for the beverage being served
- Ice bucket
- Tongs
- Distilled water or mineral water
- Service tray

Steps of Service

- Approach the table with the gueridon from the guest's right-hand side.
- Offer a selection of available aperitifs or digestifs and assist the guest with their choice.
 - If needed, offer a menu with prices.
- Repeat the order back to the guest to confirm accuracy.
- Select the appropriate glassware for the beverage being served.
- Pour the correct amount, using a jigger if available.
- Add ice if requested.
- Bring the beverage and any requested accompaniments to the guest on a tray.
- Place all items to the guest's right-hand side and confirm the order as you serve.

COCKTAIL SERVICE STANDARDS

Introduction

In addition to wine expertise, sommeliers are expected to have a comprehensive understanding of spirits and cocktails. This includes knowledge of cocktail ingredients, preparation methods, and presentation standards. When guests order cocktails, the sommelier should approach warmly and professionally, ready to provide attentive and personalized service.

Steps of Service

- Repeat the cocktail order back to the guest to confirm accuracy.
 - Ask about specific preferences, including ice, garnish, or any special requests.
 - If needed, write down the order to make certain all details are correct.
- Determine the correct method of preparation based on the cocktail recipe and follow the steps below.
- If a rimmed glass is required, rim the glass before beginning the cocktail preparation.

Shaken Cocktails

- If the recipe calls for muddling, begin by muddling the specified ingredient(s).
- Add the measured ingredients to a shaker, with or without ice, according to the cocktail recipe.
 - Do not overfill the shaker with ice.
- Seal the shaker and shake for the appropriate amount of time.
 - Do not add carbonated ingredients before shaking.
- Strain the cocktail into the appropriate glass.
- If the cocktail is served on the rocks, fill the glass with fresh ice before straining.
 - Do not use “dirty rocks” (ice used in the shaker) in the finished drink.

Stirred Cocktails

- If the recipe calls for muddling, begin by muddling the specified ingredient(s).
- Add the measured ingredients to a mixing glass, using a jigger if available.
- Fill the mixing glass about three-quarters full with ice, then stir gently until properly chilled and diluted.
- Strain the cocktail into the appropriate glass.
 - If the cocktail is served on the rocks, prepare the glass with fresh ice before straining.
 - Do not use “dirty rocks” in the finished drink.

Built Cocktails

- Built cocktails are prepared directly in the serving glass. The ingredients must be added in the order specified by the recipe.
- If the cocktail is layered, begin with the densest ingredient and carefully pour each additional layer over the back of a bar spoon.
- Use the correct type of ice, cubed or crushed, as specified in the recipe.
- Stir, swizzle, or leave it unstirred, according to the recipe.
- Finish the cocktail with the appropriate garnish and present it on a clean tray to the guest.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE PAIRING

Introduction

Food and beverage pairing is a distinctive service offered by the sommelier. The primary goal of any pairing is to align with the guest's preferences. The most successful pairing delights the guest, encourages their return, and enhances the restaurant's reputation and profitability.

While technical aspects such as acidity, tannins, and body are important, the beverage should first complement the guest's taste, the occasion, and the ambiance. For instance, if a guest prefers red wine with shellfish, the sommelier should honor that preference, even if it deviates from classical pairings.

While wine is a key focus, candidates should also be comfortable pairing other beverages such as beer, sake, spirits, and non-alcoholic options to offer diverse pairing opportunities.

CMS-A Examination Expectations

Food and beverage pairing requires theoretical knowledge, technical knowledge, and the ability to explain choices clearly. In the Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas examinations, candidates may be asked to:

- Propose a beverage to pair with a specific dish.
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a pairing.
- Assess the suitability of various food and beverage pairings.
- Explain the reasoning behind a pairing recommendation.

Pairing Across Global Cuisines

Modern restaurants often feature dishes from many culinary traditions. A well-rounded sommelier should:

- Be familiar with both classic and modern pairings, common cooking techniques, and iconic dishes.
- Understand key ingredients, sauces, and flavor profiles that define major world cuisines.
- Describe dishes confidently and recommend appropriate pairings in a way that is clear, inviting, appetizing, and easy for guests to understand.

Tablesides Communication

When speaking with guests about pairings, sommeliers must:

- Demonstrate foundational understanding of pairing principles, including both structural elements (like acidity, tannin, and body) and the harmony of aromas and flavors.
- Communicate using guest-friendly and appealing language, avoiding overly technical, intimidating, confusing, or off-putting terms.
- Focus on the guest's preferences first and offer suggestions that enhance both the food and the guest experience.