



Wine Tourism Development Information

Customer service and quality standards: Putting a face to the wine label

Selecting and training cellar door staff

Cellar door staff are the public face of the winery, just as much as the winemaker. Well trained, friendly cellar door staff will make visitors feel comfortable, help them enjoy themselves and sell wine.

Workshops on wine tourism, conducted in all major wine regions of New South Wales with cellar door staff, revealed that they all wanted more training in:

- Wine appreciation and how to demonstrate wine tasting to customers
- Sales training

Vineyard and product knowledge

Cellar door staff need to be able to answer the wide range of questions they are likely to get from increasingly educated and interested wine tourists, such as:

- Varieties grown (and favoured by the local conditions)
- Best years
- Size of vineyard
- Volume produced

For each wine style or label, cellar door staff need to know:

- The grape variety, approximate date picked and beaume.
- Basic winemaking for the wine, such as time in oak, what type of oak, what difference this makes, etc. This information is often on the back label, but people will ask these questions and want to hear the answer, not have to read fine print on a back label.

Tasting Notes

A set of tasting notes on all current releases should be provided for cellar door staff so they can learn about each wine, and have them as a reference when talking to visitors.

The cellar door list of available wines found on most counters should also have brief tasting notes on each wine – this helps guide the visitor in making comments about the wine.

Local knowledge

Wine tourists expect the cellar door staff to have good local knowledge and help them with more than just tasting the wines. They are likely to be asked about places to eat, places for good coffee, places to visit, where there is a lookout, picnic area, national park and other “tourist information”. Visitors are basically seeking reliable local advice on the most enjoyable experiences available to satisfy their interests. If your staff can answer these questions, the visit will become memorable, the visitors’ needs will be met. The impression of helpful staff will remain.

Devising information systems

To assist cellar door staff with tourist information, compile your own reference manual of local information. You can be quite selective about this. Choose only those places you feel consistently meet your standards and can be relied upon to give an authentic and interesting experience to your customers. It doesn’t have to be a comprehensive list – just those places which really complement your winery. Such a focused collection of information will interest people who are waiting for their spouse to finish their wine tasting. Referring people to it if they have questions about the local area will also prove very useful when you are busy serving customers.

A reference book on the local area might include all your favourite places – restaurants, cafes, takeaways, bakeries, delis, picnic spots, scenic lookouts, parks, natural areas & best short walks, bookshops, nearby heritage villages, museums, nurseries, heritage homes, places to stay, current or coming local events, tourism operators and services such as hot air balloons, aromatherapy/massage, golf, tennis, riding, regional tourist drives, plus quirky/fun local features/stories, etc. Such lists could also be tailored around identified younger and older interests & personal needs, if desired.

Put yourself in the shoes of the visitor

Well trained staff will be tuned into ‘body language’ and be able to “read” visitors to ascertain their mood, knowledge of wine and expectations - within just a few minutes’ conversation. Liking

people a lot and enjoying interacting with them in the first place helps a lot here!

It is important to understand if a visitor knows a little or lot about wine, so that their needs and expectations in terms of what they may wish to taste, and the type of questions they will want answered can be anticipated.

In order to understand your visitors, put yourself into their shoes. Go and visit some cellar doors in other wine regions and note what you liked or didn't like about the service you received.

While wine enthusiasts are becoming more knowledgeable about wine, the increase in both overseas visitors and general tourists visiting wine regions, means that many people come through the cellar door with little knowledge and want to be guided through the tasting and the wines. If they feel comfortable, that they are learning something in a pleasant informal and fun way, they are more likely to buy.

A successful cellar door staff member says: "I don't sell wine, I just sell myself". Ask yourself, "What business am I in"? Selling wine? Selling an experience, a good time? Selling myself? Selling the region? Or all of the above.

Being conscious of the continuing benefits

A customer who buys a bottle today, may join your mail order newsletter and buy a case next month. Or they may enjoy their visit so much that they return later in the year with friends and buy much more wine. Or they may order your wine next time they go to a restaurant back home, or buy it at their local bottle shop because they remember how much they enjoyed visiting your winery.

A memorable visit to a cellar door can be the beginning of a successful transition from wine tourist to loyal customer. You want your visitors to say, "*Remember that Winery ...*"

This series of Wine Tourism Development Factsheets was developed from Wine Tourism Workshops conducted by Tourism New South Wales in 8 wine regions of NSW in June 2000. The workshops were prepared and presented by project consultant Juliet Cullen of Effective Marketing Communication.

For more information concerning tourism product development, obtain a copy of Tourism New South Wales' publications list and order form. Phone (02) 9931 1111.



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