

Burnside Beefsteak & Burgundy Club

Guidelines for Dinner Organisers

The first thing about arranging a Club function is to engage with your co-organiser and enjoy it. You are not arranging your daughter's wedding or your funeral wines. It is a Club function using what the Club has to offer.

These Guidelines do set out some mandatory requirements such as the dining function attendance limit of 42, and the requirement for wine questionnaires to be independently marked. However, there is considerable scope for innovative ideas, provided they are first submitted for Committee approval.

Venue

We should have a room of our own, especially in a restaurant with hard floor surfaces. Sharing with other diners is unsatisfactory, even if the venue promises to screen off our area.

All members and guests should be able to see each other. Do not split our group into two separate rooms when seated.

Advise the restaurant approximate numbers likely to attend [usually up to 40 for ordinary functions] and explain our format and style of meetings including that there will be speakers and music is either not required or should be capable of easily being turned off for speakers.

Reception Area

A reception area for service of the first wine [usually a sparkling] is important to avoid congestion when members and guests arrive.

Always visit the venue and check it out before making a booking as a trendy restaurant which may be fun for a birthday group with a stylish menu may not be suitable for our purposes.

It is best to plan your function so that you have secured a venue no later than three months before the required date.

Costs

It might sound simplistic, but don't forget it's not just the cost of food, but the cost of wine, corkage, GST, tea and coffee, room hire, minimum spend or minimum numbers and if a Christmas dinner, possibly some table extras which must also be included in your budget. Tick them all off, there have been some embarrassing slips.

Compulsory Cellar Usage

You will need to work within the budget guidelines determined by the Committee. Always check with the Club Secretary or President as there are Club cellar usage requirements and varying wine subsidy allowances.

Food cost considerations may need to include not just the usual three courses, but water, bread rolls, tea and coffee.

Corkage

Corkage is often an issue and needs to be plainly included in the food cost. Usually it can be resolved by negotiation, but if you are having difficulties consider:

- A fixed menu without choices is more cost efficient and Wednesday nights are less busy
- The organisers can open wines;
- The restaurant will require less serving staff for wine than usual because the Club does not require ordinary full service with wine opening and glass replenishment which can be performed by the organisers;
- Wines can be opened and taken to tables by the organisers and served by a table team leader;
- Club glasses, large and small can be used but make clear arrangements as to washing and collecting after the event.

Deposit

If your venue requires a deposit, you can pay it and later be reimbursed, or alternatively make arrangements with the Treasurer.

Food

All venues will require a date for notification of final numbers attending. You will need to be very specific about this in your dinner notice and give members sufficient time to respond as restaurants usually require payment for the number booked.

If a venue requires payment for the number booked it is Club policy that unless there are extenuating circumstances, the number of meals paid for should be provided.

Generally, to showcase food and wine pairings there should be three basic courses [entrée, main and dessert]. This can be varied, for instance three entrees and dessert, or cheese instead of dessert etc. Keep in mind that whatever you present, you will want the wine to match the food and each course should be the same, no alternate drops.

Dietary Requirements – Chilli etc

Some foods, especially those influenced by cultures which have traditionally been non wine regions [such as Asia] are not easy to match with wines.

Chilli may be in vogue as a fashionable ingredient, however it is not recommended that chilli be used as an ingredient with any course unless it is optional [as to which see below]. Do not make assumptions about the food, you need to be very specific with your restaurant as chilli should not be considered under the “dietary requirements” category requiring members to exclude it by making their own arrangements with your restaurant.

There are some vegetarian members and members with dietary requirements arising from intolerance to gluten and garlic. Alert your restaurant to this and obtain a name and phone number for those with dietary requirements to telephone the venue direct and make their own arrangements.

Don't just accept what the restaurant wants to sell you as its set menu favourite as it may contain ingredients which will overpower the wine. If you think you can match a white wine with something spicy for an entrée, make it optional for those who don't want it, with a side plate for the spice.

Water

As part of the table, have plain water and water glasses available. Make sure the restaurant knows not to put lemon slices in the water.

If you are arranging a black-tie function, try to include canapes, but remember the extra cost. At other functions if you can swing it, canapés will always be welcome.

Wine

All wine in and out of the Club's cellar and function leftovers to be returned to the Club cellar must go through the Cellarmaster. This is a requirement of our terms of storage and obviously from a Club point of view necessary for audit purposes and to ensure accurate functioning cellar records.

The Club wine has been classified into categories which allow or require certain wines to be used for current functions and others to be held back. The Cellarmaster will provide you with a list of available wines from which you may make a selection for your function.

If you have a small number attending your function it will be possible for you to use wine held in lots of four or five rather than the usual six. Using small lots when possible allows efficient cellar use and avoids waste.

Speak to the Cellarmaster if you have a difficulty over wine selection.

Wine Collection

Contact the Cellarmaster a month before your function to discuss arrangements for collection of wine. Usually removal of wine from the Club's cellar occurs on a weekend. Members are encouraged to personally attend at The Tunnels wine storage and collect their wine, but the Cellarmaster will collect wine if required.

Plan with the Cellarmaster to collect your wine from the Club cellar as soon as you know the number attending your function. This allows use of wine in smaller quantities (e.g. lots of 4 or 5) if your numbers are low, and time for adjustments if necessary, particularly to your Questionnaire.

When you collect your wine take a few moments to open cartons and check that it is the wine you expected. It is better to discover a discrepancy a week before your event than on the eve of it.

Wine/Food Pairings

As a general rule with dinners we tend to have a starter [usually a sparkling but it may be any aperitif] to be served on arrival at 7.00 p.m. in reception, then at 7.30 p.m. when diners are seated two wines [usually white to broaden the tasting] with the entrée and two with the mains [usually reds, again to broaden the tasting] followed by a dessert wine. A fortified wine can be offered with coffee. Luncheons usually follow the same format, but the format is up to you, subject to budget. The Club welcomes innovation, but obviously there are risks in departing from the norm. Be sure to obtain Committee approval to wider horizon ideas.

Budget

Function costs are reviewed each year and function organisers are expected to budget their function accordingly. The Club does not ordinarily subsidise function cost over-runs. If you are unable to bring your function cost within the recommended limit, you will need to obtain Committee approval in advance to increase the function cost to members. Speak to the Functions Auditor for guidance.

Serving Sizes

Not all attendees will want to consume the full allocated allowance of wine. It is therefore recommended that the first portion be smaller than the allocated allowance. A small first pour for everybody avoids accusations of giving partners less, and it avoids waste by allowing top ups for those who are happy to have more. This is particularly so with the first wine of the night, especially if it is a sparkling wine.

It is very important to stress to your restaurant that except for sparkling wine [as to which see below], we allocate seven (7) serves per bottle with a limit of six (6) bottles per flight and there are no reserves. This includes 375ml dessert wine. Waiters may need to have a demonstration in a glass of what 1/7th of a bottle is.

Alternatively, have the first two still wines pre-poured to the correct amount in a staff area and the glasses can then be taken to the tables.

Pouring the correct amount of wine by waiters is vital, especially with dessert wine where you may only have six 375 ml bottles. Get on top of correct serves from the start.

With sparkling wine it is not uncommon to have a more generous allowance than the seven serves we calculate for still table wines. An extra bottle of sparkling to circulate adds a little panache to a function, but remember to keep back a glass for those arriving late, and your budget.

At most ordinary functions only five bottles per flight of still wine will be needed. Sometimes numbers attending mean a choice between slightly smaller serves or using an extra bottle. Don't be concerned about stretching the serves because it is amazing at the end of a night how much wine is left unconsumed in glasses. Importantly, single bottles left over are required for the March function, so don't think all available bottles may as well be used up at your dinner.

It is important members and guests are made aware of which wine flight is in which glass. Numbered place mats can be used. Alternatively staff should be instructed to tell diners the flight number when they are pouring it. Our usual practice is to number from the left.

Some members or partners of members do not drink red wine and need to be considered.

Service

It is important to have an email exchange with your restaurant to set out a timetable for service and all other terms of the engagement.

Avoid having a choice for the entree course as this will unduly slow the flow of proceedings and often results in the first table wines being consumed before the entrée is finally served. Entrees and accompanying wine are best served just before diners are seated.

Club Glasses

Ensure that the venue has sufficient wine glasses for your function. The Club has glasses but washing and recovering need to be considered.

Masking Wines.

Make sure service staff are aware of the confidentiality of the masking. Warn them not to leave empty bottles or wine boxes where they can be seen, or inadvertently confirm the variety if someone was to say “I’ll have a little more of the Chardonnay”.

Simply putting bottles into masking bags may not be sufficient. It may be necessary to use masking tape to cover foils, trademarks or neck labels, particularly with long necked bottles.

Take care when putting bottles into the masking bags that the bag numbers are securely affixed and that the numbers correspond with your Questionnaire. It is always worth a double check to avoid an easily made embarrassing mix up.

The wine masking bags are difficult to replace. Impress upon staff the need to have them collected after each flight and kept together for later counting and collection by you.

Table Sizes

Tables of eight are usually the best, though keep in mind that a significant number of the Club members attend on their own or occasionally only one partner is attending so settings may need to accommodate that. It is your responsibility to oversee seating arrangements. It is embarrassing if couples wishing to sit together are forced to sit on opposite sides of the dining room because singles have not been directed to an appropriate table.

Reserved Seating

Reserve tables for members with guests. Put a prominent “Reserved” notice on a table and show on it the member’s name and how many places are reserved.

Consider asking your venue to set an extra place [without a cost commitment] in case of errors in notification or to avoid couples sitting separately. It is a good idea if it turns a table of seven into an eight, but not if it turns an eight into a nine.

No Purchases in the Club’s Name

Most venues have beverage purchasing opportunities. Clearly inform your venue that individual beverage purchases (beer, spirits, wine etc from the bar) must be paid for by the purchaser. Be clear about the arrangements for tea and coffee; if it is not included in the set cost, make sure it is not carelessly offered after dinner by serving staff as there have been instances of organisers being charged for it as an unwelcome extra.

The Club does not permit group purchases (e.g. from a winery) in the Club’s name.

Wine Questionnaire

Be sure of your facts, don’t make assumptions. The Club Cellar Lists and the bottle label may mislead you as they tend to show winery location, not necessarily the region from which the fruit was sourced. For example, the fruit for the acclaimed Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon wine of Noon Wines of McLaren Vale is sourced from Langhorne Creek, only Noon’s Grenache is estate grown. Also, the Cellar List may show the purchase date of an Australian sparkling wine which the wine maker has labelled as NV.

Not all sparkling wine from France is Champagne. In Australia the variety shown on the label must constitute 85% of the contents. This can leave the possibility of e.g. Shiraz/Viognier, with the Viognier not mentioned on the front label, but referred to in the small print on the back label. Overseas wines are often more liberal with blending.

Proof-read

Proof-read your Questionnaire very carefully to ensure you avoid ambiguity and spelling errors. It's a good idea to have it checked by a person who is not your co-organiser.

Allocation of Points

We usually ask that variety, region and vintage be identified, with allocation of two (2) points for variety and one (1) each for region and vintage. This need not be strictly adhered to, but be very clear if you want to depart from this tradition.

It is usual to give three options each for variety, region and vintage. For vintage don't give consecutive years, but rather bridges of two or three, e.g. 2000, 2002, 2004.

Blends

If the wine is a blend this should be stated and ask for identification of the dominant variety, or name the dominant variety and ask for identification of the lesser variety[s]. You will not be well received for asking "is it Shiraz or Cabernet or a blend of both".

Consult the Winemaster if you are having difficulty framing questions for wines which may be rare or unusual with multiple blends.

Tied Results

Include in your Questionnaire a provision for settling a tied result. Usually this will be a countback based firstly on variety, then region and finally vintage. If you wish you can provide an extra bottle of a wine not tasted on the night and have a taste off.

Resist the temptation to be too tricky with both your choice of wine and the Questionnaire. No one in living memory has scored 100% and members and guests enjoy themselves more if they get a good smattering of correct answers.

Do not print your Questionnaire until after you have collected your wine and satisfied yourself as to its accuracy with the actual wine.

Marking of Questionnaire

The Committee has determined that the marking of Questionnaires by an independent person is **mandatory** and is not to be at the option of dinner organisers. This is in the interests of preserving the integrity of the Wine Quiz winner. Please do not depart from this requirement.

Committee Approval

Function organisers are required to present planning information with background details about their upcoming function to the Club Secretary two months prior to your function. The Committee may express views or take decisions at this point. The Committee then effectively delegates its organising authority and responsibility to the function organisers. The Committee also reviews each function immediately following it and may provide you with feedback to assist you in future functions.

Functions Auditor

The Committee has appointed a Functions Auditor who will contact you approximately a month before your function as a "second pair of eyes" to provide you with any assistance you may require. The Functions

Auditor may also provide you with feedback after your function. The Cellarmaster and all Committee persons will always be available to assist.

Dinner Notice

You need to prepare a dinner notice and provide it to the Secretary in sufficient time for members to receive it at least 7 days before the last date for notification of apologies or guests. The Secretary can provide you with a sample dinner notice. You should include the menu for your function.

The sample dinner notice will show you the information to give to members. Set out clearly the required dress standard for your function and remind members to tell their guests what the dress standard is, particularly as some venues have their own dress requirements (e.g. private Clubs).

Attendance Limitation

Familiarise yourself with the attendance protocol which limits the total number of attendees to forty-two (42). Guests, with an initial limit of two (2) per member may only attend if member and partner numbers are less than 42. Accordingly, guests must wait listed on a first in priority and acceptance not confirmed until full member and partner numbers are known.

Calculating the numbers for your dinner can be tricky and care needs to be taken as venues usually require payment for the number notified. Members without leave are to be presumed to be attending Club functions. However, there are members who have a standing apology, there are members whose partners don't go to every function and usually 25% of the membership are singles.

Having only one organiser to accept notification of apologies and guest numbers avoids mistakes. As a back-up it is a good idea sending a brief non reply email to all those you think are attending, advising them they are on the attendance list.

Dinner Attendance Sheet

The Treasurer will provide you approximately a month before your function with a *Members/Guests Dinner Attendance Sheet* which has membership attendance and standing apology details. Use it to record attendances and apologies. You will also receive a *Function Cost Report* which you need to complete and send to the Treasurer after your function. Both forms may be downloaded by you from the Club website

Masking Bags

Arrange to collect the wine masking bags from the previous organiser well before your function.

It is usually preferable to bag all wine before delivering it to your venue. The alternative is to attend at the venue an hour earlier, but beware of early comers who may catch you with labels and wine boxes exposed. It is preferable to chill white wine and deliver it bagged as often restaurants over chill wine.

Trouble Shooting

Occasionally you may find yourself confronted with an on-the-spot dilemma just prior to or during a function. If you consider you require assistance the matter should be referred to the Cellarmaster or President if the Cellarmaster is unavailable.

Report to Cellarmaster

At the conclusion of your function give the Cellarmaster the *Invoice/Statement* received by you from The Tunnels when you collected the Club wine, inform him by email of the bottles unused and make arrangements for hand-over of unused wine to the Cellarmaster. It is Club policy that left over wine be made available for use at the President's function and is not to be purchased by organisers or used as a contra against a member's expenditure.

Handover Bags

At the conclusion of your function make sure you collect and account for all masking bags and arrange to hand over the bags to the next dinner organiser. The same applies to Club glasses.

Financial Report

Keep all receipts for wine purchased by you and send copies to the Treasurer for reimbursement. Do not apply contras as the Treasurer requires to pay all expenses and bank all receipts.

Complete the *Function Cost Report* showing income and expenditure for your function and submit it to the Treasurer.

Then glory in your achievement