



Taurus Wines

**Guide to choosing the Wine and Champagne for your
Wedding Day**

Introduction

After eight years of experience, helping up to two hundred couples a year with their wedding Wine, there are several questions we get asked time and time again – hence the writing of this guide.

It'll help you make good choices at a fair price, as well as ensuring there's the right amount for everyone – especially you – to have the time of your lives. And remember, dealing with a small, friendly independent merchant like Taurus Wines means that sorting out the wedding drinks is actually fun...service is everything!

How much will we need?

We'll work it out by counting up glasses per person:

Returning from the church/registry office: For a **Champagne or Sparkling Wine reception** allow one glass per person per twenty minutes for the first hour and a glass per half hour thereafter.

For example for a reception of an hour and half you need to allow about four glasses which works out at around two-thirds of a bottle.

For a **Pimms** reception you will again need 4 servings which works out to about a quarter to a third of a standard bottle with a total of 600ml of lemonade each.

The meal itself:

This depends to some extent on whether you have table service for drinks or a bar, but generally only about half a bottle per head gets used. In the summer this tends to be split two-thirds white and one-third red. In winter it drops to equal quantities of each. For the Speeches allow an extra glass per person.

Post-meal drinking / dancing / cavorting.

If the meal finishes well into the evening and the dancing stops at 11pm or midnight, people only tend to have a couple more drinks and will often keep drinking Wine, although many hosts lay on Beer. Offering Spirits tends to become very expensive, wasteful (part bottle leftovers) and can lead to embarrassing behaviour. But you'll need more drink if you've invited another list of guests to join in the later part of the festivities. Here the guests are starting afresh and around five or six drinks will be needed per head.

Now all you need to know is this:

Reckon on six glasses from every bottle of Champagne or Sparkling Wine, five from each bottle of Still Wine, and 15 servings of Pimms

How much will it cost?

Choice is everything, but here's a guideline: If you're going for the 'House' Champagne, plus Wine in the £7-£8 per bottle bracket, budget £15-£17 per head. If you opt for the cheapest Cava and a five-a-bottle House Wine you're looking at £8-£10 a head.

Even if you're having inexpensive sparkling wine the biggest single cost of the drinks bill will be the bubbly - typically it's two thirds of the total cost.

It's now very fashionable for the Groom's parents to make a contribution towards this.



We're buying a lot of wine - do we get a discount?

Yes. But don't be fooled by 'three-for-two' offers or 'buy 6 save 40%' discounts you often see in supermarkets or chain-store off licences. If you see a promotional discount of greater than 15% on any item, the chances are that the pre-sale price was a rip-off. Look at the final price you end up paying rather than the apparent strength of the offer.

If you prefer to negotiate a discount deal rather than use our sale-or-return offer, we can normally give a discount of around 10% (sometimes 15% if given a lot of notice) on a ten-case plus order.

For obvious reasons there can be no sale-or-return in this instance.

How does sale or return work?

Sale or Return is when a supplier (normally a Wine Merchant) agrees to take a percentage of stock back after an event if it's unused. This is typically limited to a quarter and is by prior arrangement and is on certain products only. Most Merchants ask for whole cases only, but we're happy to accept part cases as long as the wine is in its original boxes.

White wine and Champagne bottles lose their labels in wet ice buckets and then aren't returnable. Avoid this by putting them in water-tight bin liners before covering with ice.

What wine to choose?

Avoid the big brands. Do you really want everyone at the wedding knowing exactly what you spent because they saw it half-price in Sainsbury's last week? You might also agree that something made in smaller quantities with more care is appropriate for such a special day.

Ask for advice and don't worry: if you're serving your favourite Wine with your favourite food you can't go far wrong.

Take every opportunity to taste things - we have a huge Summer Wine Festival (normally in late May) held outside the shop where you can taste up to 300 Wines and quite often meet the people who made them. In the winter we have a series of tastings throughout October and November. Details are on the website under the 'Wine- tastings' tab, and you'll also find an article about Food and Wine matching.

It's best to drop into the store and talk things through. You'll have more time if you avoid our busiest day Saturday, and come mid-week or ring for an evening appointment.

We've been asked to pay corkage - how does that work?

Some caterers and wedding venues ask for a corkage charge of typically £10 - £15 per bottle if you're providing the Wine. This is always painful, particularly if the caterer is serving the drink in your own home. They're often open to negotiation or will exchange corkage for a flat fee to cover the bar staff's time.

It's also worth checking the small print of the contract – does it stipulate the bottle size? If not, using Magnums (twice the size of a normal bottle) will halve your corkage bill.

If the wedding is taking place at a venue where corkage is being charged, get the best man or an usher to ask the front of house manager to inspect the empty bottles, leftovers and corks afterwards. Might as well be sure they can count...



What's included in a full service package?

A full-service package is where we deliver not only the Wine but frequently glasses (ask about the numerous sizes and styles we can offer), cold boxes, ice and then collect leftovers and empty bottles after the event.

Given the huge costs involved in this (labour, van costs, warehousing, glass washing etc) we don't offer discounts when providing this service.

How do we chill the white wine, Champagne and lager?

We can lend you large 'Eski' cool-boxes. Getting White Wine down to temperature when using ice only takes 20 minutes so there's no need to panic. About 40 bottles fit in each Eski box. We'll supply the ice too.

For events of 250-plus people, hiring a fridge trailer becomes more practical. We have contacts we can recommend, the prices varying with season and location but typically being £150 – £200 for a weekend.

Your caterer may well be hiring a fridge trailer of their own for the food: Please don't think that the drink and the food will fit into a single unit. It won't.

What happens if we have ordered wine and the wedding is postponed or cancelled?

Should a paid order be cancelled for reasons beyond your control we will, where practical, offer a refund or a credit note. We'll try to be as reasonable as possible and handle things on a case by case basis (no pun intended). Some wedding insurance policies cover all deposits – it may be better for you to simply claim from the insurance company.

Can we have a Wedding list online with you?

Absolutely. How many toasters, towels or tea-sets does anyone really need? Wouldn't you prefer an instant cellar? Taurus Wines has a wedding list service to allow people to build themselves just that. To see how it works, just visit the 'wedding list' section of our website. To see a demonstration, type in 'Smith' as the username and 'Chardonnay' as the password.



Got any other top tips?

Here are some ideas to help you personalise your big day, and also save yourselves time, money and trouble.

Alternative drinks can make a reception more memorable.

Kir Royale (Sparkling Wine with a drop of Cassis) is good any time, while in winter, Mulled Wine fills the air with a festive atmosphere and Winter Pimms (Brandy based, with warm apple juice) can be served from Winter Pimms teapots.

In summer, long cocktails like Mojitos and dry, vodka-based Pimms No 2 are great. You can even purchase edible Hibiscus flowers which open up and bloom in the bottom of the glass.



Give the non-drinkers a break from water - our Belvoir soft drinks are delicious and come in a variety of flavours including Elderflower, Gooseberry & Mint, Passion fruit & Mango and Organic Blueberry. Fruit juices, perhaps in a virgin Sea Breeze (cranberry and grapefruit juice) or traditional cloudy lemonade are always popular.

If you're lucky with the weather, don't let the red wine sit on the tables in direct sunlight.

Beaujolais should be slightly chilled (11-13 degrees C) and all other reds are much better up to 18 degrees. More than this means hot, harsh-tasting Wine.

Here's a clever tweak to the running order:

Why not have the speeches at the end of the initial reception, before you sit down to eat?

The Best Man, Groom and Father of the Bride can relax during the meal, you don't have to hire a second set of Champagne flutes (around 25p each) and the caterer can simply top up the glasses – you'll only use about a third of a glass a person rather than a full one.



If you are having your speeches with the dessert, serve a demi-sec (Medium-dry) Champagne or Prosecco.

As a general rule, the Wine should be slightly sweeter than the food, or sweetness of the food will make a dry Champagne taste sharp.

If you're having Champagne, just use a 'classic' flute.

Wide, shallow 'coup'-style glasses let it go flat and flutes with hollow stems are warmed by the drinker's hand.

The cardboard boxes the Wine comes in should be kept dry and safe, or there will be nothing to pack the unused bottles in.

This is especially crucial for sale-or-return items – the conditions stipulate that the Wine has to be returned in its original boxes.

Empty bottles – we'll collect them as part of the 'full service' package.

Most caterers charge around £30 for this.

Don't forget the ushers! A bottle of Wine in a wooden box a smart corkscrew set or decanter makes an ideal ushers gift – these can all be delivered with your Wine.

If you have any questions at all, call us on 01483 54 84 84.

And don't worry, everything will be fine. Choosing the Wine is the fun part!





Taurus Wines

Wine Importer and Shop

- * Independent Wine Merchant of the Year 2008
- * Havana Cigars
- * Expert Advice
- * Sale or Return
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For a copy of our full Wine List please call