



# Self-preservation

**Are your wines-by-the-glass only good for the kitchen? Maybe, says Richard Hewitt, if you don't store them right**

**THE more I travel around the world, the more I am convinced that 80% of all hotel and restaurant operators consider wine preservation to be nothing more than tossing all the opened bottles with their original corks back into the fridge until sold, regardless of how long they may sit there or be ferried back and forth from the bar. Is this your experience?**

There seems to be an apparent lack of attention to the care of opened bottles of wine, which are very perishable and have a short shelf life. It all comes down to the quality standards and best working practices adopted by hotels, but the trend is strongly towards the adoption of greatly improved best practices.

Some chains are already implementing wine-by-the-glass programmes of the highest standards but, to do this profitably, they need to implement an effective wine-preservation system to guarantee the wines are fresh and to avoid the obvious pitfalls of leaving opened bottles to be ravaged by oxidation.

**Does every operator need a wine-preservation system of some sort? I've encountered many who say their most popular wines-by-the-glass sell so fast that they don't need to worry about wine preservation.**

Every operator needs an effective quality-control programme in place to control the service standards of wine-by-the-glass. This can either be the costly and inefficient system of sending the opened bottles to the kitchen every night for cooking, or by implementing an effective commercial-grade wine-preservation system to keep the open bottles in peak condition.

No matter how quickly a particular wine sells, there will still be part bottles open at the end of the night. It comes back to whether it is acceptable to offer wine-by-the-glass that is unlikely to be fresh. The leading operators are doing what is required to guarantee that the wine is served in peak condition, and not just hoping that they sell it so quickly that they do not get many complaints.

**Does a commercial-grade wine-preservation system always involve display cabinets and use nitrogen to preserve the wines?**

No, most operators do not need, or want, to dispense wine through these older nitrogen-style systems, which require extensive maintenance and cleaning.

**For hotels with many restaurants and bars spread**

**throughout the property, plus banqueting and room service, where should the wine-preservation system be located?**

It should always be located at the wine-by-the-glass service station to ensure prompt use of the system after every pour. This is the only way to guarantee quality, and is the standard working practice of the leading operators. If a hotel has several restaurants, wine-preservation systems should be located at each one, otherwise preservation and freshness standards will vary between each wine service.

**Do older, more expensive, red wines oxidise faster and, therefore, require more care than younger wines?**

In general, the older, more delicate and sophisticated wines require more careful attention, but all wines oxidise.

**What are the first signs that a wine is turning bad and what can I do about it? Is it better to use those wines which are starting to turn for cooking or should I just put them on special and use them up?**

The process of oxidation starts as soon as bottles are exposed to the air, and the point at which the negative effects of oxidation are predominant can be as short as a few hours. A wine does not have to be deemed fully oxidised to be unpalatable.

I strongly recommend that these wines are sent immediately to the kitchens, as an operator cannot afford to risk serving them to guests.

**Are there any particular problems with keeping wine in good condition in Asia Pacific, given the high humidity and temperatures through much of the region?**

The rate of oxidation is increased at higher temperatures and humidity. Even non-oxidised red wines that are served at too high a temperature lose many of their attractive qualities, so it is especially important to have best practices in place to ensure the quality of wine-by-the-glass served. □



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