

Beverage Planning

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The amount of punch or number of cocktails or beers a guest will drink varies. Allow for the length of the party, the strength of the beverage, the day of the week, the rowdiness of the crowd, or lack thereof, and adjust your figure accordingly. The rules-of-thumb are:

Cocktails: Figure that your guests will consume 2 drinks per person per hour for the first 2 hours and 1 drink per person per hour after that. If you have the budget and inclination, you can stock a full bar. However, a more budget conscious idea is to offer a selection of cocktails that can be made from one or two primary types of liquor. To limit the choices of hard liquor, select vodka because it can be mixed with so many things. If your budget allows, add favorites such as scotch, rye, rum, tequila and one or more sweet drinks such as Amaretto, Frangelico or peach schnapps. Each 750-mil bottle of liquor contains 16 1.5 ounce shots.

Mixers: If you are serving cocktails, don't forget mixers such as club soda, lime juice and other fruit juices, tonic water, and non-alcoholic beer. Buy them in small bottles so that unopened containers may be used in future.

Beer: Stock 5 six-packs of beer for ten people, based on a twelve-ounce serving.

Wine: Allow roughly half a bottle of wine per guest. The true number of bottles required will also depend upon whether your guests are heavy wine drinkers, or if there is a greater proportion of drivers attending. You should get roughly 5 servings per bottle. Fill glasses 2/3 of the way. White wine (Chablis or Chardonnay) used to be more popular, but lately more people are choosing a red wine (Merlot or Cabernet). On the other hand, if you want to "split the difference," serve a white zinfandel or rose.

Soft Drinks: If your guests will be dancing the night away make sure you provide plenty of soft drinks to quench their thirst. Providing iced tea, punch or lemonade may cut down on the amount of alcohol drunk, as guests who are thirsty from dancing prefer a refreshing soft drink to a dehydrating alcoholic one. There are about ten 8-ounce glasses of soda in a 2-liter bottle.

Punch: Figure 10 people to the gallon. That's a conservative estimate, assuming your guests will drink about three 4-ounce servings during the party. To avoid youngsters "accidentally" dipping into the "spiked" punch bowl, choose recipes that are two different colors and use see-through drinking glasses. This will tell you at a glance whether you need to make a substitution.

Coffee: Plan on an average of 1 1/2 cups of coffee per person (don't forget the sugar and cream).

Ice: Stock 1 pound of ice per person if the drinks need to be iced. More will be needed for an outdoor, warm-weather party, or if the party lasts a long time. Only about half that though, 1/2 pound of ice per person, is needed if the beverages are pre-chilled or the party is of short duration.

Cocktail Napkins: Figure about 4 cocktail napkins (or 2 linen napkins) per person per hour, less if your guests will be using small cocktail plates for food.

Glassware: Stock enough glasses that your guests can trade a dirty one for a clean one at least once, maybe more.

Minding the Budget: To reduce costs try to get as many bottles as possible on a sale or return basis. This way you will not run out of drink but you will only pay for the bottles that are used. Warehouse stores like Costco or Sam's Club are usually open to taking back unopened bottles and six-packs. However, they do have some restrictions, so check with them first. To stay within a beverage budget, serve wine, beer and/or soft drinks alone. At large parties with many beer drinkers, a keg is a more cost-conscious way of serving, but it is also more labor-intensive and requires more space and ice. For the greatest savings, serve an alcoholic and plain punch.

Drinks Per Bottle

Highballs, Cocktails, Mixed Drinks (1.5 oz. liquor servings)

Bottles	1	2	4	6	8	10	12
750 ML (25.4 oz.)	16	33	67	101	135	169	203
Liter (33.8 oz.)	22	45	90	135	180	225	270
1.75 L (59.2 oz.)	39	78	157	236	315	394	473

Drinks Per Bottle

Table Wines, Champagne, Sparkling Wines (5 oz. wine servings)

Bottles	1	2	4	6	8	10	12
750 ML (25.4 oz.)	5	10	20	30	40	50	60
Liter (33.8 oz.)	6	13	27	40	54	67	81
1.75 L (59.2 oz.)	10	20	30	40	54	67	81
3 Liter (101 oz.)	20	40	80	121	161	202	242
4 Liter (135 oz.)	27	54	108	162	216	270	324

Bottles of Wine for Dinner

Table Wines, Champagne, Sparkling Wines (average 2 servings at 5 oz. per serving)

Bottles	4	6	8	10	12	20
750 ML (25.4 oz.)	2	2+	3+	4	5	8

1.75 L (59.2 oz.)	1	1+	2	2	2+	4
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Generally, bottle quantities recommended provide some small overages of wine from 10 oz. per guest formula.

“+” sign indicates somewhat less than formula and additional bottle may be desirable to have on hand.

Number of People	10	25	50	100
Increase amounts for events longer than 4 hours				
Wine & Champagne	5 bottles	13 bottles	25 bottles	50 bottles
Beer	20 bottles per hour	50 bottles per hour	100 bottles per hour	200 bottles per hour
Liquor	1.5 bottles per hour	3 bottles per hour	6 bottles per hour	12 bottles per hour
Mixers Go heavy on tonic water	4 liters per hour	9 liters per hour	17 liters per hour	33 liters per hour
Limes	3	7	13	25
Olives and Maraschino Cherries	1 jar each	3 jars each	5 jars each	10 jars each
Ice	5lbs	13lbs	25lbs	50lbs
Cocktail Napkins Reduce this number if you are offering plates for food	40 per hour	100 per hour	200 per hour	400 per hour

Stocking a Standard Cocktail Bar

If you do want to stock a full bar, most needs can be met by having the following on hand:

Vodka
Rum
Gin
Scotch
Bourbon
Blended Whiskey
Tequila

Stocking a Complete Cocktail Bar

If you want to offer more cocktail choices, in addition to the standard bar consider also stocking:

Kahlua® or other coffee flavored liqueur
Creme de Menthe
Creme de Cacao
Amaretto
Brandy and/or Cognac
Grand Marnier®
Drambuie®
B&B® (Brandy & Benedictine)
Triple Sec or Cointreau
Apple Pucker Schnapps (for Appletinis)
Bailey's Irish Creme
Southern Comfort
Peach Schnapps
Frangelico
Mixers and Garnishes

Depending on the cocktails you plan on offering, you may need any or all of the following:

Juices – orange juice, grapefruit juice, cranberry juice, tomato juice or V8, pineapple, lemon or lime juice (fresh squeezed when possible or Roses), Pomengranate

For fresh squeezed juices, you can estimate that the average lemon or lime will yield about an ounce of juice, an orange will yield between 1 1/2 - 3 oz. of juice depending on it's size.

Mixes – Bloody Mary mix, Margarita mix

Carbonated beverages – club soda, tonic water, cola, 7-Up or Sprite, ginger ale.

Flavoring ingredients – Angostura bitters for drinks like Old Fashioneds, salt, pepper or horseradish for drinks like Bloody Marys, confectioner's sugar for fizzes an flips, grenadine, simple syrup, cream of coconut, etc.

Dry vermouth if you plan on making martinis.

Sweet vermouth if you plan on making Manhattans.

Grenadine

Sweet & Sour

Salt or sugar for rimming cocktail glasses (for Margaritas).

Milk, half and half, cream, whipped cream or possibly even ice cream.

Coffee – for hot drinks and last call, no alcohol.

Garnishes like lemon or lime peel or wedges, orange slices, Maraschino cherries, olives, cocktail onions or celery stalks.

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