

Wine

The Vintage Standard

Five steps that keep the wine list true to the cellar. A changed vintage is a small fact, and a large one when the guest finds it on the label alone.

Who	When	You need
Head sommelier, with the sommeliers and servers on shift	Before every service, and the moment a wine sells out	The printed list, the cellar count, tonight's change slip
Measured by List checked against stock before service · Change told before the bottle is opened · List corrected within 7 days		

1 Check the cellar

Thirty minutes before service, compare the list with the cellar count. Any wine with fewer than two bottles left, or a new vintage in stock, goes on the change slip read out at the briefing.

"Changes tonight: Meursault now 2021, not 2020. Two Sassicaia left. Rioja Reserva sold out."

Common mistake Checking stock on the screen only. The system says six bottles; the cellar has four and a broken case.

2 Say it first

When the bottle in stock is not the vintage on the list, tell the host before you fetch it, in one sentence, with what the change means in the glass. Then the host decides: the same wine or another.

"The list says 2020, Mrs Tanaka. We now have the 2021, a little fresher. Shall I bring it, or suggest another?"

Common mistake Presenting the new vintage and hoping the host won't read the label. The host who does stops trusting the rest of the list.

3 Offer one alternative

When a wine has sold out, offer one alternative straight away: same grape or region, same style, within about 10% of the price. Name it before the guest has to ask what else there is.

"We poured the last of that on Saturday, Mr Weber. The same grower's Riesling from the next slope is very close."

Common mistake Saying "we're out" and handing the list back. The guest starts again from page one and orders more cautiously.

4 Correct the list

Mark every change on the master list the same night. Update the printed and digital list within 7 days, and until then every server carries the change slip in their pocket.

"Master list updated 14 Oct: Meursault 2021, Rioja Reserva removed. Reprint ordered for Friday."

Common mistake Waiting for the spring reprint. For months the list offers wines the cellar no longer has.

5 Decide the line

Within 48 hours of a sell-out, decide with purchasing whether to reorder, replace or retire the wine. Note which alternative guests accepted; it is often the wine that should take its place.

"Rioja Reserva out. 5 of 6 tables took the Ribera instead. Proposal: list the Ribera."

Common mistake Reordering the same wine out of habit. The tables that took the alternative have already told you what they prefer.

Our Sold-Out Plan

The three wines on your list most likely to change this month, and what the floor offers in their place. Fill it in for your own cellar.

Our fastest seller

Wine and vintage on list ____

Bottles left today _____

Alternative to offer _____

Price difference _____

Our rarest bottle

Wine and vintage on list ____

Bottles left today _____

Alternative to offer _____

Price difference _____

Our next vintage change

Wine and vintage on list ____

Bottles left today _____

Alternative to offer _____

Price difference _____

How to use this with your team

The head sommelier fills it in on Monday and briefs one wine a day. By Thursday every server should name all three alternatives from memory; if not, taste them together before Friday's service.

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