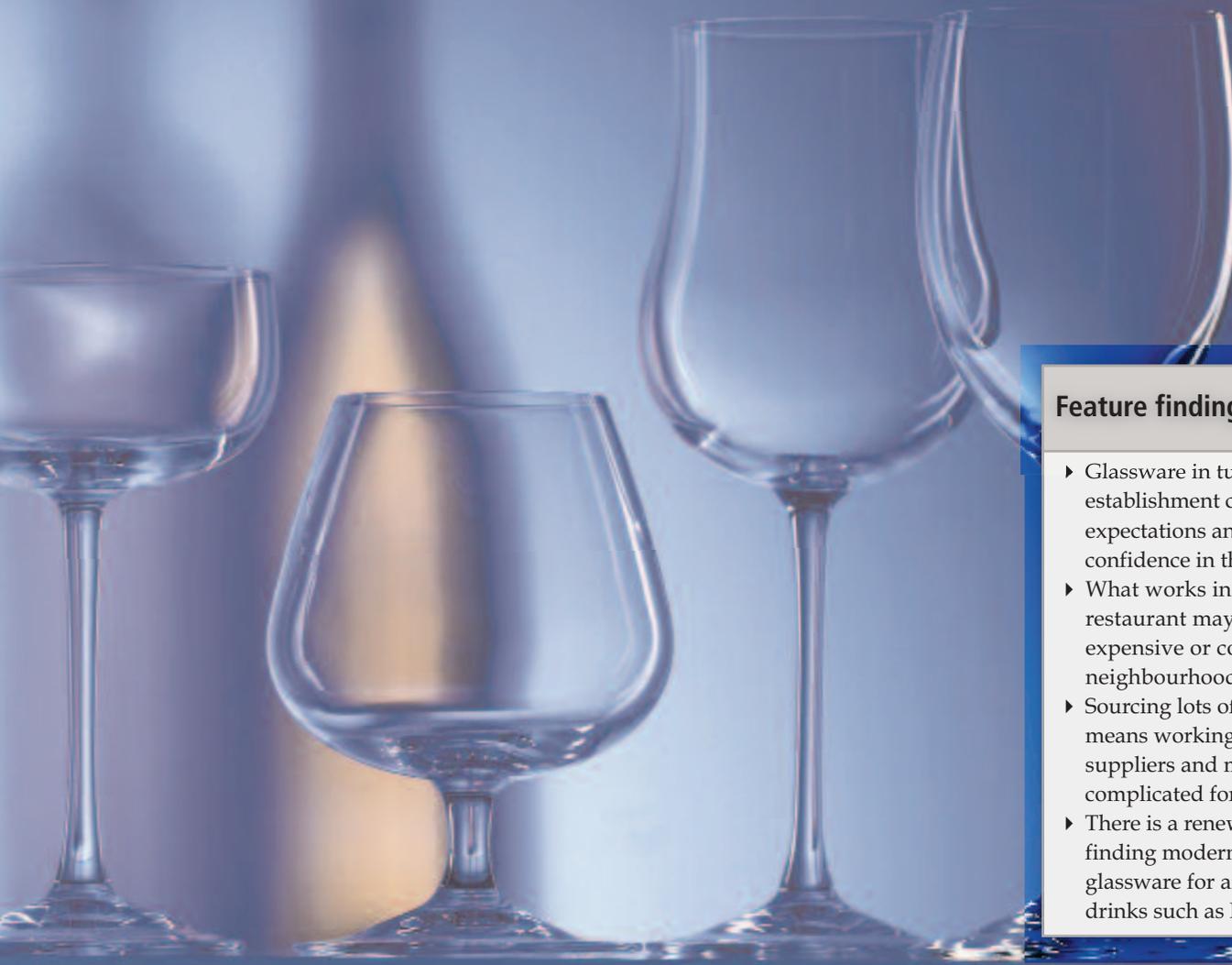


glassware

CRYSTAL clear



The attention you pay to your glassware speaks volumes about the seriousness of your venue's approach to wine in general, says **Patricia Langton**



Feature findings

- ▶ Glassware in tune with its establishment can alter guests' expectations and inspire confidence in the venue.
- ▶ What works in a top-end restaurant may be too expensive or complicated for a neighbourhood establishment.
- ▶ Sourcing lots of different glasses means working with numerous suppliers and may be overly complicated for some venues.
- ▶ There is a renewed emphasis on finding modern, more suitable glassware for after-dinner drinks such as Port and Cognac.

GOOD QUALITY glassware is important for any on-trade outlet, from a pub or bar with a decent wine offering right up to high-end establishments where crystal is often de rigueur and a variety of glasses is likely to be available for different wine styles.

The kind of glasses displayed on a restaurant table gives customers an important initial impression of the level of quality that they can expect:

A SPARKLING MODERN GLASS WITH MUCH FINER LINES CAN TEMPT THE EYE

an old-fashioned small goblet with glass as thick as a milk bottle is hardly going to inspire confidence, whereas a sparkling modern glass with much finer lines can tempt the eye and encourage customers to take a table.

"Glassware sets the scene for a restaurant and can alter guests' perception of what they can expect from their experience. Having the right glassware shows that you take drinks



The BNIC-approved tulip glass for Cognac

service seriously," says Laura Rhys, head sommelier at Hotel TerraVina.

Owned by renowned master sommelier Gérard Basset MS MW, this country retreat in Hampshire has a range of five wine glasses: two Bordeaux-shaped glasses (one smaller and one larger for whites and reds respectively) and two

IT'S THUMBS DOWN TO COLOURED GLASS, AS WELL AS ANY KIND OF CUT GLASS OR ENGRAVING

Burgundy glasses – similarly in two size formats – plus a smaller, tall-stemmed dessert wine glass. Rhys adds: "Gérard made a huge effort to find really great glassware before we opened and we are still using the same brand [Libbey Aficionado] now.

The glasses have slim stems, the glass is thin and they are very elegant examples of non-crystal wine glasses."

Rhys believes that glassware has to be right for the establishment and that the shape and size of glassware are "huge considerations". In the case of Champagne, there was one tweak at

TerraVina to get the balance right, as she explains:

"When we first opened we had some beautiful Champagne glasses, but after a couple of weeks we realised that they were just too big to be practical for the size of measure that we were using for Champagne, so we had to buy some smaller ones too."

Former sommelier Valeria Rodriguez, who now advises top-end

restaurants as part of Bibendum's London prestige accounts team, says: "A high-end establishment needs a choice of glasses to match its wines – at least three or four – and good decanters are also a must." Rodriguez is a stickler for good-quality crystal over glass in this

area of the market. "Crystal is thinner and it influences the taste of the wine. It's also to do with the shape of the glass. The shape of the glass can make you taste in a different way; some glasses make wine go to the tip of the tongue and some encourage you to taste wine further back in the mouth – a glass for Sauvignon Blanc should enhance the wine's acidity and a glass for a Cabernet Sauvignon style should enhance the fruit."

COMPLETELY TRANSPARENT

Rodriguez also recommends that glassware is completely transparent to allow customers to see wine clearly, so it's thumbs down to coloured glass as well as any kind of cut glass or engraving. She prefers smaller glasses for drinks with higher alcohol, especially spirits, and advises against the traditional practice of warming glasses (typically large balloon glasses) for brandy which can accentuate alcohol over aromas.

However, what works or is expected in a spacious top-end establishment could prove to be overly expensive and problematic in a smaller, mid-market restaurant that takes pride in its wine and food offering.

Xavier Rousset MS, co-owner of London restaurants Texture and the more recent 28-50, has learnt that you have to be realistic about glassware and take space, logistics and budget into account, as well as the style of your glassware. He says: "When we opened Texture we wanted lots of different glasses, but we soon realised

that it wasn't realistic. Don't be over-complicated with glassware – you can't have lots of glasses to please your own ego; only a few people will get what you're trying to do."

Sourcing lots of different glasses is likely to necessitate working with a range of suppliers, which can be time-consuming. Rousset and his team work with two different suppliers – Spiegelau and Chef & Sommelier – which, he says, is manageable for a restaurant such as 28-50, with 60 covers.

The range of glassware at the restaurant comprises a trio of "quite resistant" wine glasses and Chef & Sommelier's "Open-Up" Champagne flute, a 234mm high glass which is particularly popular with

SOURCING LOTS OF DIFFERENT GLASSES IS LIKELY TO NECESSITATE WORKING WITH A RANGE OF SUPPLIERS

customers thanks to its original design. Rousset says that the glass "isn't the best Champagne flute" for him personally, but he's happy to go along with what his customers want. Indeed, pleasing the customer is an important consideration where glassware is concerned.

But if only one glass can be accommodated, what kind of glass should that be? Clare Young, director of wine consultancy Vintellect, recommends "as large a glass as you can afford in terms of

budget and storage space – wine looks and tastes better in a large glass, but not necessarily in a large measure". Young promotes the idea of 125ml and 175ml to encourage responsible drinking and even smaller measures (see box) to encourage experimentation – ideally in a glass which allows enough room to appreciate a wine's aromas.

PERCEPTION OF VOLUME

But Rousset warns against stocking an overly large glass for the measure that the restaurant offers. He says: "You can't pour a small measure into a large glass. The customer could feel conned. The perception of volume and price has to be right."

There are other considerations too when considering the glass size. The larger the glass is, the more space required for storage and in a dishwasher too. With most on-trade outlets using dishwashers for glasses these days, the size of the glass needs to be kept manageable and very fragile glasses should be avoided.

While it's fair to say that glassware for non-fortified wines has improved significantly in recent years, greater attention is now being paid to glassware for after-dinner drinks. Heavier Sherry styles, Port, sweet wines, Cognac and other spirits can benefit enormously from the right kind of glassware.

Paul Symington of Symington Family Estates joins many other Port producers in welcoming Riedel's Restaurant Port glass. He says: "Port is often served in appalling glasses. We need to get away from the

New measures

NEW GLASSWARE FOR ALTERNATIVE MEASURES?

The government is set to relax drinks measures this October for wine, beer and cider which will see measures of 70ml and 50ml coming into force for wine.

The new measures will allow greater flexibility, trial and innovation in the on-trade and open up opportunities to offer wine in different formats such as wine flights.

Together with the now mandatory 125ml measure, introduced under legislation last October, there will be a wider range of options available to the on-trade by the end of year and operators wishing to take advantage of the alternatives available to them may need to reconsider their glassware requirements.

The prospect of smaller measures for fortified wines had raised concerns among Port and Sherry producers. Fortified wines have traditionally been served in 100ml measures and those involved with promoting fortified wines have long sought a closer association with the wine.

In January, the National Measurements Office confirmed that multiples of the new measures will be allowed and therefore the 100ml for fortified wines will remain in place.



formality of serving Port in small glasses. The [poor] choice of glass is one of the biggest single handicaps in this ancient trade and it hinders Port's development. Great wine needs a decent glass and we believe passionately about this."

THANKFULLY, THE SCHOONER GLASS FOR SHERRY HAS BEEN LARGELY CONFINED TO THE GLASS RECYCLING BIN

Symington is convinced that a larger glass (although not necessarily a larger measure) can have a major positive influence for Port and allows the taster to appreciate the "stupendous aromas" of a fine Port. His personal choice is

often a white wine glass to be able to enjoy Port to the full.

When it comes to the increasingly trendy Sherry, thankfully the old-fashioned schooner has been largely confined to the glass recycling bin and more appropriate glasses have been adopted, with restaurateurs opting for a *copita*-style glass or a contemporary wine glass.

Welcome change has also come for Cognac, one of the most traditional categories with a challenging old-fashioned mindset still to overcome in some areas of the on-trade. The tulip glass is now the preferred glass for

Cognac as, according to the BNIC, "its full bowl and narrow neck concentrate the spirit's complex aromas and then release them subtly and progressively". The glass is used in all the BNIC's promotional activities and is increasingly

favoured by a number of restaurants, including TerraVina.

Different glassware works for different establishments and making an initial choice from the many brands on offer can be daunting. But careful research and experimentation will help to get this important element right, thereby keeping overheads down and allowing an establishment to shine. *db*