

INTERNAL FACILITIES

Building Interior & Ambience

It's vital to consider **acoustics** when you are designing your cellar door space. Hard, flat surfaces bounce sound and can make it very difficult for visitors to hear each other – or staff making presentations. The ultra modern minimalist approach favoured by many architects often incorporates a mix of glass, steel, concrete and other hard surfaces that can lead to an acoustics nightmare. Consider sound dampening devices in ceilings, a range of angled surfaces, timber and soft furnishings in the mix.

Space requirements will vary, depending on the number of visitors you expect to attract. Clearly this will differ depending on season and day of the week, but you need to be prepared for the busy times and cater accordingly. Large areas can easily be made to feel cosier with removable dividers that can double as information areas. **Separate areas** are an absolute necessity if you wish to cater for large groups and independent visitors in small spaces. Otherwise, you risk the independent visitor simply walking in and walking straight back out – it happens regularly.

Unless your **walls** are works of art in themselves, consider using them to enhance the overall experience by incorporating paintings, historical photographs, pinboards with juicy pieces of information or shelves with merchandise or displays. And remember to caption things appropriately (unless you want visitors constantly asking you the same questions over and over about a particular photograph or painting).

Engaging the senses is a natural way to attract people and encourage a response. Silence is expected in a church, but not in a hospitality environment. You want to create a bit of a “buzz” in your cellar door, and unless the room is always teeming with people, it can be difficult to achieve. Consider background music, videos and artefacts for visitors to pore over. Above all, create an environment in which visitors can relax and relate to you.

Layout

Observe the behaviour of visitors when they enter a cellar door: they'll note where the bar is and then do all they can to avoid it by venturing towards other tangible features such as wall displays, fireplaces (in winter), brochure racks and merchandise. After a few minutes or so, when they've got a “feel” for the place and feel comfortable, they'll head for the bar. So consider the placement of your bar carefully and check whether you have any “**comfort-raising distractions**” available.

In ‘retail speak’ there are several different design layouts that are used, depending on how the retailer wants people to move around their store. Consider the differences between supermarkets, department stores and specialty shops – all designed to engage shoppers differently and promote sales. Likewise, your cellar door needs to be designed to move people around comfortably and effectively.

Most cellar doors adopt what's known as a “**free form**” layout where the environment is deliberately relaxed, relatively unconstrained in nature and intimate. In **specialty shops**, the point of sale area is often located centrally or towards the rear of the store to encourage customers to walk throughout the store. Personal selling is paramount to converting browsers into customers so staff interaction is high.

Using these principles, the location of the following items and facilities should be considered in designing your layout:

- Entry/Exit
- Tasting Area – Tasting Bar, Group Tastings, Tasting Tables
- Informational Displays
- Merchandise
- Sales Area
- Relaxation Area
- Children's Area
- Promotions/Features/Displays
- Amenities
- Windows with Views
- Stock Room/Despatch
- Access to other Areas (dining, function room, gallery, interpretive centre, winery, balcony, etc)

Tasting Area & Tasting Bar

This should be visible from the entry, but positioned so that visitors can explore other offerings before starting their tasting. Why does this work? It gives visitors a chance to “**get to know you**” by taking in information about you (perhaps a notice board or promotional material on walls).

The **choice** between the traditional tasting bar (a counter top that separates you from your visitors) and more interactive tasting arrangements needs to be made in the context of your available space and visitor needs. Ideally, there should be a separate area or room for large groups or the trade who require tutored tastings. **Adequate seating** should be considered. The general public tasting area could comprise a tasting bar for casual tastings and some small tables for self-guided or semi-guided tastings. Consider carefully the **height** of your tasting bar too. Is it at a comfortable height for staff to pour from, and can visitors of all heights lean comfortably on it while tasting and perusing wine lists. Also consider wheelchair bound visitors by including a “low point” in the bar, or offer a seated tasting. Don't forget to ensure your layout behind the bar is functional. You will need space for material and equipment, water on tap and of course ability to access the cash register without turning your back on your customer.

Information Displays & Merchandise

These can be positioned on wall spaces, the tasting counter or on a dedicated table. Include press reviews, interesting information about your wine/property/owners, regional information, general wine or tourism information, value added services you offer (wine club, tours, food etc).

Depending on the space available, merchandise can be effectively displayed against walls, centrally via specialised racking or on large tables. Whatever your decision regarding the range of merchandise, ensure you utilise **retail presentation principles** to maximise your investment and encourage sales. Otherwise you've got a lot of capital tied up in inventory that might sit around for a long time.

Point of Sale

Sales should be the outcome of a successful experience. Your point of sale terminal, or cash register, can be situated either in the tasting area or at the exit point. This decision will be based on the size of the cellar door area and the range of services being offered. **Separate sales areas** have pros and cons: advantages include the ability to differentiate between the service offering (the tasting) and the sales delivery. It means you can have dedicated staff in each area that specialise in either service or sales (though ideally they should be able to do both effectively) and can be particularly effective during busy periods. Disadvantages include the necessity of maintaining separate areas; the requirement of additional staff to service each area and the chance of “losing” the customer between the tasting and sales areas – it makes it very easy for customers to change their minds and opt out of the purchase process.

Relaxation Area

If space permits, install a comfortable lounge area offering an external view or open fire to relax by with a glass of wine, complemented by a coffee table offering a selection of “lifestyle” related reading material, including regional information. Why does this work? It's the “**linger longer**” **principle**: the longer you can encourage people to spend time with you, the greater chance they have of connecting favourably with you and the more predisposed they will be to purchase.

Special Features

These are the special touches that set you apart from other cellar doors and add value to the overall experience – or become part of the experience. At its simplest, you can create a feature of your range of wines (especially if you have different bottle sizes or back vintages), specialty products, local produce, historical items and more. More advanced options include technology centres, interpretive displays, art gallery and sculpture. Ensure that whatever you choose as your focal point is professionally presented and offers a “**wow**” **factor**.

Access to Other Areas

If you have function rooms, dining facilities, balcony, separate gallery or interpretive centre consider how visitors will access them. From a practical viewpoint, having a single entry and exit ensures visitors get to view your main features at least twice – once on the way in and again on the way out. This is particularly relevant if you offer merchandise for sale or have one point of sale area.

Amenities

Facilities should include **access for disabled people** and if they're part of your target market, then child-changing facilities can be incorporated into the disabled amenities. Whatever style you choose, ensure **regular checks** for cleanliness and provisions – you might not give it much thought, but your visitors will actually remember the condition of your amenities. Memorable amenities (for all the right reasons) include a cellar restaurant in Canada that features an open fireplace, original artwork, piped music, fresh flowers and muted lighting. An American winery loo features a video screen that plays cartoons and the occasional “risqué” flick to occupy the minds of its visitors. Or you could just keep them clean.

Children's Area

Wineries are not generally conducive places for children and research indicates that family groups comprising children under 18 are in the minority of groups visiting wineries. However, **relaxed parents are purchasing parents**, so if your cellar door is located in a family tourist area, or your target market includes people aged 25-45, then chances are you'll need to consider how you can cater for children effectively. Notwithstanding public liability insurance, **playground areas** are ideal (think of the number of fast food chains with complex playground facilities). Other simple solutions can include a large area of lawn for children to run, perhaps with some static child friendly items to explore. Indoors, you could consider a small area with toys and a table for very young children, or if the budget allows, an arcade game will entertain older children (preferably something quiet or remote from the tasting bar). Many children like to engage in the experience somehow, so providing “**kid's wine**” (grape juice or non-alcoholic wine) in plastic wine glasses is another inexpensive solution – and can generate additional sales.

INTERNAL FACILITIES CHECKLIST

Building Interior & Ambience

- Foyer area (if space allows)
- Image consistent with brand (rustic, sleek, contemporary, evocative, etc)
- Engagement of senses (music, aroma, visual appeal)
- Strategic use of space (intimate, spacious, etc)
- Welcoming and inviting
- Acoustics conducive to conversation
- Layout and traffic flow logical
- Walkways free from obstructions
- Clear directional signage
- Connectivity to other facilities and outdoor areas well defined (directional signage, doors, etc)
- Focal point (display, fireplace, furniture, etc)
- Relaxation areas (couch, coffee table, reading material, etc)
- Interpretive signage (winemaking/viticulture processes, historical displays etc)
- Information boards (press clippings, awards, history, regional information)
- Photographs, art works displayed and captioned appropriately
- Windows clean
- Merchandise professionally presented and packaged
- Theft minimisation practices employed
- Mandatory exit signs installed and maintained
- Emergency procedures displayed appropriately
- Floor surface safe and functional (wheelchairs, prams, high heels, thongs)

Tasting Area

- Mandatory Liquor Licensing information clearly displayed
- Public/staff boundaries clearly defined
- Areas within public view clean and tidy
- Separate tasting areas clearly defined
- Clean surface areas on and behind bar
- Tasting notes, order forms and relevant information provided (including pens)
- Despatch information provided
- Distribution information available (domestic and international)
- Clean tasting glassware (chip, crack and lipstick free)
- Products appropriately displayed for access by visitors
- Adequate lighting and background surface for wine evaluation
- Water and spittoons available
- Bar height comfortable for staff to pour from and visitors to lean on
- Section of bar accessible for disabled visitors
- Tasting stock clearly defined
- Bar stools well maintained and functional (if applicable)
- Proximity of tasting stock to bar (fridges, etc)
- Slip free surface behind bar
- Access to fresh water
- Appropriate wine temperature control (ice/fridge)
- Glass washing and storage facilities
- Polishing cloths (access and storage)
- Space for administrative tasks and paperwork

Sales Area

- Clearly defined from tasting area
- Cash register or point of sale terminal secure from public
- Payment options clearly stated
- Order forms and despatch information available
- Mailing list and wine club information provided
- Selection of packaging visible
- Point of sale material and merchandise displayed appropriately
- Pricing and incentives clearly articulated

Amenities

- Clearly signed for men, women and disabled
- Consider incorporating child changing facilities
- Sufficient for likely volume of visitors
- Clean and well ventilated
- Brushes provided
- Waste disposal units installed
- Sufficient supplies of toilet paper, hand towels, tissues, etc
- Mirror and vanity area provided
- Soap dispenser
- Basins clean and well maintained
- Taps functional and drip free
- Hooks behind doors for jackets, bags, etc
- Consider extending music to amenities area
- Brighten with fresh flowers, pot pourri, etc
- Adequate drainage in event of overflow
- Adequate lighting

Children's Area

- Clean and safe surface areas
- Toys and other objects clean and functional
- Separate from tasting area (but small children within view)
- Age appropriate facilities provided
- Safety rules clearly displayed and acknowledged by parents