

THINKING FOOD

From antipasto to a-la-carte; the allure of food can be just as seductive as wine and many operators get caught up in the romantic notion of offering a “complete” wine and food experience, ignoring the basic rule of business: do your homework first!

Here are some basics to consider:

Regional Audit

- What other winery and local restaurants/cafés already exist?
- Are they meeting current demand? What is the future demand likely to be?
- Which properties are doing it well, which are not?
- What are the characteristics of the successful operations?
- Can you create a viable point of difference to them?
- Have you spoken with other operators to learn about the challenges first hand?

Property Considerations

- Does your property or planned venue have the visual appeal for a dining experience?
- Will the type of experience match the physical environment to give a sense of authenticity?
- Are you located in an area of the region that will attract the lunch trade?

Objectives

- Consider carefully your reasons for offering food in the context of how it will enhance your brand and, ultimately, wine sales.
- Do you have a sufficiently broad range of wines to match your planned dining experience?

Cash investment

- It's a business venture, so determine what the projected returns are and over what period of time. Profit margins can be very tight especially if labour and food cost ratios get out of hand.

Equipment and Fit Out

- What type of kitchen equipment do you need?
- What can you afford?
- Commercial kitchen facilities are expensive to install and maintain. Do you have the necessary expertise? If not, get professional advice before you engage the architects.
- What sort of tables, chairs, cutlery and crockery will you need?
- How will your choices reflect your brand?
- What are the maintenance/replacement costs?
- Do you need flexibility (i.e. tables that can be grouped together for large functions)?
- What sort of lighting is appropriate?

Resources

- Can you deliver?
- Hospitality and catering is not for the faint-hearted. You will need to consider employing kitchen and waiting staff. Can you afford permanent employees?
- Will you have multi-skilled staff that can work across different areas?
- Is there a local agency you can use?

Compliance

- The food industry is heavily governed by legislation and standards. Are you familiar with HACCP requirements and Food Standards? (See Business Planning – Licensing Section).
- What are the local council guidelines you need to operate within? Will you be able to obtain the necessary licenses and permits?

Outsourcing or Contracting

- Would a joint venture or leasing arrangement offer more benefits?
- Should you utilise the services of an external caterer on a demand basis?
- Consider the options carefully as your brand name will still be associated with the restaurant, irrespective of who's actually running it.

Functionality

- Should the restaurant/café be close to the cellar door?
- Is a separate building more appropriate?
- Are more staff needed?
- Will you contract out the area?
- How can you maximise returns on the infrastructure and permanent staff?
- Could functions attract additional revenue outside normal operating times?
- Is there likely to be a natural 'flow' from the cellar door to the dining area?

Space Considerations

- How big is the area you intend to use for dining?
- How many tables can you fit?
- Is the capacity likely to generate sufficient revenue?
- Will the space be required for other activities?
- How portable are your tables and chairs?
- Where will your service point be located?

Impact

- What is the potential impact on wine sales and other visitor experiences?
- Can you create an entire food/wine/tour/accommodation package?
- Can you accommodate commissions to tour operators?

Target Market

- Which segment of the visitor market will you aim to attract?
- What sort of dining experience will appeal to them?
- Is this the same market that your wine is targeted to?

Food Offerings

- What foods would complement your wines?
- Can you effectively match them to maximise sales?
- Should you opt for a fine dining or casual experience?