



## Working with a Licensed Caterer

Use these steps as a guideline when you've chosen option 4.

- **Before the event:**
  - Go to the caterer's place of business and purchase the alcohol that will be distributed at your event. All monetary transactions must take place there.
  - Receive purchased alcohol. The caterer may transfer it to you at the time of the sale or deliver it to the event.
- **During the event:** Distribute alcohol to event attendees, but do not sell by the glass. Under the current ordinance, the caterer is prohibited from acting as a bartender, but this is likely to change soon.
- **After the event:** Keep all alcohol that has not been distributed. Previously purchased alcohol cannot be returned to the caterer.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Can I have a cash bar at my catered wedding at a private residence?**

No. Sales of alcohol by the glass are prohibited under option 4.

**Our fundraiser is for invited guests only. Can we serve alcohol?**

Yes, assuming you are not selling by the glass, you may serve alcohol at your private event without a license. If you intend to open your event to the public, you need to choose from one of the four options (reverse). Beware that you may not sell alcohol without a license. This includes indirect sales through the price of a ticket or meal.

**Can we have alcohol donated for our public fundraising event?**

No. All alcohol must be obtained from a licensed wholesaler. The wholesaler may offer volume discounts but cannot donate alcohol.

Each option for serving alcohol at your event has its own set of rules and restrictions. Please see the City Clerk's Office for more information or to fill out necessary applications.

**City Clerk's Office**

**Room 103, City-County Building  
210 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.**

**Tel: 608.266.4601**

**TTY: 608.266.6573**

**FAX: 608.266.4666**

**Email: [Licensing@cityofmadison.com](mailto:Licensing@cityofmadison.com)**

# Event Planning and Alcohol



Do you intend to **serve** alcohol at your public event? Do you intend to **sell** alcohol at your public OR private event?

If you answered "yes" to either of these questions, you need to work with a licensed caterer or obtain a liquor license.

## What are my options?

If you want to serve alcohol at your event, you need to do one of the following:

### (1) Apply for a Temporary Class B License (Picnic License) ★★

#### This is a good option if:

- You are a non-profit organization, state, county or local fair association, church, lodge, society or club that has existed for at least six months
- You are hosting a temporary, public fundraising or social event (less than four days in duration) where you plan to serve beer and/or wine

#### This is not a good option if:

- You plan to hold more than five wine events in a 12-month period (you may hold unlimited beer events)
- You want to serve spirits
- You plan to hold your event at a location that already has a liquor license



### (2) Personally apply for a regular Class B License for your premises ★★★

#### This is a good option if:

- You plan to hold more than five wine events in a 12-month period
- Your organization does not qualify for a Temporary Class B License (see option 1)
- You plan to serve spirits (you will need a Class B Combination License)
- You do not wish to have full food service provided by a caterer (see option 3)

#### This is not a good option if:

- You are unwilling or unable to comply with the extensive list of rules and regulations that come with having a licensed premise

### (3) Have a caterer license the venue where your event(s) will be held ★★★

#### This is a good option if:

- You plan to have a cash bar at your event
- You are willing to work exclusively with one caterer. This means you cannot hire different caterers for different events or distribute alcohol at an event without your caterer.
- You cannot accurately predict how much alcohol you will use at your event. Alcohol returns are prohibited under option 4.

#### This is not a good option if:

- You cannot provide your caterer with a dedicated space in which to conduct business

### (4) Hire a caterer with an existing license for his or her place of business★

#### This is a good option if:

- You do not wish to sell alcohol by the glass
- You are willing to have full food service catered in for your event
- You want to reserve the option to work with more than one caterer

#### This is not a good option if:

- You wish to have a cash bar at your event
- You are unwilling to purchase the alcohol from the caterer prior to the event at the caterer's licensed place of business
- You do not wish to have full food service catered in for your event(s)

## How do my options compare?

We have ranked each option based on the time, effort, and level of regulation involved. See the stars next to each option to compare.

- ★ - Easy
- ★★ - Moderate
- ★★★ - Difficult
- ★★★★ - Very Difficult