



## When it Comes to Wine Lists, Does Size Matter?

---

**A RESTAURANT'S WINE LIST CAN NUMBER IN THE THOUSANDS OR SINGLE DIGITS.  
IT ALL JUST COMES DOWN TO UNDERSTANDING YOUR CLIENTELE.**

There's no one-size-fits-all, but mostly it depends on what suits a restaurant's clientele.

The length of a wine list really needs to be right for a restaurant, says Arlene Spiegel, a hospitality consultant in New York City. "The wine list a restaurant offers tells as much about the concept as the menu, décor, and hospitality. A wine list needs to be relevant and fit the overall dining experience," Spiegel says.

Long and short lists each have their challenges. A short list can be harder to curate, since there are so many choices out there, while a long list can lead to over-buying and excess inventory, she points out.

In general, Spiegel offers these guidelines: "In a simple trattoria, 12 to 20 Italian wines, offered by the glass or bottle, may be the perfect number. For a restaurant with more complex dishes, the list

needs to be longer. Fine dining restaurants also offer dessert wines, which can add six or eight more to the list."

---

**"Servers need to be knowledgeable,  
regardless of whether the descriptions  
are detailed on the list."  
— Arlene Spiegel, hospitality consultant**

---

But whether or not you offer descriptions, you must educate your servers, warns Spiegel. "Servers need to be knowledgeable, regardless of whether the descriptions are detailed on the list. In most cases, the diner will ask the server, or sommelier, for a suggestion. That's where the real sale happens — tableside."