

Beverage Quantities

Coffee - 1 Gallon serves about 20 cups.

Liquor

One - Fifth bottle

Shot size: 1oz. = 25 drinks

1 1/8oz. = 22 drinks

1 1/4oz. = 20 drinks

1 1/2 oz. = 17 drinks

One - Quart bottle

Shot size: 1oz. = 32 drinks

1 1/8oz. = 28 drinks

1 1/4oz. = 25 drinks

1 1/2 oz. = 21 drinks

One Liter bottle

Shot size: 1oz. = 33 drinks

1 1/8oz. = 30 drinks

1 1/4oz. = 27 drinks

1 1/2 oz. = 22 drinks

There is no exact formula to calculate accurate beverage consumption. As a rule, buying beverages by the gallon, bottle or canned beverages on consumption is more cost-effective

For those parties that are held in-between meals, you can offer a variety of hot and cold hors d'oeuvres instead of a full meal.

At parties that run one to two hours, without serving dinner, you should figure on 5-6 light hors d'oeuvres or 5-8 heavy or combination (light and heavy) hors d'oeuvres. To determine drink quantities, plan on two drinks per guest in the first hour and one drink per guest each hour thereafter. If the weather is warm and/or people are involved in strenuous activities (dancing, sports, swimming) and/or you have many teens or small children, increase your quantities.

There is a trend lately that some guests are starting with alcohol and switching to soft drinks or water after the first hour or two. Don't forget that some people are either non-drinkers or are the designated driver, so be sure to have delicious and attractive non-alcoholic drinks available as well. However, what people drink is completely unique. That's why bars offer such a variety. Who prefers beer to wine? Who likes a soft drink instead of wine? Who drinks red wine, who drinks white? Who likes a mixed drink, who likes beer? That's why bars have such a large stock - to satisfy the tastes of so many people.

White wine (Chablis or Chardonnay) used to be more popular, but lately more people are choosing a red wine (Merlot or Cabernet). On the other hand, if you want to "split the difference," serve a white zinfandel or rosé.

If you need to limit the choices of hard liquor, select vodka because it can be mixed with so many things. If your budget allows, also can add favorites such as scotch, rye, rum, tequila and one or more sweet drinks such as Amaretto, Frangelico or peach schnapps.

At large parties with many beer drinkers, a keg is a more cost-conscious way of serving, but it is also more labor-intensive and requires more space and ice.

Note: Personalize plastic drink glasses by writing guests names on them with permanent ink. This will save you the trouble and expense of a lot of half-full glasses being discarded because a guest couldn't remember which glass was his or hers.

Don't forget to add bottled water to your list as well.

When you are concerned about buying too much liquor, here is a suggestion. Find a liquor store that will allow you to return any unopened stock. That way you can bring back cases of beer or soda that aren't used. Check with warehouse stores like Costco or Sam's Club. In addition to getting a good price, they can help you decide on quantities and are usually open to taking back unopened bottles and six-packs. However, they do have some restrictions, so check with them first.

Remember that a good bottle of wine or quality liquor also makes a nice hostess gift throughout the year.

If you must stay within a beverage budget, then serve wine, beer and/or soft drinks alone. Or come up with one or two specialty drinks.

One of the most important considerations, and the one most likely overlooked is ice. You can never have too much ice. On average, for a four-hour party, figure on 2-3 lbs. of ice per guest. In warm weather, making frozen drinks, beverages on ice or guests are up and active, figure on 5-6 lbs. per guest. You also will need 3-4 ten-pound bags of ice for each large cooler or tub. Add a little water to the ice to make the drinks chill more quickly.

TIP: Don't let your guests get frostbite by having to dig through a cooler, large tub or trash can for a cold beverage. If it's a serve-yourself bar, then keep a smaller container for guests' consumption.