

Guide for a welcoming, responsible, and successful event



Éduc  **alcool**

Moderation is always in good taste.

In partnership with



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The Checklist

Start getting

organized

Whether a festive event brings together twenty people or several hundred, in celebration of the holiday season or a retirement, uniting work colleagues or several families for a wedding, its success always depends upon solid planning. In addition to the theme, music, décor, and food, it's essential to make decisions early on about what drinks to serve. More broadly, it is crucial to think about the impact of guests' alcohol consumption on the success of the event, particularly from the perspective of both atmosphere and safety. Offering non-alcoholic drinks is an important consideration at a time when nearly half of Quebecers say they want to reduce the amount of alcohol they drink.*

Festive events deserve to be a source of pleasant memories, and guests should be willing to adopt responsible behaviours to aid in avoiding any potential problems. Some people associate the desire to celebrate with excessive drinking, which can lead to situations that can taint the event and its happy atmosphere. From the invitation to the right through to the debrief following the event, Éduc'alcool has designed this guide to support you in creating an event that successfully demonstrates that festivities and excessive drinking don't need to go hand in hand.

Operation Red Nose is also partnering with this publication to highlight safe ride options during your festive gatherings.

This guide was designed as a tool to support all those who organize gatherings by encouraging responsible and mindful drinking. It will help you make decisions related to the overall event, with a specific focus on the choice of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages.

Finally, it offers resources to call upon to create a gathering that will please everyone: a welcoming, responsible, and successful event.

Within these pages you will find advice on how to organize an event with a specific focus on drinking, as well as tips for making guests aware of the potential risks involved. In addition, the guide outlines tools to aid with moderation, thus helping to ensure that each guest respects their limits. Finally, it offers resources to call upon to create an event that will ensure everyone has a good time: a welcoming, responsible, and successful event.

**Let the
festivities
begin!**

* Source: Online data collection carried out during three periods (January 26-31, 2023, March 16-21, 2023, and June 17-20, 2023) via a web panel. The study was conducted by Crop among Quebecers aged 18 and over and weighted to reflect the distribution of the population.

The Golden Rules

for a Good Time

Here are some useful ideas and tips to help your guests take the time to think about the amount they drink and ensure they respect their limits.

1 Respect the rules

- 1.1 Review the **provincial regulations** governing the service and sale of alcoholic beverages, and obtain [the necessary permit from the Régie des alcools, des courses et des jeux du Québec \(RACJ\)](#) that is related to the type of event you are organizing.
- 1.2 Check if your **insurance covers any claim** relating to a possible incident that might occur during your event. Make sure you understand under what circumstances your insurance plan would not cover damages.
- 1.3 Become familiar with the **road safety code** to avoid arrests for impaired driving. Depending on their driver's license or age, some guests may be required to adhere to a zero-tolerance alcohol policy.

Tip

If necessary, take out **additional insurance** to cover all eventualities.



2 An invitation that sets expectations

2.1 Share options for the drink menu with guests. For example, upon sending the invitation:

- Ask them to indicate their preference for alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks;
- to pique their interest, highlight the alcohol-free menu that will be offered during the event.

Tip

To find recipes for non-alcoholic and low-alcohol cocktails, check out [Alternalcool](#), an essential cocktail reference in Quebec.

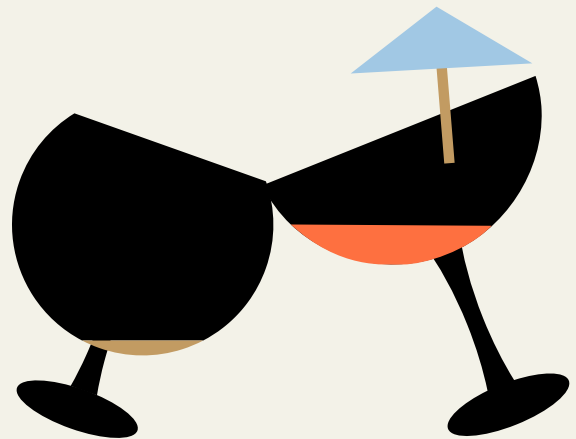
2.2 Invite guests to start planning their mode of transportation for returning from the event in advance. Suggest different solutions available in your area:

- carpooling with a designated driver;
- public transportation;
- a taxi or transportation app;
- a return home service like Operation Red Nose (during the holiday season).

2.3 Invite guests to **become familiar** with [My Éduc'alcool](#) and [the Calcoholator](#). These online tools are designed to help with moderation and can be helpful for guests attending the event.

2.4 Use the invitation to pass on information to your guests about the importance of tracking the number of drinks they consume and being careful about mixing alcohol.

To learn more about alcohol combinations, download [this document](#).



Alcoholic drinks don't mix well with everything.

The preferred combinations



Food

It helps slow down the assimilation of alcohol into the blood stream, especially if it is rich in proteins, fats, or carbohydrates. As a bonus, enjoying a successful food-drink pairing is a delicious way to enjoy two activities at the same time!



Real fruit and vegetable juices

Unlike soft drinks or flavoured varieties, the fibres and natural sugars help to better metabolize alcohol. However, if you still choose to use a soft drink in a cocktail, it is better to avoid the diet formula, which accelerates alcohol entering the blood stream.

Combinations to monitor



Energy drinks

They usually lead to faster alcohol consumption because of their enjoyable flavour. In addition, due to their composition, they increase thirst, so you may tend to want to drink another cocktail to quench your thirst.



Coffee

Whether consumed with alcohol or as an alternate, it may seem to reduce the effect of inebriation, but it has no impact on the alcohol level in the blood! And, as with energy drinks, coffee makes you thirsty, so the risk of consuming more alcohol increases.



Soft drinks

They mask the taste of alcohol, which can make you want to pour more drinks without paying attention to the alcohol they contain. In addition, it is better to avoid the diet formula, which accelerates alcohol entering the blood stream.



Gambling

Drinking alcohol reduces your ability to make rational decisions. Therefore, the combination of "drinking and gambling" can be a hazardous idea at an event.

Combinations to avoid



Cannabis

When consumed together or one after the other, alcohol and cannabis interact with each other and their depressive effects are multiplied. In addition, cannabis acts on certain functions of the body, including the vomiting reflex, which increases the risk of ethyl poisoning in the event of excessive alcohol consumption.



Medications

Certain medications, even over-the-counter medications, are likely to increase the effects of alcohol, mask them, or reduce the elimination of alcohol. Conversely, alcohol can interfere with the effectiveness or elimination of medications.

Other drugs

How alcohol and drugs interact, and their combined effects are difficult to predict. Among possible consequences, one substance can soften the perceived effects of the other substance. As a result, the person who is mixing the substances might not pick up on the cues that the body is signalling. This can lead to serious situations, including overdose.

3 Offering a range of drinks is an intelligent choice

3.1 Carefully select the beverage service provider based on certain criteria:

- A balanced offering of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks;
- A menu of non-alcoholic drinks that is as delicious as the alcoholic drinks.

3.2 Plan the quantities of drinks to serve based on the following variables:

- The type and quantity of food served;
- The duration of the event;
- The number of guests;
- Make a variety of alcoholic (wines, sparkling wine, spirits, cocktails, etc.) and non-alcoholic drinks available for guests.

Tip

In order for everyone to enjoy a good time safely, it may be a good idea to offer **unlimited non-alcoholic drinks and opt for a coupon system for alcoholic drinks**. It's easy to set up: give each guest a predefined number of coupons, exchangeable for drinks throughout the event. While giving these coupons, remind them not to share them with others, so that everyone can enjoy the party responsibly.

3.3 The open bar concept (offering unlimited drinks) is not recommended, as it could encourage your guests to drink more. The same goes for offering shooters. If, despite everything, you go ahead with an open bar and shooters, it is important to examine how the event can allow guests to choose unlimited non-alcoholic drinks or non-alcoholic shots.

Within this context, [Service in Action](#) training becomes essential, since staff should limit or even stop serving alcohol to people who are inebriated.

Don't hesitate to consult your event planner, they're an excellent resource and can guide you in assessing your needs and the quantities required.



4 Responsible service throughout the whole event

- 4.1 When it comes to beverage service at your event, choose a supplier who promotes **responsible consumption**. Choose companies whose staff have completed [Service in Action](#) training.

Offered jointly by Éduc'alcool and the Institut de tourisme et d'hôtellerie du Québec [ITHQ], the Service in Action training teaches, among other things, how to recognize, prevent, and act, in situations related to alcohol abuse.

Whether offered in a virtual or face-to-face mode, this training fulfills the following **three objectives**:

- 1 ▶ **Minimize the risks of prosecution** against alcohol license holders and their staff assigned to serving alcohol through better knowledge of the enforced laws;
- 2 ▶ **Help prevent drunk driving** and the unfortunate and often dramatic consequences it causes through better recognition of the signs of intoxication;
- 3 ▶ **Promote the reduction of problems** associated with excessive alcohol drinking such as physical and verbal violence, accidents, noise, etc.

 In virtual mode	 in-person training			
\$45	90-minute	Offered to everyone	3H30	Reserved for private groups
Register online or contact expertise@ithq.qc.ca to benefit from a student rate, if applicable.			Please contact expertise@ithq.qc.ca to plan your session.	



Non-alcoholic drinks menu

Proudly display your **non-alcoholic drinks menu**, to make your guests' mouths water and entice them to try it!



Offer food

From the start of the event, consider **offering food to the guests**, because alcohol is absorbed more quickly into the bloodstream on an empty stomach. Foods that are rich in protein and starch or which contain a lot of water should be preferred, while those which are too fatty, salty, or sweet (and therefore make you thirsty) should be avoided. Make sure guests have plenty to eat throughout the event.

Number of drinks

Use the **Standard Drinks Server** so that your guests can know the exact number of drinks they've consumed during the event and ensure that drinks are being properly measured. This tool ensures that each drink contains the proper amount of alcohol for one single drink. In the same vein, equip yourself with **graduated glasses to pour exact and standard quantities**. These tools make it possible to consider the type of alcohol and the alcohol percentage of each drink to determine what equates to a standard drink.



Have tables available

Also make sure to have **tables for guests** to place their glasses; drinks are consumed much faster when they are constantly held in-hand.



Offer water

To allow each guest to drink as much water as alcoholic beverages, **offer water continuously** and at various points throughout the event space. Conversely, the serving of alcohol should only be performed or offered when the guests' glasses are completely empty.

Tip

Offer your guests **drink protectors**, such as those distributed by TUP, to avoid any unwanted refills.

Ask for the cooperation of staff

in being vigilant about identifying guests who are intoxicated, refusing to serve them more alcoholic beverages, and reporting incidents to the event organizer.

Beware of certain combinations

Avoid associating drinking with **physical activities or potentially risky or even dangerous environments** (sports tournaments, for example).



Shut down the bar

Closing the bar at least one hour prior to the end of your event is an option to help curb excessive drinking before departure and contributes to safe travel. Remember, it isn't obligatory to offer 'last call' before closing the drinks service.

5 Plan for safe travel

5.1 Prior to and during your event, visibly advertise the chauffeur services available in the region and sector of your event:

- [Operation Red Nose](#) during the holiday season;
- CAA-Quebec or a local company (e.g.: Point Zéro 8, VIP escort service for impaired persons, Alco Prevention Canada, Limite 08, etc.) all year round.

This information can be added at the bottom of the drinks menu or on a coaster produced specifically for this purpose. The goal is for the information to be easily accessible when your guests need it.

5.2 Provide access to a simple system where you can **offer or request carpooling between guests**. For example, there is an online platform where you can register to indicate your availability as a designated driver on the day of the event and the geographical area you propose to cover. And there is no problem if your means are limited: it is possible to create a shared file online that is accessible to all guests.

5.3 Both in the invitation and on site during your event, promote safe modes of transportation such as taxis and public transportation if guests are too impaired to drive.

Tip

If possible, make space in your budget to cover such services when they are fee-based and provide this information in your invitation. An hour before the end of the event, remind your guests that it is time to finalize their **return-home plan**: call the chauffeur service, check public transportation schedules, etc.

6 Gain invaluable insights

Form a committee that is responsible for reviewing the event. They will be able to keep a record of effective measures and problematic situations relating to drinking that took place during the event. If necessary, this committee can determine the appropriate approach to provide feedback on a particular situation with all parties involved (drinks service, guests, etc.).

Tip

Address all the guests, in a post-event email for example, to thank them for their presence which made the event a success. Take the opportunity to highlight the successes (number of rides requested, for example) and mention, again, the online [resources offered by Éduc'alcool](#). This allows you to raise awareness among as many people as possible without creating discomfort by targeting specific individuals.

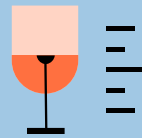
4 tools to help with moderation



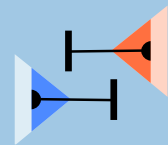
My Éduc'alcool



Calcoholator



Standard Drink Server



Alternalcohol

A standard drink

There is the same amount of alcohol in one regular beer (340 ml / 12 oz, 5% alcohol), one glass of wine (129 ml / 4.5 oz, 13% d'alcool), one glass of fortified wine (85 ml / 3 oz, 20% alcohol) and one glass of spirits (45 ml / 1.5 oz, 40% alcohol).

As for cider, malt liquour and premixed drinks, which are generally, but not always, served in a 140 ml/5 oz glass, you have to read the label to see the alcohol percentage, which varies between 2.5% and 20%.

Each of the above is considered a standard drink.



Glass of beer
340 ml / 12 oz
5% alc./vol.

=



Glass of wine
129 ml / 4.5 oz
13% alc./vol.

=



Glass of fortified wine
85 ml / 3 oz
20% alc./vol.

=



Glass of spirits
45 ml / 1.5 oz
40% alc./vol.

=



2 glasses of cider
140 ml / 5 oz
6% alc./vol.

Pro tips

for a responsible service, in collaboration with



ALAMBIKA

We asked Jean-Sébastien Michel, founder of [Alambika](#) and a huge fan of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, to share some ideas to enhance the pleasure and effectiveness of a responsible menu. His company supplies and advises bars, restaurants, hotels, event organizers, and other businesses, as well as individuals, on everything related to glasses, bar accessories, and cocktail ingredients. Alambika also uses its expertise to create cocktails, in addition to offering consulting and training services for organizations tied to the alcohol industry. Behind its boutique on Saint-Laurent boulevard, Alambika created the Alkadémie, an experimental cocktail space complete with a bar license to test innovative concepts relating to entertaining and beverages.

Think about your alcohol choices

- ▶ Before purchasing wines for an event, pay attention to the **average alcohol content of the bottles**. Selections from more northern regions as well as producers of so-called “natural” wines often offer lower alcohol contents, that are around 9% or 10% instead of 14% or 15%. Likewise, a range of ciders and perries, increasingly present in Quebec, offers options at 6% or 7%. Hybrids combining wine grape varieties and ciders are also arriving on the market.
- ▶ Ask for the cocktail menu to be made with alcohols such as sherry, vermouth, and fortified wines. These complex alcohols are affordable and easily available and have **an alcohol percentage of 14% to 20% instead of the standard 40%**. They are especially relevant for short cocktails that are not lengthened with ice.
- ▶ If shooters are served, request that they be prepared with selections **containing 20% alcohol or less**. A shooter made from a cocktail containing whiskey, sherry, a dilution, and syrup, for example, will titrate at 13% or 14% instead of 40%. The ritual remains the same, but the state of intoxication is greatly reduced. By choosing this shooter option, there is less chance of guests getting drunk too quickly and, above all, it is infinitely better and more sophisticated!
- ▶ Use an **online calculator** ([like this one](#), available only in English) to research and display the alcohol content of the cocktails offered on the menu. This way, guests will know if a cocktail has 10% or 20% alcohol.
- ▶ Limit the quantity of **spirits to 30 ml per cocktail**.
- ▶ **A tip** for reducing the alcohol content of spritzes is to use non-alcoholic sparkling wines with the spritz liquor. The taste will be similar, but the amount of alcohol is three times less.
- ▶ It's possible to **replace liqueurs containing 15% to 25% alcohol with quality syrups**. Often, cheap liqueurs contain only neutral alcohol, sugar, colouring, and flavours. Syrups made from real fruit are both more economical and higher quality, and, above all, they can be used to enrich both cocktails and mocktails, something that isn't impossible with liqueurs. Local brands like Prosyro offer room temperature stable products and an impressive array of flavours. One tip: if the list of ingredients for liqueurs and syrups doesn't inspire you, don't buy them.

Alcohol-free options

- ▶ There are a **wide variety of non-alcoholic spirits** available on the market today. They are designed to replicate the taste and feel of alcohol in cocktails. Rums, whiskeys, and gins are the most common. Sometimes, a chili is used to reproduce the warm, fiery taste of alcohol.
- ▶ Place **non-alcoholic options in self-serve single-use cans and bottles** in clearly marked and strategically placed ice buckets. People also drink to quench their thirst, occupy their hands, or gain their composure. Easy, no-wait access to non-alcoholic beverages will passively and effectively reduce overall consumption. What's more, an attractive mix of non-alcoholic beers, 0% alcohol cocktails, dealcoholized wines, and kombucha, will allow guests to explore and avoid the knock-out effects of drinking.
- ▶ While it is illegal for liquor licenses to pre-assemble alcoholic cocktails or create alcohol blends more than 24 hours in advance, it is a different story when it comes to non-alcoholic beverages. You can **assemble or have mocktails assembled in advance**, so they are easy to serve. Companies offer mixtures of dried fruits for rum infusions, which work really well with rum without alcohol—the maceration must take place for 30 days in the refrigerator (rather than at room temperature).
- ▶ Make sure you use **large chunks of ice, don't stir them for too long, and don't add water**. Since non-alcoholic spirits are composed mainly of water, you would lose the taste and the interest of the guests.
- ▶ For non-alcoholic drinks, **favour cocktail structures which, in the alcoholic version, do not use exclusively strong alcohol**. Avoid: martinis and Old Fashioneds. Non-alcoholic spirits pair best with non-alcoholic aperitifs, syrups, and a touch of acidity, which provides the drinks with the taste contrast they need.

Three tips for serving alcohol

Create a reflex

Encourage bar staff to get in the habit of systematically offering guests the choice between options with or without alcohol.

Offer only non-alcoholic or low-alcohol drinks

After a certain time, staff may only offer non-alcoholic or low-alcohol drinks. This way helps ensure that guests stay a little longer but aren't in "party" mode.

Are they comfortable serving non-alcoholic cocktails?

Before the event, ask your bar service provider if they are comfortable serving mocktails. This is a specialty, so you will have to prepare for it and provide certain ingredients.

Partner

A perfect holiday pairing



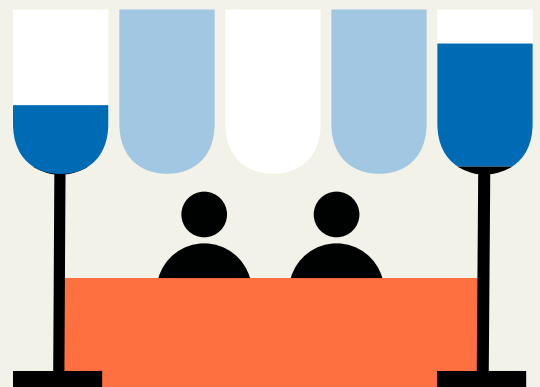
Éduc'alcool is proud to offer you this guide in partnership with **Operation Red Nose**. Created from a flash of inspiration by Jean-Marie De Koninck, this NPO promotes the adoption of responsible behaviour in order to prevent impaired driving. Throughout the holiday season, Operation Red Nose offers a volunteer chauffeur service with donations benefitting youth and amateur sports, in addition to offering awareness activities throughout the year.

Éduc'alcool's mission



Éduc'alcool is the essential resource for organizations, decision-makers, and members of the general population wishing to promote and adopt responsible behaviour when it comes to alcohol.

Éduc'alcool's mission is to inform, provide tools, and raise awareness among the Quebec population regarding alcohol consumption. It is also focused on influencing collective actions in order to raise public awareness and thus prevent risky drinking behaviours.



The checklist

For planning your event

Easy to use—just print and start planning

Here is the list of elements to consider while preparing a welcoming, responsible, and successful event:

1

Well before the event

- Regulations
 - RACJ license
 - Insurance
 - Road safety
- Invitations
 - Menu of drinks with and without alcohol
 - Planning the return home
 - Sharing of moderation support tools
- Beverage and catering service provider
 - Choice and planning of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks
 - Responsible service
 - Service Action training

2

The day before the event

- Beverage service
 - Preparation of cocktail and mocktail ingredients
 - Preparation of the drinks menu for a prominent display

3

During the event

- Beverage service
 - Display of the menu featuring drinks with and without alcohol
 - Systematic offer of drinks with or without alcohol
 - Restricted choice of alcoholic beverages towards the end of the event
 - Use the Standard Drinks Server to portion drinks
 - Easy access to water at several points throughout the venue

- Guest safety
 - Food to be served at the start of the event
 - Display available options for getting home
 - Display of moderation tools (QR code)
 - Clearly identify the person responsible for the safety and care of guests
 - Real-time inventory of all issues linked to overconsumption or dangerous behaviour

4

After the event

- Evaluation of preparation stages for the event
 - Choice of drinks with and without alcohol
 - Invitations
- Evaluation of the event itself
 - Collaboration and cooperation of beverage service staff
 - Beverage consumption
 - Review of events flagged during the evening (overconsumption, interventions, dangerous behaviour, etc.)
- List of organizational and logistical successes, and list of areas for improvement
- Reach out to guests to thank them for their presence, share event highlights and provide information on the tools and support resources available on the Éduc'alcool website



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in good taste.

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