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## Special Occasion License Frequently Asked Questions

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### General Information

#### **What does the special occasion license allow?**

The special occasion license allows a registered nonprofit organization to sell spirits, beer and wine by the individual serving for on-premises consumption at a specified date, time and place (i.e. fundraising dinner, gala event, auction, wine tasting). Any alcohol that is consumed at a special occasion event must be sold by the special occasion licensee. Alcohol cannot be given away.

#### **Do I have to sell alcohol at my special occasion licensed event?**

Yes. The nonprofit organization must sell all alcohol, including tastings and samples. Alcohol sold in a ticket prior to the event must be sold by the nonprofit organization holding the license. This includes alcohol that is purchased or donated. Alcohol must be sold at cost or higher.

#### **How can I apply for a special occasion license?**

Special occasion license applications are available online. The cost is \$60 per day, per alcohol point of sale location. The application and fee must be submitted 45 days before the event to:

Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board  
Licensing and Regulation Division  
P.O. Box 43085  
Olympia, WA 98504-3085

By law, the local authority (e.g. mayor or county executive) will be notified of your application and has 20 days to respond with an approval or objection to your application.

#### **Can I have alcohol at an event if I'm a nonprofit and I didn't get a special occasion license?**

Yes. Non-profits can have alcohol at events without a special occasion license, if you hire a caterer who is licensed to sell alcohol at events. The proceeds must go directly to the caterer, not the nonprofit. The caterer will need to notify their local liquor enforcement officer and advise them of this activity.

**Can I use a banquet permit to sell alcohol at my nonprofit event?**

No. A banquet permit cannot be used to sell alcohol to anyone. They are for private functions where alcohol is provided to guests for free. A banquet permit is not available for events that include alcohol sales to the public or events advertised on social media. Add link to FAQ's.

**Does anyone serving alcohol need to have a Mandatory Alcohol Server Training (MAST) Permit?**

A MAST permit is not required, but it is highly recommended for special occasions events. You can also attend a Responsible Alcohol Sales class taught by an LCB enforcement officer. This additional resource will help you follow all applicable state laws, such as: checking ID's, identifying fake ID's, selling/service of alcohol, and signs of intoxication. For more information about these classes, click here.

**Who can I contact if I have additional questions that are not answered in this document?**

For additional questions about special occasions, may contact a customer service specialist at (360) 664-1600 or by email: [specialoccasions@lcb.wa.gov](mailto:specialoccasions@lcb.wa.gov)

**Organization Information****Who can apply for a special occasion license?**

Only nonprofit organizations registered with the Washington Secretary of State or the IRS can get a special occasion license. Each organization is limited to 12 single-day events per calendar year. If you have a multi-day event, each day will count against your annual limit.

**How will I receive my special occasion license?**

Your approved special occasion license will be sent to the email you identify on your application.

**Event Information****What is an alcohol point of sale?**

An Alcohol point of sale at a special occasion event is any location on the premises where alcohol is sold.

**Can I auction alcohol at my event?**

Yes. If you want to auction alcohol at your event, you must request permission on the special occasion application. Your special occasion license will indicate whether you can hold an auction.

**What are the requirements to auction alcohol at a special occasion?**

The following requirements must be met to have an auction that includes alcohol at your special occasion event:

- Approved special occasion license
- Alcohol must be in a manufacturers sealed bottle
- Winning bidder must pay wholesale cost or above for auctioned alcohol
- Alcohol won at auction may not be consumed at the event
- For alcohol sold at a live auction, all alcohol sold at the event for on and off premises consumption must be sold by the nonprofit under the special occasion license. No alcohol from the venue may be sold to your attendees.
- For alcohol sold at a silent auction, all alcohol sold at the event for on premises consumption is sold by the licensed premises and not the nonprofit

*NOTE: For more details regarding auctions, please see the chart under Resources*

### **Can employees of the nonprofit organization drink during the event?**

No. No one working at the event may consume alcohol. This includes all volunteers or employees of the nonprofit, manufacturers, or distributors.

### **Can I hire and work with a promoter to promote my event?**

Yes, you can hire a promoter to promote your special occasion. However, you must abide by the following rules:

- Promoters or a promotions company may not sell alcohol included in a ticket,
- Only the nonprofit holding the special occasion license may sell alcohol
- Promoters may not acquire or pay for alcohol on your behalf
- Promoters may not take any proceeds from the sale of alcohol from a special occasion license

### **How does a nonprofit conduct a wine, beer or spirit tasting event?**

A nonprofit must do the following to have an alcohol tasting event:

- The nonprofit must have an approved special occasion license
- The nonprofit purchases the alcohol from the manufacturers prior to the event
- The nonprofit sells a specific amount of tastes/samples either in a ticket prior to the event or at the event
- A winery, brewery and distillery may pour alcohol that the nonprofit has purchased at a tasting event and talk about their products with the public
- The nonprofit, with permission on the special occasion license, may sell bottles of spirits, beer, and wine for attendees to take home at the end of the event. This alcohol may not be opened and consumed at the event
- The manufacturers may not bring alcohol to sell to the public at the event

## **Outdoor Alcohol Service**

### **I am having an outdoor event and I'm required to submit a site map. What does a site map look like?**

An example of a site map for an outdoor special occasion event can be [found here](#).

### **What does a site map need to include?**

The following items should be notated on your special occasion site map:

- Clearly identify alcohol serving areas (they must be enclosed areas with minimum barrier height of 42 inches)
- Location of structures, fire lanes, streets, alleys, fencing (indicating location of exits and gates)
- Location of tents or temporary structures, including dimensions
- Vendors, food trucks, merchandise areas
- Stage location and sizes
- Any other pertinent details about areas applicable for event

### **Do I need to complete any additional forms if I plan to allow minors in an enclosed service area at an outdoor special occasion event?**

Yes. You must attach a completed Special Occasion All Ages Outdoor Event Addendum Form to have minors in enclosed service areas. This form is only required if you are having an event outdoors and want minors allowed where alcohol is present. Filing out this form does not grant you permission to have minors in your enclosed beer garden. If your request is approved you will be

notified by the Board. This request must be submitted 60 days prior to the special occasion event. If minors are attending, the event must end by 9:00 pm.

### **What liquor laws am I required to follow during a special occasion event?**

Special occasion license holders must follow all state liquor laws and regulations during the event. A WSLCB enforcement officer may visit a licensed event to check compliance. Please remember the following:

- You may not sell alcohol to persons under 21 years of age
- You may not sell alcohol to intoxicated persons
- Intoxicated persons and those under 21 may not drink or possess alcohol at your event
- No disorderly conduct at the event
- No alcohol sales, service, or consumption is allowed between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m.
- All special occasion licensees must follow WAC 314-11 – General Requirements for Licensees

### **Venues Requiring Authorization**

#### **Can I have an event with a special occasion license at a liquor licensed premises?**

Yes. You can have a special occasion license at a liquor licensed premises. However, you must obtain a signature from the licensee, or manager of the licensed location indicating that they understand that the liquor licensee cannot sell alcohol at the event. The signature must be on your special occasion application.

#### **What if my event is held on a church or school property or a military facility?**

You can hold a special occasion event at a church, school property, or military facility if you include the signature of an appropriate official from that location to authorize the sale of alcohol at the location.

### **Wineries, Breweries, Distilleries and Spirits Distributors**

#### **What alcohol industry businesses can participate at my special occasion event?**

The following businesses may help you at a special occasion event:

- A winery and distillery may help pour at any special occasion event
- A brewery may only pour if the event is an alcohol tasting or judging event
- A winery, distillery, brewery or spirits distributor may conduct presentations that educate the public on the alcohol being offered for sale at any special occasion event

#### **What alcohol industry businesses cannot participate at my special occasion event?**

The following businesses may not help you at a special occasion event:

- Distributors may never pour at events
- A manufacturer or distributor may not sell tastes/samples or alcohol by the glass for on premises consumption at your event. The nonprofit must own all of the product sold at a special occasion event.

#### **Where can I purchase alcohol for my event?**

Alcohol for special occasion events must be purchased from one of the following:

- Beer, wine or spirits distributor
- Brewery, winery or distillery
- Certificate of Approval Holder who can ship directly to Washington retailers

- Liquor store (at retail price)
- Licensed retailer (at retail price)

You may not advertise or sell beer, wine, or spirits below cost. Alcohol cannot be complimentary or free at a special occasion event.

### **What documentation must be available for inspection at the event?**

At a special occasion event, you must have the following documentation available for inspection:

- Special Occasion license (must be posted where alcohol is being sold)
- Alcohol invoices or procurement forms must be made available at event (including donated product)
- If alcohol is included in the ticket price, a breakdown of the ticket

### **Can I receive alcohol donations for a special occasion event?**

If you are a nonprofit 501(C) (3) or a 501(C) (6), you may accept donated product from a winery, brewery, craft distillery, licensed out of state manufacturer or a spirit distributor for your licensed special occasion event. The nonprofit must keep an invoice for all donated alcohol that reflects the wholesale price of the donated alcohol. All alcohol must be sold above wholesale prices. Invoices must be available at event, if there is an inspection.

### **Who can provide donations of alcohol for a special occasion event?**

You may receive donations of alcohol from the following licensees for your special occasion event:

- Brewery, winery or distillery
- Certificate of Approval Holder who can ship directly to Washington retailers
- Spirits distributor

### **Can I collect sponsorship money from a manufacturer or distributor to help me pay for my event?**

No. Special occasion licensees are considered a licensed liquor retailer. Therefore, you cannot accept any money from a manufacturer, distributor or any other non-retail industry member related to the event. You can accept sponsorship money from non-alcohol related businesses. Please contact [specialoccasions@lcb.wa.gov](mailto:specialoccasions@lcb.wa.gov) for more details.

### **What happens if I don't sell all my alcohol at my event and I have some left over?**

Any leftover alcohol from a special occasion event must be used at another special occasion licensed event. It may not be given away free or below cost after the event. Unopened alcohol can be returned to the manufacturer or distributor for a refund, if the manufacturer or distributor is willing. Open containers of alcohol and tapped kegs cannot be returned to a manufacturer or distributor.

### **May I sell bottles of wine for consumption during the event?**

Yes. The nonprofit may sell wine only (by the bottle) to be consumed at the special occasion event. Opened bottles cannot leave the event location. Spirits and beer must be sold by the individual serving for consumption at the event.

### **May I sell beer, wine or spirits to go?**

Yes. In conjunction with on premises sales, you may get prior permission to sell manufactured sealed bottles for attendees to take home from a special occasion event. No alcohol sold to go may be opened at the event.

### **Can a licensed retailer sell alcohol during a special occasion licensed event?**

No. If a special occasion event is held at a liquor-licensed location, the licensee may not sell or serve their liquor in the same room to event guests (we don't allow two licenses at the one location).

If the liquor licensee is open to the public in a different room, they may sell liquor to patrons who are not attending the special occasion event.

### **Can I have a wine wall at my event?**

Yes. You must have a special occasion license and approval from the Washington State Gambling Commission (WSG). Contact the WSG at 800-345-2529.

### **Do we need a special occasion license for a wine walk?**

Yes. You can host a wine walk at a special occasion event, if you meet the following requirements:

- Get a special occasion license for each location where wine is being served (each location is \$60.00)
- Tickets must be sold by the nonprofit
- The nonprofit must provide the wine at each location
- Alcohol purchased for on premises consumption may not leave the location where it was purchased

## **Use of Event Proceeds**

### **Who must retain proceeds from alcohol sales at the special occasion event?**

All proceeds from the sale of alcohol must go directly back into the non-profit organization with the special occasion license. The proceeds may not be paid directly or indirectly to members, officer, or trustees of the organization. No profits from the sale of alcohol may go to a promoter or a promotions company.

## **Miscellaneous**

### **Can I accept other items in lieu of alcohol from a manufacturer for a special occasion event?**

Yes. You may accept items of nominal value from a manufacturer for your special occasion event. You may not give those items to attendees of the event, only staff. Items of nominal value might include coaster, lighters, key chains and t-shirts. The nonprofit staff may use these items but may not give them away to guests. See RCW 66.28.310 Three-Tier and Promotional Items for more details.

### **Can I have homebrew or homemade wine at my special occasion event?**

No. All alcohol that is sold in Washington must be produced by a licensed manufacturer. You may not sell or provide homebrewed beer or homemade wine at any public event.

### **Can I raffle alcohol at my special occasion licensed event?**

You cannot raffle alcohol at events that are open and advertised to the public. You may only raffle alcohol to your nonprofit members at a closed event (not open or advertised to the public). Before you raffle alcohol to your members, you need a raffle permit from the WSLCB. You must also work with the Gambling Commission to get permission for a raffle. See link for permits here.

### **Can I sell growlers at my special occasion licensed event?**

No. Only manufactured sealed bottles can be sold for off premises consumption at special occasion event.

### **Can I auction off a tray of drinks?**

No. You cannot auction off any alcohol for on premises consumption at a special occasion event.

## Resources

<b>All Auctions Including Alcohol Must Be Held By A Nonprofit With A Special Occasion License</b>			
<b>Where/How?</b>	<b>Liquor Licensed Premises</b>	<b>Unlicensed Venue</b>	<b>Nonprofit Using A Liquor Caterer At Unlicensed Venue</b>
<b>Live Auction</b> where the nonprofit is selling all the alcohol (the liquor licensed venue is <b>not</b> selling alcohol)	A nonprofit may have a live auction at a liquor-licensed premises. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Nonprofit with an SOL must provide and sell all alcohol for on and off premises consumption</li> </ul>	A nonprofit may have a live auction at an unlicensed venue. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Nonprofit with an SOL must provide and sell all alcohol for on and off premises consumption</li> </ul>	A nonprofit may have a live auction when using a caterer for alcohol service. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All catered alcohol service must cease during the live auction.</li> <li>The nonprofit must have a SOL for the auction</li> </ul>
<b>Live Auction</b> at a liquor licensed venue where the <b>venue is selling alcohol</b> to attendees for on premises consumption	A nonprofit having an event at a liquor-licensed venue may have a live auction, if the venue is selling the alcohol for attendees to consume at the event. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The nonprofit must have a SOL to have an auction involving alcohol</li> <li>The alcohol service from the venue must cease during the live auction</li> <li>The nonprofit must provide and sell the alcohol in the auction</li> <li>Auctioned alcohol may not be opened at the event</li> </ul>	Not applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not applicable – Caterers may not sell alcohol at liquor licensed venues</li> </ul>
<b>Silent Auction</b> and the venue is <b>not</b> selling alcohol, only the nonprofit	Nonprofit may have a silent auction at liquor-licensed premises. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Nonprofit with an SOL must provide and sell all alcohol for on and off premises consumption</li> </ul>	Nonprofit may have a silent auction at an unlicensed venue. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Nonprofit with an SOL must provide and sell all alcohol for on and off premises consumption</li> </ul>	Nonprofit may have a silent auction when using a caterer for alcohol service. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The nonprofit must have a SOL for the auction</li> <li>Alcohol service can continue during the silent auction as long as the alcohol in the silent auction is not announced at the event</li> </ul>
<b>Silent Auction</b> and the liquor licensed venue is selling alcohol to attendees for on premises consumption	A nonprofit having an event at a liquor-licensed venue may have a silent auction, if the venue is selling the alcohol for attendees to consume at the event. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The nonprofit with an SOL must provide and sell all alcohol for the silent auction.</li> <li>The venue can sell alcohol to attendees</li> <li>Alcohol service from the venue can continue as long as alcohol in the silent auction is not announced at the event</li> </ul>	Not applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not applicable – Caterers may not sell alcohol at liquor licensed venues</li> </ul>

### State Laws:

RCW 66.24.010 – Licensure—Issuance—Conditions and restrictions—Limitations—Temporary licenses

RCW 66.24.375 – Nonprofit organization defined  
RCW 66.24.380 – Special Occasion Licenses  
RCW 66.28.310 – Three-tier system- Promotional Items  
RCW 15.76.120 – Categories of fairs – jurisdiction and organization  
RCW 34.05 – Administrative Procedures Act

**State Rules:**

WAC 314-05 – Special Occasion Licenses  
WAC 314-05-030 – Guidelines for special occasion license events  
WAC 314-05-035 – Branded Promotional Items  
WAC 314-07-065 – Denial reasons  
WAC 314-07-070 – License denial process  
WAC 314-11 – General requirements for licensees  
WAC 314-11-015 – What are my responsibilities as a liquor licensee?  
WAC 314-11-025 - What are the acceptable forms of identification?

**Definitions**

**Agricultural Area Fairs** – state and local fairs defined by RCW 15.76.120.

**Alcoholic Beverage** – a beverage with more than a half percentage (0.5 percent) alcohol by volume.

- Ale/Malt Liquor – malt beverages with MORE than 4percent alcohol by weight (a type of liquor).
- Beer – malt beverages with more than a half percent alcohol by volume, but not more than 4 percent alcohol by weight (5 percent alcohol by volume).
- Distilled Spirits – alcoholic beverages made through the distilling process. Includes rum, tequila, vodka, whiskey, gin, brandy, etc.
- Liquor – alcoholic beverages with MORE than 4percent alcohol by weight (5 percent alcohol by volume). The term “liquor” includes ale/malt liquor, wine and distilled spirits.
- Malt Beverages – alcoholic beverages made by brewing grains. Malt beverages are broken down into two categories: beer or ale/malt liquor, depending on the alcohol content of the final product.
- Mixed Beverage - an alcoholic beverage served for consumption on the premises where it is sold by the holder of a mixed beverage or private club permit. It could be beer, malt liquor/ale, wine or spirits.
- Wine – alcoholic beverages made by fermenting juice from fruit, grapes, berries or honey.

**Brewery** – a place where beer and malt liquor are produced.

**Certificate of Approval Holder (COA)** – an out of state liquor manufacturer approved to sell liquor in Washington State.

**Designated Location** – specified geographical location or site where the special occasion event will be held, typically identified by a street address.

**Distillery** – a place where alcoholic drinks (such as whiskey) are produced.

**Distributor** - a business that purchases alcohol from the manufacturer and sells it to the retailer.

**Enclosed Area** – an area enclosed with barriers (a minimum of 42 inches) where the sale, service, and consumption of alcohol takes place and minors are not allowed without prior WSLCB approval.



The enclosed area(s) are smaller area(s) within the designated location.

**Local Authority** – The governing agency of a jurisdiction (e.g. mayor or County commissioners/executives).

**Manufacturer** – a company that makes a product.

**Off-Premises Retail** – any retail location where alcoholic beverages are sold but not available for consumption on the premises, such as liquor stores.

**On-Premises Retail** – any retail location where alcoholic beverages are sold for consumption on premises, such as bars, clubs, tasting rooms, and restaurants.

**Nonprofit Group** – a registered organization that operates solely for charitable, religious, social, political, educational, civic, fraternal, athletic, or benevolent purposes.

**Promoter** – a third party person or organization that organizes and/or advertises your events.

**Retailer** – a business that sells goods to the public for consumption rather than for resale.

**Site Map** – a drawing that identifies the following outdoor areas for the special occasion event:

- Alcohol serving areas (they must be enclosed areas with minimum barrier height of 42 inches).
- Structures, fire lanes, streets, alleys, fencing (indicating location of exits and gates).
- Tents or temporary structures, including dimensions.
- Vendors, food trucks, merchandise areas.
- Stage location and sizes.
- Any other pertinent details about areas that might impact the safety of the public at the event.

**Special Occasion License** – a license to allow a nonprofit organization to sell beer, wine and spirits on a specified day and place for a daily fee. The nonprofit organization is limited to sales on no more than 12 calendar days per year.

**Sponsor** – a person or organization that pays some or all of the costs for an event in return for the right to advertise during the activity.

**Violation History** – any criminal or infraction notices issued in past two years.

**Wholesaler** – a business that distributes alcohol from the manufacturer and sells it to the retailer.

**Winery** – a place where wine is produced.

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