

GUIDANCE FOR BUSINESSES

THE SALE OF ALCOHOL IN RESTAURANTS, CAFES, BARS ETC

Weights and Measures Act 1985

Weights and Measures (Intoxicating Liquor) Order 1988 as amended

The above legislation controls the manner in which alcohol must be sold in restaurants, cafes, bars, etc. The purpose is to standardise the size of the measures used to serve wine, beer or spirits and to ensure customers are aware of the sizes of those measures.

How should beer and cider be sold?

Draught beer and cider may be sold in any of the following quantities:

- 1/3 pint, often found in specialist draught beer pubs
- 1/2 pint
- in multiples of 1/2 pint, e.g. one pint glasses, 2 pint and 4 pint jugs.

Glasses and jugs must be stamped. Some bars use automatic beer and cider dispensers instead of glasses. These too must be stamped to show accuracy.

At the moment there is no provision allowing draught beer and cider to be sold in metric quantities such as 250ml or a litre. All bottles and cans are, however, pre-packed in metric quantities. If you sell pre-packed beer and cider, you must make the quantity known to the customer.

What about shandies?

If you mix beer or cider with at least one other liquid, then the above rules do not apply. However, if the customer requests a certain quantity, e.g. one pint, you must ensure that this is served in a stamped container.

How should Gin, Rum, Vodka and Whisky be sold?

If sold by the glass, the above spirits should only be sold in quantities of 25ml, 35ml, or multiples thereof.

You must choose either 25ml or 35ml measures. It is illegal to mix the sizes.

Also, you must inform customers of the size of measure used. If customers buy their drinks from a bar, this may be by way of a notice. Alternatively, the measure size may be indicated on the price list or menu. This will be more appropriate if customers are served at tables such as in a restaurant. Thimbles and measuring instruments (optics) must be stamped to show they are accurate.

What about other spirits and liquors?

Technically the rules do not apply to other spirits such as brandy or liqueurs. Many bars and restaurants prefer to use stamped measures for accounting reasons and to avoid mistakes. When customers are informed of the size of the measures used, you must ensure you deliver the correct amount.

Cocktails that are a mix of three or more liquids are not included in the Regulations.

What about wine sold by the glass or carafe?

Wine, when sold by the glass, may only be sold in quantities of 125ml or 175ml or multiples thereof.

The best way of ensuring that you comply with this requirement is to acquire stamped and lined wine glasses. Alternatively, a large thimble measure may be used.

If wine is sold in a vessel such as a carafe, it must be sold only in quantities of 250ml, 500ml or 1L. Again the carafe, or the jug used to fill the carafe, should be stamped.

The licensee must inform customers of the quantity in which the wine will be sold. This may be done either by means of a notice prominently displayed on the premises, or as a statement included on every wine list or menu.

What is 'stamped' equipment?

Stamped equipment has been marked with a crown symbol to indicate it has been checked for accuracy by an independent body such as a local weights and measures authority.

Where can I obtain the right equipment?

Most catering bar suppliers will be able to supply 'stamped' equipment. Several are listed in Yellow Pages.

What happens if I fail to comply with the above requirements?

You will be committing a criminal offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is £2,000 for failing to notify customers of the size of measure used and £5,000 for failing to use the correct size of measure.

How can I get further advice?

If you require further information, clarification or advice on any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact the Trading Standards Service at:

222 Upper Street, London N1 1XR

Tel: (020) 7527 3198

Email: trading.standards@islington.gov.uk

In offering the above advice, this Authority wishes to make it clear that only the Courts can interpret the Law.