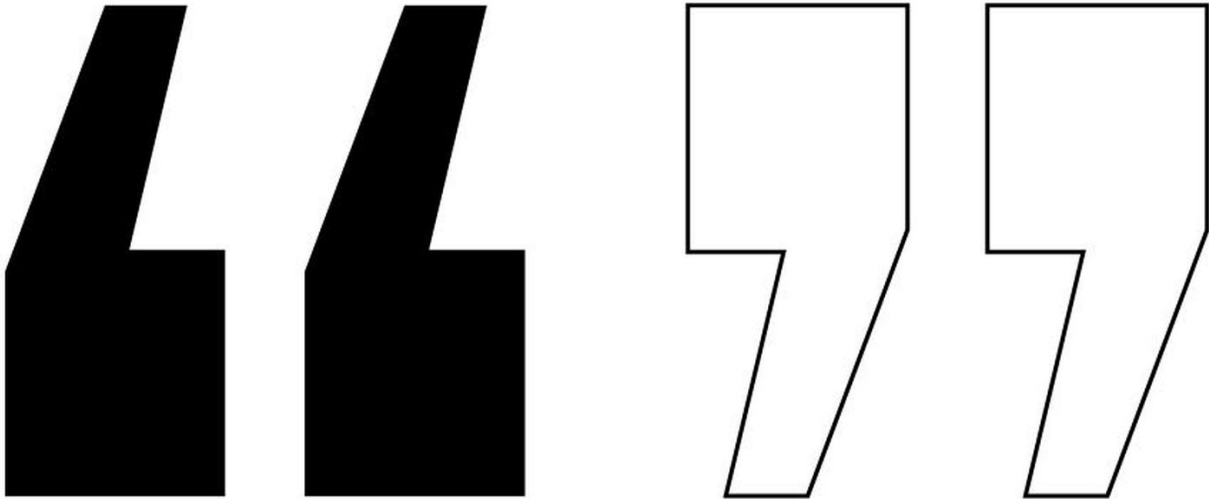


Should the state allow restaurants to continue offering alcohol as part of takeout orders after the pandemic?

Read two views and vote in our online poll.

Updated May 28, 2021, 5:18 p.m.

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YES

Bob Wong

Member of family that owns Kowloon Restaurant in Saugus



Beer, wine, and mixed drinks to go: a win, win, win! While many restaurant owners are certainly looking to put the past year in the rearview mirror, there is one development that was introduced during the pandemic that we ought to keep going.

Last year, Governor Charlie Baker signed laws allowing restaurants with liquor licenses to sell beer, wine, and mixed drinks with takeout and delivery food during the pandemic. In the year that has followed, customers have fallen in love with the convenience of getting a restaurant-quality drink with their food orders, and it has provided a much-needed revenue boost to our beleaguered hospitality industry. Our first drink sold last year was our specialty Kowloon Mai Tai!

Most people are not going to buy gin, vodka, or tequila from us, as customers know where to purchase those products. However, a professionally made, specialty margarita or martini is an entirely different story. Guests want the unique cocktail that only we can offer, and continuously gets ordered.

When diners order takeout, the average sales order decreases, as they are less likely to add an appetizer, dessert, or fancy cocktail. However, once the ability to include beer, wine, and mixed drinks with takeout was added, some of that average spending increased. Restaurants across Massachusetts have invested in labels with their logos and customized drink bottles. At Kowloon, people love our mai tai packaging as much as they love our spare rib marinade or Saugus Wing special sauce.

Our guests love our bartenders, and even when they can't make it into the restaurant, they are still getting that professional bartender experience. Adding a margarita to your takeout order is extremely easy and popular.

Extending the ability to offer beer, wine, and mixed drinks to go would increase restaurant sales, which helps local governments collect more in meals tax revenue and gives diners the benefit of enjoying their favorite restaurant cocktail at home.

There are not many things from this pandemic that people want to see stick around. But beer, wine, and mixed drinks to go is certainly one of them. It's a rare win, win, win!

NO

Kelly Buttiglieri

Public policy manager, Westborough-based Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts; Stow resident



In February 1992 when I was a young law school student, the car I was driving was hit head-on by an inebriated driver as I drove to my afternoon class at Suffolk Law School. In a split second my life was permanently altered. I sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and, to this day, live with the consequences of that driver's actions.

I spent nearly three months hospitalized, followed by two years of intensive outpatient rehabilitation, including speech, occupational, and physical

therapy. As a result of my brain injury, I have epilepsy. Despite an operation to help control the seizures, I will require anti-seizure medications for the rest of my life.

In spite of these challenges, with grit and determination and the support of my speech therapist, I eventually returned to law school — taking one class at a time — and was able to graduate and pass the bar exam. Today, I devote my professional life to public policy efforts on behalf of those with TBIs.

In the early days of the pandemic, the Commonwealth's residents were under stay-at-home advisories. One of the effects was a dramatic reduction in drivers on our roads. The well-intentioned and temporary measures enacted at that time authorizing restaurants to sell beer, wine, and cocktails with takeout orders were designed to give restaurants that had been forced to shutter an economic lifeline — allowing them to recoup costs and retain jobs. Because of the enormous reduction in road travel, the potential unintended consequences of an increase in impaired drivers were mitigated.

With more than three million Massachusetts residents already fully vaccinated, it has been encouraging to see customers return to local establishments to enjoy their favorite meals and beverages. And, in time for Memorial Day weekend, Governor Baker announced an end to all remaining pandemic restrictions as of May 29.

Consequently, the temporary measures allowing restaurants and bars to sell alcoholic drinks with takeout orders are no longer necessary and, in fact, given the renewed roadway congestion, may lead to increased incidents of driving under the influence. Let's go back to the previous rules and keep our roads safe.

As told to Globe correspondent John Laidler. To suggest a topic, please contact laidler@globe.com.