

drinkaware @ Club Soda

Low and alcohol-free

Publican Training Guide

The definitive guide to making low and alcohol-free products work in your venue.



Introduction

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[Drinkaware.co.uk/alcoholfree](https://drinkaware.co.uk/alcoholfree)

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The rise of low alcohol and alcohol-free drinks presents pubs and bars with an exciting opportunity to expand their range.

However, choosing what to stock and how to promote it can be challenging. That's why Drinkaware and Club Soda have created this guide to help you navigate these decisions and make the most from this category.

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Drinkaware is the leading alcohol education charity which aims to reduce alcohol-related harm in the UK by helping people make better choices about their drinking.

Club Soda

Club Soda is a social impact business. They were created to help to make the world a better place for people who are drinking less or not at all. They own a Low and Alcohol-Free Tasting Room in London to help venues and customers find the right drinks.



In this short course, you will cover:



Why do low and alcohol-free options matter?



Why stocking low and alcohol-free makes business sense.



How to create a great low and alcohol-free offer.



How to promote your low and alcohol-free drinks.



Top tips to implement today.

Meet the experts

We asked professionals in the on-trade to help us put this guide together by giving us invaluable insights and information.

Thank you to:



Megan Garner
The Chemic Tavern
in Leeds (Punch Pubs)



Jimmy Adams
The Lucky Saint
in London



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The Venture
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(Blood & Sand Group)

Why do low and
alcohol-free options matter?

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Many people in the UK are drinking less alcohol than they used to, however, only a small number of these become abstainers.

Despite this small growing number of people who stop drinking, the decline in alcohol consumption is mainly accounted by people that decide to cut back rather than giving up alcohol altogether.

Cutting back from alcohol may mean different things to different people. To some, this could mean switching to lower-alcohol options, to others it may mean taking drink-free days or adding an alcohol free drink between alcoholic drinks during a night out. Whichever the strategy we can safely say moderation has gone mainstream.

The important thing to know is that the biggest purchasers of alcohol-free drinks are people who still drink alcohol.

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Three out of four UK adults say they are moderating their alcohol intake.*



Research by Drinkaware shows that over 20% of UK drinkers use alcohol-free or low-alcohol drinks to cut back their alcohol consumption.



Your venue could benefit by reflecting this growing trend.

Giving your customers different options to choose from is the best way to make them happy. Imagine what a difference it may make to someone trying to cut down to have the option of choosing between their favorite zero alcohol beer, cocktail or spirit. This is why it's important to put real thought into your alcohol-free range.

*KAM No and Low Report 2023

Why stocking low and alcohol-free makes business sense

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As well as helping attract new guests to your venue, a good alcohol-free offering also helps maximise choice for existing customers and makes good commercial sense. Consider the upsell in offering a bottle of alcohol-free beer or an alcohol-free gin and tonic compared to a soft drink. Customers might spend more, but they will be happy to do so if it enhances their experience.

£800m

is lost by restaurants not upgrading customers from tap water to a drink they pay for.*



Equality of experience is key. When people go out, they want something they can't easily get at home, served properly by an expert.

Just because they are at your venue during their lunch hour or on a day when they are not drinking, does not mean they want to compromise. Venues with a good alcohol-free range see increased profits, good reviews, and improved customer loyalty.



Tap space is at a premium on any bar. But if you have three similar alcoholic lagers, it's worth asking yourself whether it might be possible to switch one out for an alcohol-free variant. Customer demand for draught alcohol-free beer is high. It is also a more efficient, sustainable, and profitable format for venues.

Venues report an increase in group bookings when they add more alcohol-free drinks to their menu, as people check websites in advance to ensure a venue suits everyone in the party.

*KAM No and Low Report 2023



The alcohol-free beer market will double over the next ten years, according to Global Market Insights.

How to create a great low
and alcohol-free offer

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Customers have come to expect choice, and low and no alcohol drinks are no different. If a group is planning a night out, and some of them are not drinking, having an interesting low and no offering could be a deal-breaker. A survey showed that nearly half (42%) of customers look at a venue's menu in advance to decide whether to visit or not.*

*KAM No and Low Report 2023

If you have a range of alcoholic drinks that suit all occasions; it should be the same for your alcohol-free range too.

If you sell a full-strength lager, IPA and stout, it is easy to replicate those with low or alcohol-free versions. If you have an excellent wine list to go with your menu, what alcohol-free options can you source that will go well with food? Pride yourself on excellent cocktails? Can you lavish the same care and attention on your low or alcohol-free versions? A wide variety of drinks are available in many formats, including ready-to-drink cocktails



Top tips for beer on draught:



If you are stocking a new alcohol-free beer, check in advance whether you'll need to change the keg connector.



Clean the line at least every seven days and regularly sanitise the nozzle and keg coupler.



Taste the beer every day before service to check for freshness.



Ask the brewery if you're not sure about something.

Creating your own alcohol-free cocktails

If you and your team want to create your own alcohol-free cocktails, then bear in mind that there are some crucial differences between alcohol-free and alcoholic cocktails.



Dilution, for instance, might be a key part of alcoholic cocktails since it helps take down a drink's strength, but it can make alcohol-free cocktails taste watery. So be careful how you use the ice.



Alcohol itself supplies body and mouth-feel to drinks, so you may want to play with creams, oils and sugar to add texture.



Simply substituting classic cocktail recipes with alcohol-free alternatives often will not work. You may need to change proportions and add or remove other drinks to achieve balance and complexity. So experiment.



But the good news is that, with no traditional rules to follow and hundreds of new drinks to experiment with, making your own versions of alcoholic drinks is a lot of fun. So get creative.



Reviewing your alcohol-free range:

- Match the quality of your alcoholic drinks with a well-thought-out range of alcohol-free drinks and cocktails.
- Check what your wholesaler or pub co has on offer, and if you need something else, let them know. Or work directly with an alcohol-free brand to test what works, and then you can ask your regular wholesaler or pub co to stock your customer's favourites.
- Pick a range of beers, not just one; customers have different preferences regarding beer styles. Can you accommodate an alcohol-free beer on draught?
- Stock a high-quality lower-sugar craft soft drink in your fridge as well. Not everyone wants an alcohol-free version of an alcoholic drink, but they still care about quality and sugar content.

Hot to promote your low
and alcohol-free drinks



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Low and alcohol-free drinks are relatively new to the market, so don't assume your customers know you have a great range of options.



Train your staff to guide customers and offer your premium alcohol-free drinks.



Highlighting alcohol-free in a separate section on your menu draws attention to your range.



Create a drinks menu for lunchtime and weeknights, emphasising your alcohol-free options.



Set targets to upgrade customers from tap water or soda to premium alcohol-free drinks.



Use chalkboards, tent cards, video screens, or even posters drawing attention to your alcohol-free range - don't leave your low and alcohol-free out!



Equalise promotions, always offer non-alcoholic alternatives in specials like happy hours.

Use your website and Google menus for all your menus. Your venue will pop up when people locally search for a brand or type of drink.

42% of customers look in advance*.



*KAM No and Low Report 2023

Top tips to
implement today

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Getting started can feel overwhelming but you don't need to do everything at once.

Taking it step by step will make it easier and you can use our top tips to get started on this exciting journey.



Review your range, look at what your suppliers offer, and see if you can add a few low and alcohol-free products. January is a perfect time to test what your customers will like.



Train your staff on the products and how to upsell them, especially during the week and at lunch times.

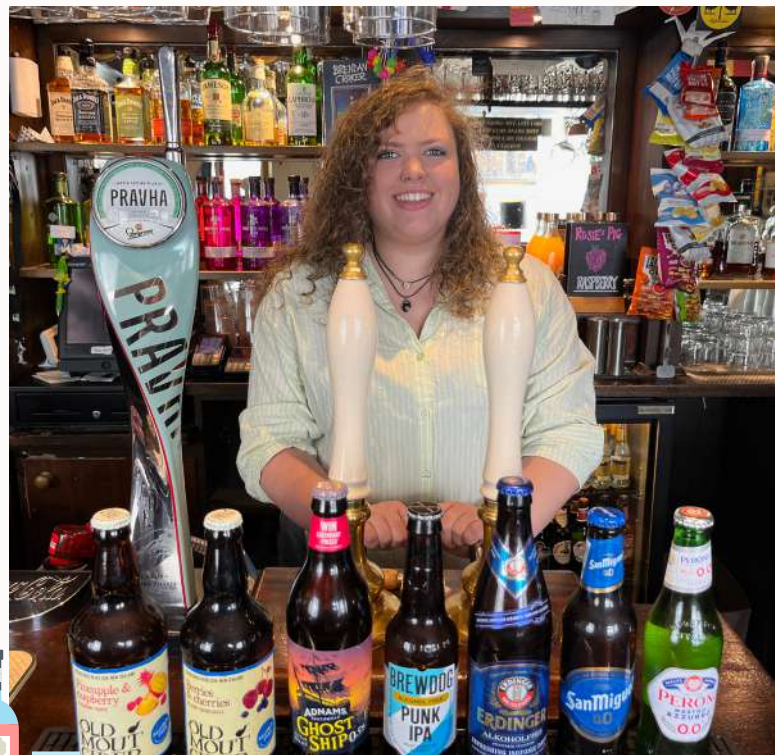


Promote: add your low and no offering to your menu in the venue, online, and on Google, so people know what you have.



A recent report* estimates that a third of all pub visits do not involve alcohol.

*The Drinkaware Monitor 2023



FAQ's

What is low and alcohol-free?

While de-alcoholisation (removing the alcohol after the fermentation process) has been around for over 100 years, the no and alcohol-free category is still young, and the terminology can be confusing. Words like 'low', 'light', 'free' and 'zero' are used worldwide, but they don't always mean the same thing.

In the UK, you don't need an alcohol licence to sell drinks of up to 0.5% ABV. These drinks are usually labelled as 'non-alcoholic' or 'alcohol-free'. Drinks from 0.5% to 1.2% ABV can be labelled 'low alcohol'. The rules may change over time, so it's worth checking the latest guidance.

It is helpful for your customers to include ABV information on your menus for all drinks, including low and alcohol-free products. This is especially important for cocktails, as you may use different ingredients with different strengths.

How alcohol-free drinks are produced?

Customers often ask how alcohol-free drinks are made. Alcohol-free wine is nearly always de-alcoholised – a regular full-strength wine goes through an extra process to remove the alcohol. Beers at 0.5% can be 'brewed to strength' – made like a standard beer, but with changes in brewing methods to keep the alcohol level naturally low. This is not the case for a 0.0% beer, which are usually de-alcoholised. Spirits are often made from blending distilled ingredients, although some can be fermented too.

What about the price of alcohol-free?

When it comes to pricing, it is true that no alcohol duty is paid on alcohol-free drinks. But making the drinks themselves is often more expensive, particularly if they have been de-alcoholised. It is best to explain that these drinks are high-quality, healthier alternatives to alcohol, not a cheaper option. Customers value feeling rewarded and included.

What about age ID?

Under-18s can legally purchase alcohol-free beers, as long as the drinks sold are 0.5% ABV or below. This is because the Licensing Act 2003 defines "alcohol" under the provisions of the Act as beer, wine, cider, spirits and other liquors over 0.5% ABV.



Club Soda

39 Drury Lane, London. WC2B 5RR

t. 020 7836 8693

e. cheers@joinclubsoda.com

joinclubsoda.com



Drinkaware

Michael House, 35 Chiswell Street. EC1Y 4SE

t. 020 7766 9900

e. contact@drinkaware.co.uk

drinkaware.co.uk

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