



Massachusetts becomes merlot-to-go state

For Massachusetts diners, bringing home a doggy bag from a restaurant may now include an unfinished bottle of wine, thanks to a new law passed by the state legislature a few weeks ago. Recently the Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission outlined a set of strict temporary rules for hotels and restaurants to follow when sending home opened bottles of wine with customers. For a single diner, the wine must be purchased with a meal, defined as an entrée, not just a salad. For two or more diners, the wine must be purchased with a diversified selection of food priced at more than \$20. Only one partially consumed bottle of wine per patron may be resealed and removed from the restaurant. Before permitting patrons to leave with their carry-out wine, restaurant owners must securely reseat the bottle and place it in a one-time-use, tamper-proof transparent bag so people will not drink it on the way home. The bag must be sealed and a receipt showing proof of purchase of a meal and the bottle of wine attached to it. Advocates of the law think it will encourage responsible consumption of wine and help reduce drunk driving if people do not feel they have to consume all of the wine they purchase. Restaurateurs are hoping the new law also may increase sales to patrons who are torn between buying wine by the bottle or the glass. Not surprisingly, one California-based company appropriately named winedoggybag.com already exists as the exclusive supplier for several other "merlot-to-go" states. Prices start at \$18.75 for 25 bags, with discounts for higher-quantity orders, such as \$140 for 500. Knowing that customers at the Coach House restaurant in the Harbor View Hotel will soon be asking about the doggy bags, general manager Alain Michel said, "We are in the process of getting everything together." Restaurant employees contacted at Slice of Life, Seasons, and Pomodoro in Oak Bluffs said they do not have the bags yet but will be checking into what is required.