

A WINE TRADE INSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE

The Wine Trade's **Accidental Moderation Strategies**

I didn't just become an expert in sourcing, blending, and marketing wine over the 30+ years I visited vineyards around the world.

The practices I observed when dining out and from talking to Sommelier friends inadvertently helped me moderate at home and subsequently teach others how to drink like a professional.

Alastair Cassie,
Founder, Alcohol Reduction Coach™

Moderating in a trade where drinking is often part of the job was not always easy. Nor was living with the endless sample bottles that arrived at my home. But this task was made easier when, without realising it, I started re-engineering the luxury tools of fine dining into a form of natural moderation at home.

It wasn't until I developed a deep interest in behavioural science when researching my BAC (Balance and Control) System™ that I appreciated that the connection was far more than just a coincidence, or my ADHD brain joining the dots behind the scenes.

The irony was not lost on me. The wine industry spent centuries perfecting tools and practices to get the best out of wine. Better glasses; temperature control; preservation; food matching; serving structure. All designed for appreciation, not restriction.

It was only later that I fully recognised that the theatre of wine service in restaurants could have such an important role in moderation at home.

And now I am using these 10 strategies as part of an overall moderation system that I teach others so that they too can enjoy more whilst consuming less.

01

Calibrate your glass

The Method:

Measure 125ml of water into your usual wine glass and observe where it reaches. That mark is your unit. No more guesswork. Or for even more accuracy, use a wine measuring jigger.

The Science: visual perception vs reality

Studies show that our estimated single unit pour is actually about 1.9 units. Furthermore, the brain focuses on the height of a pour rather than its width, so if you're using a wider glass, it makes the same volume look smaller than it is, and you end up pouring 12% more.

02

Use the right glass for the job

The Method:

Standard moderation relies on small glasses, which subconsciously signal restriction and deprivation. Use the large glasses that were intended for the wine (but remember to measure!).

The Science: reframing the experience

Changing the context from "drinking less" to "appreciating more" means that a large glass with a measured pour is not a compromise; it's a choice. It signals that you are still connected with your old world, but the focus has moved from volume to sensory quality.

03

Use preservation technology

The Method:

A Vacuvin, or better still a Coravin, means you never have to finish a bottle in one sitting for fear it will otherwise deteriorate. It gives the right context for those final glasses: appreciation at an appropriate time rather than mindlessly consumed in the moment.

The Science: removing the pressure of waste

The "sunk cost" fallacy creates a ticking clock when a bottle is opened; people often overconsume simply to prevent a good wine from spoiling. Preservation tools eliminate the artificial urgency, separating the decision of having a glass from the pressure to finish the bottle.

04

Store the bottle away from the table

The Method:

Keep your open wine on a sideboard or in a different room. After you've poured your measured glass, the bottle goes back.

The Science: interrupting the automated reach

Keeping a bottle within arm's reach makes refilling a frictionless, subconscious muscle reflex. Moving the bottle away introduces physical distance, ensuring that a refill requires a conscious decision to get up, rather than happening on autopilot. Essentially, you are enforcing our Choice O'Clock™ protocol, forcing the engagement of the System 2 part of your brain (responsible for decisions and brakes) from the System 1 (automated habit loop).

05

Taste before you drink

The Method:

Look. Smell. Taste properly. Give it those few seconds. Given real attention, a wine stops being just a drink, and volume stops being the measure of satisfaction.

The Science: interrupting the habit loop via mindfulness

Autopilot consumption relies on the rapid, unthinking transition from cue to reward. Forcing a few seconds of sensory analysis engages the prefrontal cortex, slowing down the pace and switching the goal from biological intake to cognitive appreciation.

06

Let the glass empty

The Method:

A good sommelier paces service to the table, not to whoever's glass empties first. Let yours sit empty rather than rushing to refill it. Finish, pause, then decide if another pour is worth it.

The Science: preventing anchoring and resetting the baseline

Topping up a half-full glass destroys the cognitive anchor of "one drink." By allowing the glass to completely empty, you force a distinct pause and a conscious decision-point, breaking the continuous consumption loop. Otherwise, you run the risk of the scenario where "the glass that never empties has no natural stopping point".

07

Protect the temperature

The Method:

Smaller pours help keep your wine at its best temperature, rather than the temperature imposed by a warm room or a hand wrapped round the bowl.

The Science: altering the pacing mechanism

Warm wine tastes worse, which often drives people to drink faster to finish the glass before it spoils. Smaller pours protect the liquid's integrity, naturally slowing the physical cadence of sipping.

08

Match the wine to food

The Method:

Start drinking with the meal, not while you are cooking it.

The Science: behavioural bundling and pharmacokinetics

Food slows how fast the stomach empties into the small intestine, which is where most alcohol gets absorbed. One frequently cited study found a light meal cut peak blood alcohol by over a third, a proper meal by well over half. It also gives the evening a shape, a start when the meal begins and an end when it finishes, rather than leaving the occasion open-ended.

09

Use a tasting pour for the last one

The Method:

50 to 75ml instead of a full glass. Usually, what you want at that point is one more taste, not one more drink. A proper measure lets you find out which without committing to the answer.

The Science: satisfying the peak-end rule

The brain evaluates an experience largely based on how it ends. A micro-pour satisfies the psychological craving for "one last taste" without compounding the physical and chemical toll of a full standard drink.

Finish at the peak

The Method:

Stop while it still tastes good, not when the bottle happens to be empty. The trade does not need a study to know when a glass has stopped earning its place. Neither do you, once you are paying attention.

The Science: recognising sensory-specific satiety

Palate fatigue naturally diminishes the reward value of additional drinks. Stopping when the pleasure wanes reinforces a positive memory of the evening, rather than anchoring the experience to the negative feelings of overindulgence.

Boundaries, not restrictions

The 10 strategies are elegant boundaries, not hard-and-fast restrictions. Try picking the ones that might fit into your life and see if anything shifts. Remember, incremental improvements are far more sustainable than trying to do everything at once.

Successful moderation is not about willpower, though part of it is about architecture. Set up the environment, and the behaviour tends to follow. You end up wanting less, because you are getting more. Appreciation winning over abundance.

The bigger picture

If your relationship with alcohol has become an ingrained autopilot habit, these tools are best used alongside a broader ecosystem that covers:

- why you are drinking in the first place
- strategies for your specific patterns and triggers
- an understanding of how alcohol works with your body and brain
- recalibration strategies if things don't go to plan
- making drink choices, alcohol or AF, that over-deliver on enjoyment
- mindset and accountability

Moderation, if done properly, is an elegant enhancement to your life, not a challenge.

About Alastair

I spent over 30 years in the wine trade before founding Alcohol Reduction Coach™.

My mission was clear: to help people whose drinking had drifted into autopilot take back conscious control and enjoy more whilst drinking less.

It probably helps that I'm one of the very few alcohol moderation coaches who still actually drinks. That matters particularly in 1:1 coaching; if a client is reporting a heavy weekend, I treat it as data, not something to judge.

→ [Find out more about the BAC System](#)

Or if you have lots of questions and want a proper human conversation:

→ [Book a free 30-minute strategy call](#)

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