

Café Alcohol Permits

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Issue

Summarize what state law allows a café alcohol permittee to sell and if there are any minimum seating requirements.

Summary

State law requires any business that intends to sell alcoholic beverages to obtain an alcohol permit from the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP). A café permit allows a business to serve alcoholic beverages as long as it keeps food available for sale, which does not have to be hot ([CGS § 30-22a](#)). Permittees may also (1) allow certain customers to take home wine they have not finished and (2) sell growlers of beer. The annual permit fee is \$2,000.

By law, a “café” is space in a suitable and permanent building held out to the public as a place where alcoholic beverages and food are served for on-premises consumption. A café must have an adequate number of employees, but it does not necessarily need to serve hot meals or have a kitchen or dining room. It is prohibited from having sleeping accommodations.

If a café has more than one public room (excluding the restrooms, kitchen, and other non-public areas), then it must, among other things, be able to seat at least 20 people ([Conn. Agencies Regs., § 30-6-B28](#)).

Café Permits

By law, a café permittee is allowed to sell all types of alcoholic beverages (e.g., liquor, wine, and beer) for on-premises consumption ([CGS § 30-22a](#)). Cafés must keep food regularly available for on-premises consumption and the requirement may be met by having sandwiches, soups, or other fresh or processed food. With prior approval from DCP and as permitted by fire, zoning, and health regulations, a café may serve in outside areas.

The law limits when café permittees may sell for on-premises consumption. They may sell on Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. the following morning, on Friday and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. the following morning, and on Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. the following morning ([CGS § 30-91\(a\)](#)). Further, they may not sell on Christmas unless they are also selling food. They can sell until 3:00 a.m. on the morning following New Year's Eve.

Wine

The law allows a café customer to take one partially-consumed bottle of wine from the café if the customer has purchased a full-course meal, which the law defines as a diversified selection of food that cannot (1) typically be consumed without using silverware or (2) be conveniently eaten while standing or walking. A café employee must securely seal the bottle and place it in a bag before the patron can take it.

Growlers

Café permittees are allowed to sell, at retail, permittee-supplied and sealed containers of draught beer for off-premises consumption (i.e., growlers). These retail sales are limited to (1) four liters of beer per day to any individual and (2) Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and any other day from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Additionally, permittees are prohibited from selling on Thanksgiving Day, New Year's Day, or Christmas Day ([CGS § 30-91\(d\)](#)).

Area, Seating Capacity, and Facilities

State regulations subject cafés with more than one public room (excluding the restrooms, kitchen, and other non-public areas) to specific facility requirements. These include having:

1. a dining room or lounge with an area of at least 400 square feet;
2. a seating capacity for at least 20 people;
3. separate toilet facilities for men and women that may be reached without passing through the barroom, though DCP may waive this requirement for hardship; and

4. effective separation of the dining room or lounge from the barroom, or an agreement that the bar will be used only as a service bar (i.e., customers are not allowed to order or get drinks) ([Conn. Agencies Regs., §§ 30-6-B28 & -B29](#)).

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