

Happy Hours FAQs

Q: Does North Carolina have happy hour for alcohol?

No. North Carolina ABC permitted establishments may offer happy hour food specials only. *ABC Rule 2S.0232 (b) states, "An on-premise permittee or his agent shall not give away a drink or sell the drink for any period of time less than one full business day."*

Q: Can a business reduce the price of drinks for only one segment of the population (i.e., ladies night) as long as it is for the full business day?

No. *ABC Rule 2S.0232 (b) further states, "Free or reduced drinks under this provision shall be offered to all customers, not just a segment of the population."*

Q: Can a bartender sell more than one drink to a customer at a time? No.

ABC Rule 2S.0232 (3) states, "an on-premise permittee or his agent shall not sell more than one drink to a patron for his own consumption or deliver more than one drink at one time to a patron for his consumption. This rule does not however prohibit the sale of pitchers of alcoholic beverages to two or more patrons. This rule also does not prohibit serving a single carafe or bottle of wine to a single patron." **NOTE:** This rule does not prohibit a person from purchasing a round of drinks for multiple persons.

Q: Can my business sell a bucket of beer to just one person? No. Buckets of beer are treated the same as a pitcher of beer and can only be sold to more than one person.

Q: Is a shot and a beer (i.e. a boilermaker) considered one drink? Yes. For the purpose of this rule, a boilermaker is considered one drink and may be sold to a single patron.

Q: Is a pitcher of margaritas considered one drink or more than one drink? Any drink considered a pitcher is more than one drink and must be sold to more than a single patron.

Q: What is considered a single drink?

ABC Rule 2S.232 (c), states, "a 'drink' contains the amount of alcoholic beverages usually and customarily served to a single patron as a single serving by the permittee."

Q: Is there any special time during the year where I can offer a package deal where alcoholic beverages are included in the price? Yes. *ABC Rule 2S.232 (d) (e) states, "an on-premise permittee may include alcoholic beverages in a package offering that includes a meal or entertainment if the offered special is made in conjunction with the following holidays: New Year's, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, or Father's Day. The offer of a meal and alcoholic beverage at a single total price is not a violation of this Section so long as the total price reflects the actual price of the alcoholic beverages and not a reduced price."*

Q: Can a business establish a single price based upon the required purchase of more than one drink?

No. *ABC Rule 2S.232 (a) (2), states, "an on-premise permittee or his agent shall not establish a single price based upon the required purchase of more than one drink."*

Q: Can a bartender sell "doubles" to a single patron for their own consumption? Yes. A double is considered one drink and can be sold to a single person.

Q: Can I advertise "cents-off" coupons for free alcoholic beverages? No. *ABC Rule 2S-1006 (a), states, "cents-off coupons or coupons offering free alcoholic beverages shall not be used as a method for advertising."*



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Q: Can my business advertise “2 for 1,” “buy 1 get 1 free,” or “buy 1 get another for a (nickel, penny, etc.)”?

No. ABC Rule 2S.1006 (f), states, “no on-premise permittee or his agent shall advertise any drink promotion prohibited by Rule 2S.0232. This paragraph includes a ban on all advertisements of “2 for 1,” “buy 1 get 1 free,” buy 1 get another for a (nickel, penny, etc.), and any other similar statement indicating that a patron must buy more than one drink.”

Q: Can I advertise alcoholic beverages on my free-standing marquee located at the street? No. ABC Rule 2S.1008 (a), (b) requires all exterior advertising for alcohol to be on “a single nonmechanical sign,” attached to the building on the licensed premises. Additional requirements apply.

Q: Can my business promote specials where prizes are given away based on the purchase of certain alcoholic beverages? No. ABC Rule 2S.1006 (e), states, “except as otherwise provided in these Rules, no industry member of retailer shall promote an alcoholic beverage product by giving prizes, premiums or merchandise to individuals for which any purchase of alcoholic beverages is required based on the return of empty containers unless all containers of like products are accepted and considered on an equal basis with the product sold by the permittee.”