



Host a Fundraiser

IDEAS FOR FUNDRAISING INVOLVING WHISK(e)Y

Disclaimer: Be sure to comply with all state and local liquor regulations.

1. Host A Whiskey-Tasting Event

Arrange for as many as one hundred different whiskeys to be available for sampling, including single malt and blended Scotch whiskeys, Irish whiskeys, small-batch bourbons, cognacs and high-end tequilas.

In a large reception room, group your tasting booths by category in a racetrack format. That way, people can stroll about freely and select the liquors that interest them.

Charge a general admission fee commensurate with the quality of the whiskey-tasting. Many groups go with a price in the \$50 to \$100 range.

Tickets should be offered for pre-sale through participating merchant partnerships. This is a good way to reach that specific customer base without spending large amounts on advertising. Your group can also issue a press release, seek publicity from local media coverage, and offer tickets at a discount to your own group members as well as related organizations. Some groups even do their event in partnership with another nonprofit group.

Consider hiring a live jazz band to give your event a swinging tone. Black-tie formal dress events also appeal to certain people as being more exclusive and therefore more deserving of their time and money, so keep that in mind during planning.

You can also offer a special VIP tasting for an equal or larger additional fee. In the VIP whiskey-tasting, include some one-on-one interaction with the whisky experts. Distillery representatives will often compare varieties of whiskey and explain how different types of aging in oak barrels affect traits such as taste and appearance.

Another potential tie-in would be premium cigars. You could provide an expert who could explain how fine cigars are made, demonstrate the finer points of cigar rolling and who could also offer various high-end cigars for sale.

There are other ways you can maximize revenue at your whisky-tasting event. You can offer examples of fine liquors via silent auction or conduct a live auction at a certain time, say two hours into the event.

Raffle tickets are another way to raise funds. By offering an inexpensive way to possibly win an expensive prize, you can oftentimes raise more money than that item would bring at auction.



Host a Fundraiser

Another approach is to keep the ticket price low and encourage people to buy multiple tickets. And of course, a raffle allows you to sell tickets to people who can't make the event but would still like to participate in the fun.

Always allow yourself enough lead time to successfully organize your fundraising event. Otherwise, everything will seem rushed and chaotic to your guests.

Give at least a month's lead time when you announce your whisky-tasting fundraiser. That allows people to plan their weekend far enough ahead to ensure high attendance levels.

2. Host a Scotch or Bourbon Pull

I imagine that most of you have heard of the Wine Pull or Wall of Wine revenue generator that is facilitated at charity auction events. This activity is enjoyed by guests during the silent auction/cocktail time and is set up at a station. A twist on this activity is a Scotch or Bourbon Pull. Guests play the same way with the exception that instead of a bottle of wine prize, the winners receive a bottle of whiskey.



The picture above is a Wall of Bourbon but you can call this activity a variety of things. How you set it up can differ as well. What will remain the same is that you'll need 40-50 bottles of whiskey. Get these donated. How? Ask each of your board members to bring a bottle (or two). You can also post a call-to-action on your nonprofits' Facebook page soliciting donations. These donations can be the bottles themselves or you can request cash to underwrite the whiskey. Be specific with your request – indicate guidelines for the type bottles you need, both in size and value. I recommend bottles with a minimum retail value of at least \$40 or more. You'll also need to procure a few really nice bottles of much higher value. This is important for creating the desire to participate – that high-dollar bottle of booze will intrigue guests who hope they will win THAT bottle.



Host a Fundraiser

The bottles are placed so the labels can be seen easily. Have fun with the display, making it as attractive as possible. Tags with a number are placed around each bottle and secured with tape. The corresponding number is placed on a “vehicle” which will determine the bottle each participant will win. This vehicle can be a variety of things. You can place the numbers on cubes, which are then put in a bowl. To play, each participant reaches into the bowl, without looking, and selects a cube. The number on the cube is matched to the number on the bottle tag and that is the prize they win.

You can alternatively use a bingo basket and place the numbers that correspond to the whiskey bottles on the bingo balls. The participant rolls the cage until a ball with a number comes out.

The cost to play this revenue generator is \$50-\$100. After each play, the bidder’s number or name is written on the tag and placed in a holding area close to the checkout area for pick up after the event. We encourage this to ensure no liquor laws are broken, which could jeopardize the venue or nonprofit’s license. Be sure to check your state liquor and gambling laws at the early planning stages of your event to avoid any surprises.

Your guests will have a great time playing this revenue generator at your next charity auction event!

3. Have a Raffle

A single bottle of very nice Bourbon/Scotch can be purchased and then raffled off (once the desired number of raffle tickets have been sold).

Make sure that the cost of the raffle tickets and the number of raffle tickets you sell ensure a nice profit at the end.

For example, purchase a \$1,000 bottle of Bourbon. Sell 40 tickets at \$25 each and you break even (not the way to go!). Sell 100 tickets at \$50 each and your profit is \$4,000.

4. Order A Barrel

You can work directly with a distillery to purchase an entire barrel of your favorite liquor. Your cash outlay will be steep, but can pay off big time if you are 1) patient, 2) have a minimum of \$10,000 to purchase the barrel sipping delight, 3) have a place to properly store the bottled liquor.

We know that Jack Daniels distillery will sell you an entire barrel. The year John Germ, from Chattanooga, Tennessee, (USA) was the International President of Rotary International, his Club purchased a barrel and had it bottled. The distillery worked with the Club to custom engrave the bottles as well. John Germ autographed each bottle (with a special marker for writing on glass) for extra flair.

The Club sold these bottles for \$300 each during his tenure as Rotary International President.

5. Wagon or Wheel Barrel Auction



Host a Fundraiser

Another easy way to put together a significant amount of liquor without a huge investment is to ask each Board or Club member to donate a nice (\$50 and up) bottle of brown liquor. These items are displayed in a toy wagon or a wheel barrel, (anything that can hold the weight of the liquor and be wheeled away at the end of the night). This can be sold at either a live or silent auction.

6. Progressive Dinner, Safari Supper, Moving Feast

A progressive dinner (US) or safari supper (UK) is a dinner party with successive courses prepared and eaten at the residences of different hosts. Usually this involves the consumption of one course at each location.

This type of moving feast offers hours of entertainment with a limited amount of preparation. It's a great way to entertain a group of friends or neighbors without shouldering the whole responsibility (or cost) of a multi-course dinner party -- all because a progressive dinner party is held at several homes in succession, with a single course served at each one.

Whether you'd like to plan a simple affair or throw an elaborately themed mobile soiree, there are a few basic tenants to follow. The most important? Encourage each host to prepare their course ahead of time so they can join the guests as the party migrates.

A weekend may work best for your progressive party, as a four-course dinner will take nearly four hours. Each course -- appetizers, salad/soup, main course, dessert -- will last about 45 minutes. Plus, you'll need to include an appropriate time cushion between courses as guests walk (or take a short ride -- with designated drivers, please) to the next destination.

If guests must drive from one home to another, the party may take considerably longer -- perhaps five or six hours. It will work best if the homes are no more than 15 minutes apart by car. Otherwise, guests will spend the evening driving instead of socializing.

Whether guests ride or walk from home to home, you'll want to designate "people movers" to ensure that guests are subtly corralled and mobilized at appointed times; this will keep the party on track, especially as the evening progresses. Staying on schedule also allows you to predict when you'll arrive at each home, something that's important if any of your guests plan to drop in just for cocktails or dessert. The fluid nature of a progressive dinner party is part of its appeal. Guests aren't locked into an hours-long commitment, but can attend as their schedules permit.

Now add a whiskey component to this type of event - the possibilities are unlimited! Whiskey pairings with each course, foods prepared with whiskey, a drawing at each home for a nice bottle of your



Host a Fundraiser

favorite brown liquor. This event can scale in size if you choose not to do a seated dinner and make it a buffet or cocktail type party. Taking a progressive dinner party from idea to reality means recruiting the right hosts, choosing foods that hold well and working together.