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# What a BYOB program might look like in Boston

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While the Boston City Council voted Wednesday to lift the city’s ban on BYOB — or “bringing your own bottle” of beer or wine into restaurants — you’ll want to hold onto your sixpacks and chardonnay, for now.

More steps must be taken by city officials before diners are permitted to supply and serve themselves at Boston eateries, and even if the initiative is ultimately approved, various restrictions likely will apply.

However, Wednesday’s vote also offered a closer look at what a BYOB policy in Boston might look like.

The council’s ordinance included some detailed “guidance” — a list of proposed regulations — that it asked to be considered by other city officials who will be tasked with setting the final rules.

Here’s a guide to what may be ahead:

**BYOB would only be allowed in some neighborhoods**

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# City Council expected to approve BYOB

The measure limits the initiative to restaurants with 30 or fewer seats and restrict it to outlying neighborhoods.

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The council's guidance calls for BYOB to be restricted to outlying neighborhoods such as Hyde Park, Roxbury, South Boston, and Dorchester.

BYOB would remain banned in the following neighborhoods: Downtown, the North End, South End, Bay Village, Fenway, Chinatown, Seaport, West End, Beacon Hill, and Back Bay.

## Not all restaurants would be eligible

Under the council's recommendations, restaurants would need to get a BYOB license from the city, and renew it each year, at a cost of \$300 annually. The license would need to be hung visibly inside the business.

Restaurants that have a license to serve alcohol would be ineligible for a BYOB license. And restaurants with more than 30 seats would not be able to obtain a license.

The establishments must serve food on site with a wait staff and must have a liquor liability insurance policy.

Managers and staff would also have to undergo insurance industry-approved training about how to serve alcohol safety.

## Only certain types and amounts of alcoholic drinks would be allowed

Customers dining at BYOB-licensed restaurants would only be allowed to bring malt beverages and



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wine, according to the rules envisioned by city councilors.

The maximum amount of wine allowed per two customers would be 750 milliliters, the equivalent of a standard bottle of wine.

The maximum amount of malt beverages allowed per two customers would be 72 ounces, or the equivalent of a standard six-pack of beer. Each malt beverage would have to be in a container no larger than 16 ounces.

The proposed regulations do not specify what amounts would be allowed if customers were to bring a combination of both beer and wine, but they do prohibit customers from bringing the maximum amounts of both wine and beer.

### **Customers could be forced to pay extra for BYOB**

The proposed regulations would allow for restaurants to set a “corkage” fee on bottles at their own discretion.

### **It’s not clear how soon a BYOB policy could be implemented**

The ordinance approved by the council Wednesday first will require approval from Mayor Martin J. Walsh. Walsh’s office said Wednesday he would approve it.

If he gives the green light, the initiative would then go before the city’s Licensing Board, leaving officials there to develop the final regulations. The board’s chair has said the group would hold a public hearing to solicit feedback.

No timetable has been announced for the board to issue its regulations.

### **Reaction to a BYOB policy has been mostly positive**

The ordinance approved Wednesday said “the practice of BYOB would provide economic opportunity for small businesses and would increase economic vitality in the neighborhoods.”

City Councilor Michelle Wu, who has co-led the effort since February, told the Globe recently that “the goal is to jump-start new restaurants.”

In other cities, BYOB has been a boon to restaurateurs unable to afford pricy liquor licenses.

At a public hearing last week, no one explicitly opposed BYOB, including representatives of the local restaurant industry.

There was some skepticism, though. Councilor Ayanna Pressley said she feared that BYOB would shrink tips for servers and create a two-tiered licensing system in which most liquor licenses remained downtown while outlying neighborhoods would be relegated to BYOB.

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