

Thank you for hearing testimony on the issue of cocktails-to-go for Oregon restaurants during this unprecedented time.

No one in the restaurant business can be successful without a few things: creativity, the ability to react quickly, and a deep care for quality. Quality isn't just about taste, or service— it also means attention to the safety of our product and our guests. Going into the pandemic, few industries were better trained to maintain sanitation, monitor responsible customer behavior and to adjust (early and often) to new protocols. We understand, in our bones, the need for excellence and attention to public health rules, liquor regulations and service standards.

I am the COO and Creative Director for the Marché Restaurant Group in Eugene— we have been celebrating this bountiful place and this community to national acclaim for more than 20 years. We've been honored by the James Beard Foundation and the national and international press, and reached milestones that few restaurants have the privilege to reach. While we've certainly had our ups and downs, not until this year have we been shaken so deeply. Emotionally, financially, logistically, we've been gutted by the pandemic and the attendant restrictions on our ability to serve with grace and hospitality. Most painful have been the layoffs. Our crew has gone from more than 180 down to four, back up to almost 60, and back down again recently with the latest restrictions. It has been excruciating to see our employees and their families bear the brunt, but through it all they've been understanding, loyal and stalwart. Within the allowable limits, our customers have been amazing, rallying to support us in any way they can.

Our ability to serve our customers has changed, and changed, and changed again. Now, in deep, wet winter, we are trying to find ways to keep our revenue trickling in while operating outside, under tents with very little allowable windbreak. We are focusing on takeout and finding new ways to meet our customers where they are. Our customers have embraced these adjustments, taken advantage of wine-to-go and cocktail mixer kits with great enthusiasm. They want to celebrate, even if it's in small groups at home.

At Marché, our sales are 20% of normal— but the rent, utilities and fixed costs of operations haven't changed. The costs—both literal and figurative—of stopping and starting business to flex with the regulations are staggering. Profitability—even in more usual times—depends on the mix of products we offer, and the bar is a huge, huge contributor to balancing our cost of goods. As food costs and import tariffs go up, our margins are harder to meet. Without bar income, we are hobbled even further.

But we're staying with it— we're shifting and adjusting, as restaurant people do, on the fly. We're being creative without sacrificing quality, sanitation or the responsible service of alcohol. Join us in that creativity, and help independent restaurants survive by allowing us to send cocktails home with our guests.

Thank you,

Jessica MacMurray Blaine
Creative Director, C.O.O.
Marché Restaurant Group
Marché & Le Bar, Provisions Market Hall, Provisions South