The Moscow Times
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Alcohol Delivered After Hours

By The Moscow Times

February 08, 2012



Laws against alcohol sales at night can be skirted if you know who to call. **Igor Tabakov**

According to the law, it's not possible to buy alcoholic beverages at night, but there are ways around that. For example, alcohol can be received as a present, rented, or accepted as collateral.

In Novosibirsk, sales of alcoholic beverages are forbidden from 10 p.m. to 9 a.m. But a company called Litrovoz can help. Its business model works as follows: a customer gives a loan to a courier who comes to him, and as collateral he receives a bottle that is the property of the courier.

The cost of delivery of the collateral is from 200 rubles to 500 rubles ($7 to $17), depending on which part of the city you are in. The delivery charge is included in the collateral amount if your order is less than 1,000 rubles. If it's more, delivery is free.

The courier who brought a Vedomosti correspondent a bottle of whiskey at 12:30 a.m. explained that it was possible to give back the collateral and get a refund, if the alcoholic

beverage was returned by 10:00 a.m. — but he had never heard of anyone actually doing that.

AlkoPresent, a Novosibirsk club that delivers alcohol accessories, promises to make beverage gifts to its customers. When one orders a souvenir that has the symbol of the club on it — a magnet for 500 rubles, a laminated map for 1,000 rubles, or a button for 2,000 rubles, and so forth — the purchaser gets as a present a free bottle of the spirit of their choice, whose daytime price happens to coincide with the cost of the souvenir.

A quick check on the Internet shows that other Russian cities are not falling behind Novosibirsk. In Moscow, for example, there is the Alkozazhigalka company, which offers customers the opportunity to buy a cigarette lighter and get points — one point equals 1 ruble — and then select a bottle as a present for accumulated points.

There is also the regional social organization We Have the Right. One can join by paying the membership fee and get a bottle of booze as a present, though this group requires that passport data be provided.

There are other schemes. Agent 0.5, at a customer's request, will deliver alcohol from bars and restaurants. Alcoholia.net offers alcoholic beverages for rent — the contract is valid until 8 a.m. The Internet site Alkosale.ru offers around-the-clock delivery of alcohol obtained from duty-free stores.

Legal experts explain that such businesses violate the spirit, but not the letter of the law — giving and renting alcoholic beverages does not require a license. "Now in Russia only the buying and selling of alcohol at specific times is prohibited — everything else is allowed," said lawyer Ivan Kokarev. In order to prosecute those who offer alcohol at night but don't formally sell it, it's necessary to legally prohibit not only sales but also any related transaction, he said.

There is a catch even now, said Anton Mudry, senior lawyer at a Siberian legal firm. "The transactions could be classified as artificial, in line with Article 170 of the Civil Code," he said.

Name one law that can't be circumvented, said Viktor Zvagelsky, deputy chairman of the Duma committee on economic policy, who participated in setting up the anti-alcohol legislation. It's not possible to close every loophole — the punishment for violating the law has to be increased, he said.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/02/08/alcohol-delivered-after-hours-a12471