



Wine - Oh!

by Erika Kelsey

Wine Garage is like a grown-up ice cream parlour: everyone comes in stressed out and leaves with a smile. It's very trendy – lots of swirling and sniffing goes on here – but not at all pretentious, especially if you choose to sit al fresco.

My colleague Verne Maree and I are told to watch our step on the way in, and as we get seated, Verne remarks, "We'll try not to stumble out."

"Oh, don't worry," says marketing executive Grace Goh. "You won't get tipsy here tonight."

I give Verne a surprised look. She replies with an equally perplexed but reassuring nod and a bit of a wink. It means, 'of course we'll drink wine. Lots of it.'

And with that, three glasses appear – each. And why not? Wine Garage sells their wine at retail prices, with 16 varieties by the glass (\$7 - \$15). There's not much sense in bringing your own (\$10 corkage) given that the wine menu rivals an Oxford dictionary in size.

The wines are kept fresh in a wine cuvinet, a system of bottles, tubes and taps that took some explanation. One tube injects the bottles with nitrogen for freshness and to keep it from oxidizing. Another connects the bottle to a tap so servers can pour out those hearty glasses with ease.

The subject of the day, beyond a valiant attempt to check out a whole wall full of wines (the sacrifices I make for you, dear readers), is the pairing of food and wine.



We get a little help from American chef, Travis Maseiro.

While most wines are available year-round, his menu changes with the season. Of course he is referring to the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, given that Singapore is decidedly summertime year-round. He explains, "July in Australia means root vegetables; in the US, fresh cucumbers. It's interesting for me. I've never been in a situation where I'm dealing with two seasons [simultaneously] before."

So when it comes to wine, he advises, "you can't just pick your favourites. You've got to have a balance." He hustles back to the kitchen to prepare skewers of pork

belly and watermelon (\$8) to go with our German dry Riesling. The Sauvignon Blanc complements a spinach salad (\$15) and a Spanish Miguel Torres Chardonnay melds wonderfully with the hot smoked Scottish salmon (\$22). I have to remark, with a note of surprise, "I don't usually like chardonnay!"

Verne shakes her head at me and takes another enthusiastic gulp. Travis elaborates. "With this pairing, I tried to match the acidity of the wine with the fat content of the salmon."

Next up, Travis says: "We'll start another round with the reds, first a pinot noir then a cabernet and a shiraz."

"You're my new favourite chef," I say. My cheeks are getting flushed.

A pinot noir arrives to accompany braised duck folded in herbs. The Shiraz blends in time with sumptuous, slow roasted beef tenderloin (\$35). [Cue mouth-watering]. But the true romance on the table, I believe, occurs between the cabernet sauvignon (Whoops! Picking favourites!) and the Japanese Kurobuta pork (\$45) with porcini risotto. Travis chose the wine because it's "earthy" like the mushrooms.

He's back to work in the kitchen for a while and reappears, perspiring a bit as dinner is well under way, just as we down the last of our shiraz and nibble the remaining bits of seared red snapper with quinoa (Native American grain) salad (\$29).

"Well," he says. "Either you're really hungry, or you liked it."

Wine Garage is located at #01-07 Riverside Point, 30 Merchant Road. Wine tastings occur every Friday and 3-course set suppers are available on Sundays. For reservations, call 6533 3188.



CAPE WINES

Today, South Africa's reputation for vivacity, excitement and enormous diversity is reflected very much in its wine industry, though its wine history began with the arrival of the first settlers in 1652. It did not take long for the parched explorers to slake their thirst by planting the region's first vineyards.

If the notion of South African wine seems new to you, consider the fact that South Africa was awarded 13 Best in Class gold medals at the 2006 International Wine and Spirits Competition – an accolade worthy of some of Europe's finest wines.

At Cape Cellars, the goal is to offer a selection of the greatest wines that have been shaped by the rich history of South African winemaking. With an ever-growing list of vintners and varietals available now, there's something to stimulate all palettes!

A new generation of energetic and passionate winemakers is emerging from the country's 350-year-old tradition and uniquely Mediterranean climate. Even some of the world's finest wine makers have lent their expertise to the further the region's development in the field. Pierre Lurton of Cheval Blanc and Chateaux Yquem is the consultant winemaker for one of Cape Cellars' finest labels - Morgenster Estate in the Western Cape.

Visit www.cape-cellars.com.sg

Tel: 6468 4332 or 9823 7140



The Wine List

Here's just a taste of where to whet your whistle and please your palate. Singapore's wine scene has taken off in the past 20 years: currently more than 60 wine sellers operate on the island. Many of these shops are combined with restaurants, host tastings and offer cosy spots to sit and enjoy.

Le Bénaton (French)

River Valley Village
4 Hoot Kiam Road
6235 4800

Cape Cellars

www.cape-cellars.com.sg
6468 4332

Cellar Door (Australia/New Zealand)

www.thecellardoor.com.sg
619 Bukit Timah
6463 5296

Cold Storage & Jason's Wine Cellar

www.coldstorage.com.sg
for Branch Addresses

Crystal Wines

www.crystalwines.com
491 River Valley Road
#01-02 Valley Point
6737 3540

Culina

www.culina.com.sg
• 617 Bukit Timah
6468 5255
• 21 Orchard Blvd.
#01-23 Parkhouse
6735 8858

Vinotique

Blk 4 Queen's Road
#02-133 6474 2911

Vinum (fine wines)

www.vinum.com.sg
• Shaw Centre
6735 3700
• #01-03 Citylink Mall
6338 9414

Wine Arcade

www.winearcade.com
116 MacKenzie Road
6336 2881

Wine Culture

897 Bukit Timah Road
6462 1129

Wine Garage

www.winegarage.com.sg
30 Merchant Road #01-07
Riverside Point
6533 3188

Wine Network

13 Dempsey Road
#01-03A
6479 2280

Le Vigne

40 Holland Grove Rd
6462 0053

Bacchus

#B1-13 Paragon
6734 4844

The Wine Company

www.thewinecompany.com.sg
• Blk. 14-3 Dempsey Road
6479 9341
• 26 Evans Road #01-05
6732 1229

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