

FOOD DRINK DISH!

BY KELLY A. MAGYARICS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY POWERS AND CREWE

Hit the bottle at Vinifera in Reston!

[NEW ON THE SCENE] OUT ON THE VINE

Dark wood and brushed metal, a world of wines to sip and a casual chic vibe: Are we really in Reston? Indeed. The nearby Dulles Toll Road feels a million miles away from **Vinifera**, a posh new gathering place at Westin Reston Heights—and the first true wine bar to hit the area. Named for the species of vine that produces most of the world's wines, this haute grape haven sports an eclectic cellar collection of 31 by-the-glass options and more than 270 bottles (including a few top Virginia labels). On warm summer evenings, the breezy terrace beckons imbibers with its hardwood furniture and soft lighting, making it the perfect place to savor tasting-plate creations such as chicken lollipops, tiger prawn potstickers and margarita flat bread. Not in the mood to share? Devour the seared Georges Bank sea scallops with pea purée and sweet chili oil. "Vinifera is meant to be a sophisticated neighborhood gathering spot," says general manager Sami Zeitoun, who is planning wine dinners and sipping classes. So bring your own 'hood to Reston! 11750 Sunrise Valley Dr., Reston, 703.391.9000.



Dish with Diane Gross and Khalid Pitts.

[RESTAURATEUR Q&A] WHERE THE SIPPER IS HIPPER

Diane Gross and Khalid Pitts aim for intense cork-and-fork synergy at **Cork**, their Logan Circle restaurant and wine bar, which opened earlier this year and has locals going gaga in their zest to swirl, sniff and sip while feasting on chef Ron Tanaka's brilliant American and Mediterranean small plates. We asked Gross how the happy couple grew from political wonks to wine aficionados. *What inspired Cork's creation?* Khalid and I had always wanted to open an intimate restaurant near our home. After the 2004 elections, when our guy didn't win and I didn't want to work on the Hill anymore, we toured Paris and decided that a wine bar was just what this neighborhood needed. Plus, it would give us the chance to explore our passion for wine together. *Describe the space.* It's rustic-modern and cozy. We kept the beautiful exposed brick wall and tin ceiling and added some modern touches. *What are guests drinking?* People order a lot of Bordeaux and Burgundy, but also many varietals that they may not have encountered before such as negroamaro, fer servadou, grillo and chenin blanc. *How about flights?*

We offer four new flights each month. The most popular are sparkling flights and any with big reds—right now we have a Rhône flight and a tempranillo flight. *And the food?* Ron Tanaka came to us from CityZen, so he brings complex layers and flavors to his dishes. But he likes to have fun with his food, and our bistro menu is affordable and goes great with wine. *Your favorite Cork food and wine pairing?* Rosemary chicken liver bruschetta with the Albert Mann pinot blanc. The chicken livers are a bit decadent and also earthy. The pinot blanc has great acidity to balance the richness but also its own richness and smokiness which compliments the bruschetta. *Do you miss the Hill?* No. That was a great experience, but it's gratifying to be here. You don't get that in politics all the time! 1720 14th St., NW, 202.265.2675.



The future of wine bars? Glass half-full.

[FIVE CAN'T-MISS SIPS]

BAR BAUDELAIRE Francophiles have a new reason to be oenophiles in Old Town. The second floor of that bastion of French cuisine, Le Gaulois Café, is now a heady sipping station. Wine director Steve Fisher's lengthy list represents all regions of France—and most of the wine world. A petits-plats menu caters to the late-night set. 1106 King St., Alexandria, 703.739.9495.

ENOTECA A wine bar in a grocery store? Skeptics should park their carts and head to the pour-your-own loft at Whole Foods in Fairfax. The mantra here is "try before you buy." Small tables are topped with tasting notes and wine books. Order Manchego with your Rioja or bring in bites from the several in-store restaurant-cafés. 4501 Market Commons Dr., Fairfax, 703.222.2058.

EVO BISTRO Grab a glass and a prepaid card at this McLean hideaway, where wines are dispensed self-serve-style from a sleek Enomatic system. Explore 32 wines by taste or full pour. Splurge on a \$25 legendary Penfolds Grange while nibbling on chef Driss Zahidi's Mediterranean-inspired tapas; go for the zesty sautéed garlic shrimp and spinach-and-crab-stuffed crêpes. 1313 Old Chain Bridge Rd., McLean, 703.288.4422.

VERITAS Joe Englert and Adam Manson are the dynamic duo behind this lively Dupont Circle nook. Grape nuts can take flight, sampling pours with names like "So Fresh, So Clean" and "Bordeaux Threesome." A charcuterie-and-cheese menu provides smart pairings and desserts (with Port or Sauternes to match) sate the sweet tooth. 2031 Florida Ave., NW, 202.265.6270.

VINOTECA It's always a steamy scene at Paul Carlson's U Street hotspot, with live music, flamenco dancing and weekly wine classes. In the mood for sliders and syrah? Vinoteca's got you covered with several versions, along with small plates, entrées and cheese boards. The spacious bar, lounge and patio gives plenty of elbow room to quaff your picks from the saucy wine list. 1940 11th St., NW, 202.332.9463.