



RESTAURANT JOURNAL

## New wine bars in old-town settings

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In the maybe-not-such-strange-bedfellows sweepstakes, wine shops that are also wine bars with food are lately the darlings of city redevelopment folks all over Southern California. And it's hard to argue with the sense that they're just the thing to lure suburbanites back to revitalized "old town" centers.

Oh, sure, locals might say they've come to the spiffed-up district to hang out at the art museum or coffeehouse, and it's great to pull your car into one of those pretty, clean new parking structures -- but for really giving a place a "hmm, it's kind of getting trendy around here" feeling, nothing beats an evocative landmark space where you can sniff, swirl, sip and snack.

Pacific Wine Merchants moved into the historic 1937 Santa Fe railroad station building in Old Town Upland about four months ago, returning to the neighborhood where the business began 12 years ago.

"The city of Upland came to us and asked if we'd be interested in coming into the building; they thought we could bring in traffic," says co-owner Fred Paciocco. "We're glad. It's a neat old Spanish-style building."

The generously sized retail area showcases more than 600 labels, and though the main business is selling wine by the bottle or case to take home, owners Paciocco and Brian Brandt have added a wine bar at the new location. They serve about 10 wines by the glass from the handsomely restored railroad ticket-counter area; **24 more wines are on tap in an Enomatic machine (that increasingly popular ATM-like, wine-sampling apparatus).** Pacific doesn't have a kitchen but serves charcuterie, cheeses, breads and olives.

In April, Packing House Wine Merchants were among the new businesses opening in the freshly renovated Sunkist citrus packing house that's the cornerstone of a redeveloped mixed-use neighborhood in Claremont. Owner Sal Medina calls his establishment "a wine shop, bar and lounge," and offers cheese, meat and fruit plates for noshing while sampling from among the 20 to 30 wines by the glass available. (Or, if you commit to two glasses, Medina will open any bottle in the shop.)

Food from a next-door restaurant scheduled to open soon will be available in the future. Medina plans wine tastings and other events, already hosting a twist on the beer-'n'-sports tradition with Wednesday night "Wine and a Movie" evenings during which Old Hollywood classics are shown on the flat screen.

There's a kitchen and a full menu at the Twisted Vine Wine Shop & Bar, which has been open almost nine months in a 1930s-era building in Fullerton's historic downtown district. In fact, owner Chris Castillo estimates that dining is about 70% of his business, although there is also a wine shop. With his wife, Jessica, Castillo turned a former warehouse into a space with a bar, dining room and patio seating for serving tapas, sandwiches and more than 45 wines by the glass as well as 20-some specialty beers.

Exposed brick and a vaulted wood ceiling are true to the old-town feeling.

The inspiration? A wine-loving couple, the Castillos wanted to bring wine-country atmosphere to northern Orange County. Without, of course, planting vines.