

Capital Cellars

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The GM of the Shangri La Hotel in Delhi, Andrew Steele, pulls out a rust coloured menu from his bookshelf in his plush office and rattles off exotic sounding wine labels. Though it's been two years since the Australian enjoyed the \$3,000 dinner in Shanghai, he still remembers the taste of the dark mahogany 1906 Chateau d'Yquen he sipped among other classic vintages. "Imagine tasting a wine that shares its date with the first batch of Rolls Royce. You know unlike other spirits, a wine has a history attached to it and that's what makes it so special," he says animatedly as he breaks the news of opening a wine bar at the hotel's Island Bar in a month or two.

"We want to educate Indians about the drink and that's why we've decided to offer 32 wines and four champagnes by the glass," he says. He is also importing the **enomatic wine serving system** from Italy that uses nitrogen gas to prevent wine from getting oxidised. "This vending machine will allow the customer to check out the prices of the spirits by inserting a debit card. He can then take his pick and get the amount deducted," he informs. The client will be able to sample 30 ml of wine if he doesn't want to order a bottle. Steele already has a tentative list with him and guest will get a chance to taste a Grover for as little as Rs 50 and a Rs 10,000, second-label Cos d'Estournel red Bordeaux for Rs 500.

Another place that's trying to cash in on the wine trend is Terroir, a European restaurant and wine bar at Gurgaon's Galaxy Hotel. "We have 48 wines at the moment, but we plan to stock around 180 by December," says Amit Gupta, Assistant Food and Beverage Manager. Terroir serves 13 wines by the glass, with the price ranging between Rs 300 and Rs 490. It will soon bring on the table wines from Greece, Portugal and even China.

Hyatt Regency, on the other hand, has been focusing on wines for around three years now. It has 165 labels from 11 countries at its wine bar at La Piazza and it's adding 50 new ones soon. The Oberoi also launched its cellar, Enotica, in 2004 and it now houses around 110 labels. It has a range of exclusive wines of which the Chateau Petrus Grand Vin 1996 from Bordeaux costs Rs 1,30,000.

Interestingly stand-alone restaurants are also catching up. Baci, the Italian restaurant at the Sunder Nagar market launched its wine bar last week. "We had 30 wines earlier, but now we've almost doubled the list. We are also offering at least 20 wines by the glass here," says its owner Andrea Pauro. He even plans to start a three-course wine dinner for which people can sign up. Meanwhile, Shangri La is already hosting wining and dining sessions at its restaurant, 19 Oriental Avenue, but the entry is by invitation only. However, Steele wants to take this a step forward by holding workshops on a particular variety of grape or a wine country. Smoke House Grill, the restaurant cum bar in GK II is also promising to become a wine destination. It plans a list of approximately 100 wines, of which 10-12 can be ordered by the glass. "Wine and champagne amounts to 45-47 per cent of our total liquor sale," says Restaurant Manager Deb Dip Chatterjee. It seems the city is in high spirits.