



Wine Odyssey

Lenny Ann Low
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Advertisement

39-43 Argyle Street, The Rocks, 1300 136 498.

Open Sunday to Wednesday, noon to 10pm;

Thursday to Saturday, noon to 12am.

HOUSED in a heritage-listed building that has served as a hospital, a brothel and the public house of Rosetta Terry, Australia's first female entrepreneur, Wine Odyssey features a tasting room, wine bar, bottle shop and "aroma room and tasting theatre". In the tasting room, 44 Australian wines are available for DIY tastings.

THIS IS POSSIBLE due to an Italian-developed Enomatic wine preservation and pouring system. More simply, it's a series of wine-vending stations decanting a taste (25ml), a half glass (75ml) or a full glass (150ml) from 44 bottles, each kept fresh via temperature control and nifty decanting devices. Staff are effusive with assistance and advice as we proceed.

A SMART CARD either stores a pre-paid amount or runs up a tab; we insert ours into the slot above one station of stored bottles. Positioning a glass beneath the bottle's special dispensing nozzle, the desired amount is selected on a keypad and the wine pours out.

DO MILLIONAIRES HAVE ROOMS LIKE THIS in which to waft thoughtfully between sips of a crisp white and quaffs of a warming red? For \$10, we taste (25ml serves) a Scotchmans Hill pinot gris from Victoria, a Brian Barry Juds Hill riesling from South Australia, a Glandore rose{aac} from the Hunter Valley and a Tobin merlot from Queensland.

THE PENFOLDS GRANGE LABEL is splattered gently with faded blotches; gazing at it is as close as I get to sampling it. A 25ml taste (\$38) costs more than a bottle of good red but making it available is a great idea.

WE RETIRE TO A RICHLY DECORATED SITTING ROOM, crammed with fat vintage sofas and armchairs, tasselled lamps and brocade cushions. Wines from the tasting room can be brought here for comfortable quaffing and the wine list has 200 by the bottle (60 by the glass, 43 by the half-glass). The food menu offers snacks or full meals with wines for each course. We order fried szechuan calamari with squid-ink aioli (\$10.90, too salty), grilled ciabatta and sourdough, olive oil, za'atar spice and dukkah (\$7.90) and beetroot and goat's cheese pillows with sweet balsamic reduction (\$15.90, nice despite falling apart). We are sold on the ingenious, no-pressure concept of this DIY wine-tasting room.

YOU'LL LOVE IT for bypassing complex wine label terms and deciding on taste alone.

YOU'LL HATE IT if wine-bore drinking friends don't need further encouragement.

GO THERE FOR multiple wine samples and cosy drinking nooks.

IT'LL COST YOU tastes (25ml) start at \$2.

This story was found at:

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2009/07/07/1246732315583.html>