

Observer

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Wine flows by the ounce

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Jim Hepple, manager of the Wine Room on Park Avenue, stands above the restaurant's vault, which is kept at 52 degrees at all times to preserve the wine. It was originally a bank vault.

Photo by Isaac Babcock — The Observer

By Kristy Vickery
Guest Reporter



Californication, Mr. Holland's Opus, Sweet Dreams Made of These, After a Hard Days Work and The Sweet Blood of Judas. No these aren't movies coming to a theater near you — they are just some of the labels the Wine Room uses to describe their vino sold by the ounce.

"It is the best idea I have seen in restaurants or bars in decades," Wine Room Sommelier Kevin Decker said. "I can't remember a better idea... Where else can you sample wine like it was just opened?"

By combining both a wine bar and a wine shop, the Wine Room on Park Avenue is successfully bringing a unique concept to Winter Park.

Part of what makes the experience so unique — an Enomatic dispensing system. The system allows customers to sample up to 150 different wines from all over the world in 1, 2.5, or 5 ounce portions with just a swipe of a card and the push of button.

The state-of-the-art machines keep the wine fresh for more than 30 days, by forcing nitrogen into the bottles and oxygen out, similar to the wine-bottling process.



Owner of the Wine Room, Bruce Simberg, said the concept was to give people a chance to try different kinds of wine before they decide to purchase a bottle.

"We want people to be able to taste wine one ounce at a time so they don't have to spend \$50, \$100 or \$200 for a bottle," Simberg said. "We want them to taste something that is affordable."

He also said customers appreciate the cozy atmosphere, as well as the extensive artisanal and farmstead cheeses offered.

"We have a lot of parties — people bring in 15, 20, 30 or 50 people at a time," Simberg said. "People love it because it's something very different."

Private parties can be reserved and set up downstairs in the vault, which accompany not only the needs of special events, but hold lockers that can be rented for personal wine storage. The vault is kept at 52 degrees year-round to preserve wine, and is also the original vault of what used to be the old Barnett Bank.

Wine Room Manager Jim Hepple said people visit from across the globe.

"If you look at our guest book you will see addresses from all over the world," Hepple said. "We are kind of a destination here."

Wine Room customers Mike and Sally Bowrey came all the way from North Carolina to warm up with a glass of wine.

"The concept is fantastic; we really enjoy it," Sally said.

"We like to taste different kinds of wine and what better way to do it," Mike said.

Miami residents Jules and Bob Baer also said they appreciate the unique flavors the Wine Room has to offer.

"My wife doesn't really drink, and if I open a bottle I can't drink it all by myself," Bob said. "Eventually it goes bad, so it's nice to be able to come to a place and sample different wines."

"We know what we are going to get, we are going to like," Jules said.

The Wine Room

The Wine Room is located at 270 S. Park Ave. and is open Monday through Thursday from 3 p.m. to midnight, Friday and Saturday from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 a.m. and Sunday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.

They offer more than 150 different wines, as well as a variety of champagne and beer selections available at the bar. A light fare menu is also available, with an extensive variety of hand-crafted cheeses. Visit thewineroomonline.com or call 407-696-9463 for more information.