

Solage, Calistoga, CA

Featured Wine Region: Napa Valley
Number of Wines on the Menu: 35 by the glass, 400 by the bottle
Number of Regional Wines on the Menu: 26 by the glass, 300 by the bottle

"Napa Valley is a culinary and enological destination for gourmands worldwide," says Solage sommelier/beverage director Scott Turnbull. "Having the list reflect the wineries (both large and small) that we have just around the corner is key to being relevant for our visitors."

At the 130-seat, globally inspired restaurant whose cuisine is influenced by the growing seasons, the list naturally skews heavily in favor of Napa's finest. Turnbull calls the 2013 Coquerel Winery verdelho (\$10 a glass, \$45 a bottle) "an exotic treat from just up the road." Its light floral and stone-fruit notes and elegant richness go well with chilled sweet corn soup with three-seed croutons, haricots verts, nduja and thyme.

The bright strawberry- and watermelon-tinged 2015 Shypoke Winery Rosé of Grenache (\$40 a bottle) comes from a Calistoga producer with more than 100 years of experience. With local heirloom



The list at Solage restaurant in Calistoga, CA, is heavily influenced by the Napa Valley's offerings, but aims to balance classic and popular varietals with more-unusual, locally grown wines.

tomatoes, it's "a perfect foil with its clean, crisp finish and slight touch of cherry pit tannins," Turnbull says.

And the 2012 Chateau Montelena Estate Zinfandel (\$80 a bottle) is "more restrained than other full-bodied versions, classic and correct with the high alcohol and extraction." Turnbull recommends it with wood-grilled Sakura pork tenderloin with jasmine rice, ginger, chile-laced cashews tamarind sauce, coconut and mustard greens.

Curating the list in such a rich wine region is clearly a challenge, but Turnbull seeks balance. "Balancing classic and popular varietals with more

unusual but still locally grown wines is a great way to show the variety of what we have here. Thus, chardonnay and cabernet sauvignon co-exists with gewürztraminer and refosco."

In an area so full of local products for the table, Turnbull views regional and local wines as the key to the success of Solage's beverage program. "There is only so much time that people can spend going to wineries and tastings," he admits.

"Being able to enjoy a meal with a bottle of wine, and be able to spend time with it as it changes and opens is a way to better understand both wine in general, as well as the wine that we can make here."

Enolo Wine Café, Chicago

Featured Wine Region: Michigan
Number of Wines on the Menu: 40 by the glass, 50 by the bottle
Number of Regional Wines on the Menu: 3

General manager/sommelier Tony Rossi seeks out bottles that have a "classic, Old World aesthetic and balance" for the 60-seat Mediterranean-influenced café.

He believes Larry Mawby makes the best sparkling wine in the U.S. The NV L. Mawby Blanc de Blancs (\$16 a glass) is made in the Leelanau Peninsula, where stable summer temperatures are perfect for bubbles. It boasts aromas of orchard fruit and light spice, juicy acidity and a dry, crisp and clean finish that's great with fried chicken or pancetta pizza with Bosc pear and brie, he says.

Northern Michigan has a cool climate and long growing season that's akin to

that of Alsace. Rossi says the 2012 Bel Lago Vineyards Auxerrois (\$12 a glass) is similar to its French counterpart.

"Eight months spent on the lees gives the wine a subtle nutty and yeasty aromatic balance to the ripe fruit," he says. "It's a great fall wine that pairs well with scallops and butternut squash or wild fall mushrooms."

Leelanau's climate is also fitting for high-acid and low-tannin cabernet franc. The 2011 Black Star Farms Arcturos cabernet franc (\$16 a glass) balances juicy fruit and savory herbaceousness, he says. It's a winner with game fowl like pheasant, quail or duck.

Michigan wines are flying under the radar right now, but that will most likely change as word about Leelanau's quality spreads, Rossi says. "What is great about Leelanau is the porous soil and cool temps, which are not ideal for



Enolo Wine Café in Chicago offers several wines from Northern Michigan, which has a climate similar to that of Alsace.

agriculture, but perfect for the vines, which need to struggle."*

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KEEPING MERRY *AND* BRIGHT

Seven tips for surviving and thriving this holiday season

By Kelly Magyarics

Expectations run high during this time of year, as bars and restaurants fill up with guests ready to celebrate. How can you rise to the challenge? We asked several operators for suggestions on making the most of the holiday season.

BALANCE YOUR HOLIDAY DECOR

Decking those halls during the holidays adds a festive touch, but opinions vary as to how much is too much. For a seasonal pop-up or kitchy-themed concept, more is more. But many restaurants try not to overdo it with seasonal decor.

At the Bravo/Brio Restaurant Group, which includes 64 locations of Brio Tuscan Grille, “each restaurant tastefully incorporates holiday cues like white lights, fresh greenery, poinsettias, [and] some have trees,” notes chief operating officer Connie Collins. A light touch is often best, as is incorporating some elements that already exist in your restaurant.

New Orleans’ restaurant Brennan’s installs a 12-ft. tree that’s decorated with birds to tie in with the theme of its Roost Bar and lounge. Its pastry chef creates a gingerbread display that includes the French Quarter, streetcars and the restaurant’s facade.

“In the rest of the restaurant, we lightly decorate,” notes Brennan’s general manager Christian Pendleton. It’s important to find a balance, “while also allowing Brennan’s natural beauty to shine through.”

At The Palm restaurant’s Houston, TX, location, the holiday party setup includes red bows on the paintings, ornaments hung from the

As part of the subtle holiday decor, the pastry chef at New Orleans restaurant Brennan’s creates a gingerbread display that includes the French Quarter, streetcars and the restaurant’s facade.

