

Bacaro (below) in Venetian dialect is a place where friends meet for drinks. Terroir (facing page left) is in the East Village while Vintage (right) is in SoHo.



Wine bars
muscle into the
Big Apple

WINE BARS ARE SPROUTING UP IN NEW YORK AT AN IMPRESSIVE PACE, WE VISITED SOME OF THE BEST FROM THE UPPER WEST SIDE DOWN TO THE VILLAGE. VARIETY ABOUNDS WITH THEMES RUNNING THE GAMUT FROM FRENCH TO ITALIAN TO ONE THAT REPLICATES A BRITISH LIBRARY

by *Susannah Gold*
photos by John Morgan

A few years ago you would have had a difficult time finding a New Yorker who knew the difference between a wine bar and a wine cooler. Now the former are sprouting up throughout the city, sometimes at a pace of five new ones per month. Many wine bars specialize in a particular country while others prefer to concentrate on a category such as **terroir-driven wines**.

Famous chefs and restaurateurs have entered the fray at a time when going to a wine bar has become something of the norm in New York as Americans grow accustomed to drinking wine on a more regular basis. While Irish pubs are still the biggest game in town in the Big Apple, wine bars with largely Italian food have become ubiquitous. The cost of opening a wine bar is significantly cheaper than opening a restaurant convincing many entrepreneurs to gamble that New Yorkers will continue to absorb the constantly growing selection.

With the proliferation of the wine bars, which also usually serve small plates of food made or heated on the premises, has come new ways of serving. You can now get your Chardonnay and Shiraz by the 3, 6 or 8 ounce glass as well as by the quartino (about 8.5 ounces), an innovation on the New York scene that is said to have come over from Friuli in northeastern Italy compliments of chef extraordinaire Mario Batali and restaurateur, winemaker and author Joe Bastianich.

Wines are generally very expensive in New York and wine bars are a perfect way for people to try out that Marquis de Riscal Rioja or Pol Roger Champagne without breaking the bank. What follows is a selection of wine bars dispersed throughout Manhattan and one in Brooklyn, just in case you find yourself on that side of the East River the next time you get a wine craving.

Upper West Side

Buceo 95

Located on West 95th Street, steps away from Amsterdam Avenue, Buceo 95 is in a residential neighborhood with few other nearby wine bar choices. Buceo doesn't have a specific theme and instead offers small plates of food and glasses, quartinos and bottles of a variety of New and Old World wines. Piqueras Valcanto Monastrell 2005 from Spain and a Syrah-Bonarda blend from Salentein 2003 in Argentina stood out on a recent visit.

Wines are grouped on the list by body (light, medium and full) rather than by geographic area.





Vintage (above) is the place to come to try every New York state wine imaginable while Solex (right) is for those looking for a French feel and a chic décor.

area, a style that has taken hold in the United States along with separating by varietal.

Wine & Roses

As far as 26th anniversary presents go, a wine bar has to be one of the better ones you are ever going to get. And former model Jennifer Klein is not complaining after her husband Todd did just that, giving her Wine & Roses for their silver anniversary plus one. This wine bar, located on Columbus Avenue between 73rd and 74th streets, opened in August 2007 and has been packed ever since. The bar seats 25 comfortably but on many nights you will be sharing the space with 50 or more visitors. There is also a small outdoor seating area. The eclectic wine list is extensive and includes some noteworthy Italians such as Marisa Cuomo's Furore 2006 and Recioto della Valpolicella di Venturini, Le Brughine 1998.

Bar Boulud

This new wine bar, directly across from the Lincoln Center, is owned by well known restaurateur Daniel Boulud who has a number of famous restaurants under his belt including Daniel and Café Boulud. This sleek French eatery, which offers lunch and exquisite cheese plates as well as patisserie, is more of an upscale small plate restaurant than a wine bar. It opened to great acclaim earlier this year though many in the industry prefer smaller, more intimate settings. Despite Bar Boulud's size, it has space for about 100 people, it can be next to impossible to get in on any given night of the week.

Upper East Side

Uva

A family affair is in the works on this stretch of 2nd Avenue between 77th & 78th St. Uva, owned by the same family that runs local institution Lusardi's restaurant, is filled with 20 and 30

year olds eating Italian fare including pasta, pizza, sliced meats and cheese. The bar has a cozy garden for the warm weather and its popularity often forces would-be patrons to move on to the other Italian wine bars in the neighborhood. And there are many to choose from with this stretch of the Upper East Side also home to Vero, Vespa, Enoteca di Leonardo, Bar Italia and CavaTappi.

East Village

Terroir

Terroir is the brainchild of Marco Canora and Paul Grieco. The pair own Hearth, a restaurant on the same street, as well as Insieme in Midtown. Terroir is fast becoming a hangout for people in the wine industry. Its 30 seats are somewhat cramped but the particularly interesting wine list makes up for the lack of space. Terroir driven wines are a decidedly Old World wine concept and the list is heavily oriented towards Italian, French, German and Austrian wines. An entire page of the wine list is a celebration of a wine from the Campi Flegrei Le Ciglate 2006. There is also an Asprinio di Aversa 2005 from Cantine Cicala offered by the glass. Riedel glassware is used and the food comes from Hearth a few doors down the street. The bar is a huge success though they have not quite sorted out the air conditioning or the burning smell from the small burners used to heat the food.

Solex

Solex, open since December 2007, is a new French wine bar, with chic décor and a jacket and tie wearing staff. Small plates of French food are served in this long spacious wine bar owned by Fredrick Twomey and his partners. Twomey has left his imprint on the wine bar scene with ever popular Bar Veloce serving Italian fare and wines and his new Spanish venture, Bar Carrera. Christophe Chatron-Michaud is a lovely host. He hails from the

“You can get your favorite Chardonnay or Shiraz by the 3, 6 or 8 ounce glass as well as by the quartino (about 8.5 ounces), a recent entry to the New York scene”



Megeve in the Savoie region of France. The wine list offers interesting little known varietals such as Savagnin and Arbois from the Jura and Altesse which makes Roussette from Savoie.

Monday Room

The Monday Room has been open for about a year, but reservations are still needed to be seated in this oddly themed British library wine bar. Personalized service is the key to the success here with sommeliers on hand to explain the terroir of each wine. You'll enjoy yourself and learn a lot, but beware because the bill can be steep if you are not careful. On a recent visit, Hungarian producer Doremus' Furmint was on the list as was a phenomenal Cour-Cheverny Cuvee Renaissance 2002 from Francois Cazin.

Lower East Side

Bacaro

Bacaro, which in Venetian dialect means a location where friends meet for a drink and a snack, is the name chosen by tall New Zealander Kama Geary and her co-owners Frank DeCarlo and his wife, Dulcinea Benson for this new wine bar. Geary is also the wine buyer at this new hangout on Division Street. The wines are offered by the 3-ounce ombra (Italian for shadow), al bicchiere (Italian for glass and twice as big as an ombra) and by the half bottle. A long and eclectic list of wines from Emilia Romagna, Veneto, Lombardia, Trentino, Alto Adige and Piemonte are offered both by the glass and the bottle. The Nosiola 2006 from Cesconi in Trentino, the Lambrusco 2005 from Medici Ermete in Emilia Romagna and a host of wines by Veneto producer Maculan stood out. This is a large space with a bar, tables upstairs and a cave-like lower floor

with interesting and private nooks and crannies. Bacaro opened in the fall of 2007 after two years of renovations. It is fast becoming a destination for the art crowd thanks in part to the new museum of Contemporary Art in the Bowery and the numerous galleries that have popped up nearby. The Venetian theme is carried on throughout their products, from the water, Azzurre, to their coffee, Caffe Rialto. They use a variety of glassware but the beautiful Chandelier hails directly from Venice.

THEY AGREE

There are few things that people in the wine industry seem to agree upon but they do find common ground on the importance of glassware and its integrity. Integrity implies that a wine glass was washed with hot water without soap and dried by hand. At industry tastings and in many wine bars and restaurants, hand washing is nearly impossible but a good wine bar will run its glasses without soap which leaves a filmy residue and can affect the taste of the wine.

Most wine bars in New York use glasses from a limited number of suppliers, the premier one being Austrian company Riedel. The Riedel family is credited with being the first to create wine glasses tailored to specific grape varieties. These Riedel series glasses changed the market and made the company number one. Riedel also revolutionized the wine industry with its "O" series with no stem or base, two elements that are crucial to our concept of the wine glass.

SoHo

Vintage

Not to be outdone, New Yorkers have a wine bar dedicated exclusively to New York wines. Vintage, owned by Robert Ransom and his wife Susan, has a big store in SoHo with a wine bar next door and a second smaller location on the Upper West Side. Vintage offers wines from New York State's three viticulture areas - Finger Lakes, Hudson Valley and Long Island. Wines are sold by the glass at the bar or by the flight (usually 2 ounce pours of 3 to 5 different wines). Vintage holds master classes with winemakers and numerous tastings throughout the year.