



## Wonderful Wine Bars

**Amalia McGibbon offers a few suggestions for spots to taste everything from a tawny petite syrah to silvery sauvignon blanc.**

Whether you're a newbie looking to dip your toe into the world of wine, or a connoisseur on the hunt for your next collectible, wine bars offer consumers the very useful luxury of a "test drive." Purchasing a good bottle of wine requires much of its buyer (money, the know-how to care for it, etc.), but ordering a glass needs only a Friday night. There's a generosity of spirit that characterizes the wine bars popping up around the South Bay, and we'd like to extend that generosity by putting you in touch with them.

### UNWINED Wine Bar and Shop

A steady favorite in local polls, the UNWINED Wine Bar and Shop brings a lot to the table with over 50 wines available for tasting, and another 300 for purchase. The shop features special wine tasting events every Wednesday (6 - 8 PM), and live music every Thursday and Saturday. The walls of the wine bar host rotating exhibits of arts and three flat-screen TVs with HD sports. Wines can be such a serious affair, but this establishment does much to lighten the mood. **6946 Almaden Expressway, San Jose, 408.323.9463.**

### The Grapevine

This San Jose wine store specializes in small production wines—those that generate fewer than 1000 cases—from family-owned wineries in California and around the world (most of the bar's selections are so limited they've never even graced the desk of a wine critic). Try to sign up for one of The Grapevine's "Blind Tastings," during which the store will pour five wines, all incognito, of a single varietal. You'll taste, you'll discuss, you'll choose favorites,

and then comes the final unveiling. June's tastings will focus on "Dessert Wines," "Cabernets over \$50," and "International Sauvignon Blanc." **1389 Lincoln Avenue, San Jose, 408.293.7574.**

### Vintage Wine Merchants

This month, take advantage of Santa Row's open-air layout with a visit to the marketplace's al fresco wine bar, Vintage Wine Merchants. Is there a better way to enjoy San Jose's balmy afternoons than with a glass of champagne in one hand and a slice of artisan cheese in the other? Vintage Wine Merchants likes to throw parties, and this June its dance card is full. On June 16, the bar will celebrate "The Flavors of Spain" with selections like 2003 Montecastro Ribera del Duero and 2005 Naia "Naia Des." June 30 will mark the bar's third annual "Pizza in the Park." Held in the courtyard at the north end of Santana Row, the event features 24 different wines paired with six different pizzas care of neighbor Pizza Antica. **368 Santana Row, Suite 1040, San Jose, 408.985.9463.**

### J. Lohr Tasting Room

Forgive me while I push the guidelines of this round-up, but I must urge you readers to visit the San Jose-based J. Lohr Tasting Room. While not a wine bar, per say, the establishment affords you a similar educational, and more importantly enjoyable, experience. And though your options are limited to one winemaker, if that winemaker is J. Lohr, I wouldn't consider it a hindrance at all. No appointments are needed—though you should call with groups larger than six—and the tastings are free (unless you have your heart set on the winery's prized Cuvée Series). The San Jose tasting room pours current release wines and, if you're lucky, mature vintage wines and pre-releases. **1000 Lenzen Avenue, San Jose, 408.288.5057 x35. ■**