

House-wine hunting

Bagging your favorite restaurant bottles



If you're looking for a special bottle of wine for the holidays—be it for a feast or gift—you can always head to your local wine shop for a familiar label or advice on a new wine.

But you might also discover the vintage of your dreams at a restaurant, which are play-ing up to patrons' adventurous streaks with growing lists of quality wines. Once you've sipped it and liked it, the trick is often tracking it down, since many of the wines come from small producers only distributed to restaurants.

And diners at **Taste**, Eli Zabar's restaurant on the Upper East Side, need only walk a few steps to **W.I.N.E.**, the adjoining store, to find any of the 20 wines by the glass or 50 bottles from small producers.

Wine director, Jonathan

Laufer, who runs back and forth between the store and the restaurant, is "really proud of the list we have because it encompasses so many varietals you wouldn't normally see in a by-the-glass list."

He's especially excited about the Nigi Gruner Veltliner from Austria, an up- and-coming white grape. "It's such a wonderful wine, so food-friendly or you can have it as an aperitif," he says.

Buying for both the restaurant and the wine store means he's able to make deals with wine makers so he can have unusual wines to pour by the glass.

"That's what's so exciting," he says. "We introduce our customers to a wine and then they come next door and buy it."

by Cynthia Kilian

Make their vintage your vintage

THE VINTAGE	Champagne Cuvée Daniel Brut	Vouvray Sec, Le Mont, Gaston Huet (Loire)	Bastianich Vespa Bianco (Friuli, 2000)	Nigi Cruner Veltliner (Austria, 2002)	Pommard, Robert Apeau (France, 1989)
WHAT IT'S LIKE	Medium body with balanced acidity and buttery overtones	Floral, fruity and mineral notes for a complex aroma and a long finish	Full-bodied blend of chardonnay, sauvignon blanc and picoli	Exotic fruits and delicate hints of spice	Rustic, traditional red Burgundy, very soft with gamey, mushroom flavor
SERVED AT	Restaurant Daniel, Café Boulud and DB Bistro Moderne; \$16 per glass; \$69 per bottle	Union Square Cafe; \$10.25 per glass; \$40 per bottle	Babbo; \$17 per quartino (1/2 bottle); \$49 per bottle	Taste; \$10 per glass; \$36 per bottle	Le Bernardin (starting Friday); \$32 per glass; \$125 per bottle
WHERE TO FIND IT	Sherry-Lehmann, 679 Madison Ave. (between 61st and 62nd streets), (212) 838-7500, \$29.95	Chambers Street Wines, 160 Chambers St. (between Greenwich Street and West Broadway), (212) 227-1434; \$22.99 for 2002 vintage	Italian Wine Merchants, 108 E. 16th St. (between Irving Place and Union Square East), (212) 473-2323; \$25.95	W.I.N.E., 1415 Third Ave., at 80th Street, (212) 717-1999; \$16.99	Columbus Circle Wine & Liquor, 1780 Broadway (between 57th and 58th streets), (212) 247-0764, \$80 per bottle