



Vine Assets

A TASTE OF THE BUY LOCAL MOVEMENT

words by *Karen Jeffery*

When it feels too chilly for a Rogue Valley wine tour, find a cozy corner at one of Southern Oregon's many fine wine bars. Whether your favorite pour originates in the Umpqua, the Upper Rogue, the Rogue, the Illinois or the Apple-gate appellation, these establishments specialize in bringing your nose right back to the riot of autumn colors that accompanied your last adventure into wine country.

Wine bars provide tastings of recent and vintage wines. Many showcase local wineries at special tasting events, with vintners often present to educate about varietals, terroir, methods and flavor profiles. Many wine bar proprietors are happy to pour flights during regular business hours and at specific and themed tasting times, so never hesitate to ask to taste something.

Some wine bars still offer complimentary sips but most charge a nominal fee for a flight of six or more specific wines. Tasting local wines in this way gives Southern Oregonians and their guests another way to support the local wine industry long after the harvest is in.

Located in a historic building overlooking Ashland's Lithia Plaza, EdenVale Enoteca (Italian for "wine library") is the newest wine bar on the block. Opened by Medford's EdenVale Winery in April, 2009, the wine bar sources only Southern Oregon wines, providing a nice introduction for visitors who may be in town to visit family or to take in some theater; the locale is also perfect for a girls' night out.

Enoteca's manager, Nicole Lamb, works with a highly competent staff of wine experts to enhance each visitor's experience.

"We serve the very best because Ashland is the gateway to Southern Oregon wines," says the Napa Valley-trained Lamb, who is conscientious about the quality and diversity of varietals poured at this classy venue. The wine bar also provides a concierge service, delivering wines to hotel and B&B guests throughout Ashland.

At Liquid Assets Wine Bar, Denise Daehler-Piotter and her husband, Jim Piotter, have been in the food and beverage industry for over 20 years and are committed to the slow food movement. They source their greens from

Fresh Green Organics in Klamath Falls and purchase locally grown beef and free-range products. All seafood is fresh and from the Pacific Northwest. Serving 26 wines by the glass, they also sell bottles for dinner at retail and pour them for a \$5 corkage fee. Of over 250 wines in stock, nearly 50 are from Southern Oregon, and flights are poured any time during business hours.

Open for just over three years, Liquid Assets is known for its afternoon tastings. The owners enjoy working with other local businesses, producing spa nights (a Waterstone Spa facial accompanies a tasting), swig 'n' stitch, bunko night, knitting circles and local music. For Daehler-Piotter, it's all about the customer. "There's nothing I love more than watching people have an enjoyable experience through good food, good wine and good company," she says.

Lynne Galligan, who, as principal owner, oversees Allyson's Kitchen both here and in Bend, serves up yummy food, culinary training, kitchen gadgets and essentials, imported foods, and wines. The shop's famous Friday wine tastings (paired with gourmet cheeses and antipasto) have been held for ten years, with over 150 Southern Oregon wines prominently featured. "One of our goals is to support and grow the local wine community through education and enjoyment," says Galligan. Allyson's also offers free tastings on Saturdays and during its seasonal open houses.

Located in downtown Medford next to the Craterian Ginger Rogers Theater, Corks Wine Bar and Bottle Shoppe caters to both the theater crowd and Rogue Valley wine lovers. Into their fourth year on Theater Alley, the Jennings family offers customers a rotating glass and flight list, with complimentary tastings every day. During Medford's 3rd Friday Art Walk, Corks provides trendy blind tastings; winemaker's nights are also popular. In addition to hundreds of Oregon wines, Corks pours a selection of microbrews from the State of Jefferson. "Our brand new, growing wine industry needs the support of the local area," says Fred Jennings as he pours another round. "Enjoy your flight!"

Near the Medford airport sits Pacific Wine Club, owned and operated by Ken Green and Victoria Guantonio. Their initial idea, before opening in 2004, was "Internet-only wines." A city policy insisted on other licensing, which led Green and Guantonio into tastings and other events that happen alongside a very successful wine club shipping program. Pacific Wine Club provides daily complimentary tastings in a spacious warehouse and flight tastings with weekly themes on Friday and Saturday nights. Offering over 1,000 facings, about 150 are Southern Oregon varietals.

"We're strong supporters of local and green wines," says Guantonio, pointing out an extensive selection of organic pours. Club members also enjoy the "brown bag" blind tasting night. This forward-thinking service has found a local niche, complemented by strong Internet sales.

Stop by Elegance Fine Wines in Grants Pass, where Carl and Mimi Raskin feature 125 Southern Oregon wines as part of their ample collection of over 2500 bottles from around the world. Twenty years in this downtown location, the Raskins provide complimentary tastings throughout the week and charge \$10 for flights of six to seven wines, paired with food, at their famous First Friday Art Walks. "We're too busy helping people find that perfect wine, so don't look for us online," says Mimi. "Just call or come on in!"

When the Jacksonville Inn (a National Historic Landmark) opened in 1861, there were no wines in Southern Oregon. Thirty years ago, when Jerry Evans purchased the inn and restaurant, there still weren't, so he drove to Portland to pick up cases for his guests. Evans now stocks over 2,000 wines (nearly 300 from Oregon) in his Wine Spectator Best of Excellence award-winning Jacksonville Inn Wine & Gift Shop. Winemaker dinners prepared by master chefs to complement selected wines are a regular highlight. Tasting times? "We're always tasting, and there's never a charge!" says Evans.

These are just a few of Southern Oregon's numerous wine tasting venues. Discover a new favorite by getting out and about. Patronizing local wineries, wine shops and wine bars is a fun way to support the "Buy Local" movement. By featuring Southern Oregon wines, these tasting rooms provide additional opportunities to keep local dollars circulating in the region instead of siphoning them off to other locations. And stopping by your favorite local spots keeps that wine tour experience going all year round. ★

EdenVale Enoteca

17 N. Main St., Ashland

541-482-3377

www.edenvalleyorchards.com

Tastings: Tuesday through Saturday
11 a.m. to 10 p.m., flights \$10

Liquid Assets Wine Bar

96 N. Main St., Ashland

541-482-9463

www.liquidassetswinebar.com

Tastings: Sunday through Thursday 3 to 10 p.m.,
Friday and Saturday 3 p.m. to midnight,
flights \$10

Allyson's Kitchen

115 E. Main St., Ashland

541-482-2884

www.allysonskitchen.com

Tastings: Friday 6 to 8 p.m.,
\$10 flights with food pairings;
Saturday 1 to 4 p.m., complimentary

Corks Wine Bar and Bottle Shoppe

235 Theater Alley, Medford

541-245-1616

www.corks-wineshoppe.com

Tastings: Tuesday through Thursday
1 to 8 p.m., complimentary;
Friday 1 to 10 p.m., \$8 - \$10 flights

Pacific Wine Club

3588 Heathrow Way, Medford

541-245-3334

www.PacificWineClub.com

Tastings: Friday 5 to 7:30 p.m., \$10 flight;
Tuesday through Saturday
11 a.m. to 6 p.m., complimentary

Elegance Fine Wines

321 SE 6th St., Grants Pass

541-476-7428

Tastings: Tuesday through Saturday
10 a.m. to 6 p.m., complimentary;
First Fridays, flight of 6 or 7 wines
\$10 with food

Jacksonville Inn Wine and Gift Shop

175 E. California St., Jacksonville

541-899-1900 or 800-321-9344

www.jacksonvilleinn.com

Tastings: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily, complimentary