



Happiness. Writing Fine Spirits and Booze.

CHIHOU SEPTEMBER 17, 2019

WINE: A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 2019



We've remarked before that we're endowed with an embarrassment of riches when it comes to drinking in Singapore, and perhaps the best example of that comes from wine.

We've managed to round up almost a dozen things to do with wines, big or small, this September and October, a good month before the holiday season proper even begins.

Strap in, we'll get you through it.

FESTIVALS TO ATTEND

Going all out: Wine Pinnacle Awards 2019 and the GREAT Wine & Dine Festival

When it comes to wine awards, it's often a little hazy as to how the final entries are selected, and how the winner is decided. It's also important to ask how relevant it is to you.

Well, perhaps those questions can be answered by Resorts World Sentosa. They've gotten together a five-member Wine Committee of luminaries, helmed by Jeannie Cho Lee, the first Asian Master of Wine, and an independent jury of over 80 wine professionals to launch its inaugural Wine Pinnacle Awards 2019.



Jeannie Cho Lee, MW

Held from 10 to 12 October this year, the awards will not restrict wines under consideration by origin, submissions or entry fees. The gala dinner and awards ceremony will be held on 10th October, in partnership with two Michelin-starred La Grand Vigne.

You might ask how is this relevant to me? Well, if pomp and pageantry isn't your thing, however, The GREAT Wine & Dine Festival will be on during the awards season, and many of the nominated wines (some of the best ones in the world, we remind you), will be paired with food from Resorts World's many celebrity chef-helmed restaurants.

While we only got a tantalising peek at the 400 wines and craft sake that will be available at the fair, we can tell you that the quality is quite unlike any other.



Just a taste

One of the particularly good pairings were a 2017 Domaine Vacheron, Sancerre Les Romains with table65's Ceviche with pomfret, passionfruit, coconut and kaffir lime. We particularly like how the fruity, acidic notes of the Sancerre, a Sauvignon Blanc from the Loire Valley, work with the creamy, spicy and herbal notes of the Thai-green-curry-like Ceviche.

Also standing out among a stellar cast are the 2015 Ata Rangi Pinot Noir, and the 1999 Luciano Sandrone Barolo, paired with Foie Gras and Roasted Spanish Pork Belly respectively. The berry notes of the Pinot accentuates the richness of the goose liver and adds its own fruity sweetness, and the dark fruit of the Barolo adds roundness and complexity to the Pork Belly. Incredibly delicious.



Ceviche, to be paired with a Sancerre

Other than the pairings and the wide range of award winning wineries strutting their stuff, there will also be masterclasses featuring topics such as Tuscan wines, craft sake, the varietals unique to Spain and the difference between new and old-world wines.

Entry on 11th and 12th October will be on sale from S\$60 per person here. Special deals are available for Mastercard holders and RWS Invites members.

For the classic experience: Wine Fiesta

For those who prefer the classics, the stalwart Wine Fiesta is returning for its 12th incarnation for yet another wine-filled weekend.



The event will kick off with the Winemaker's Table Dinner on the 4th, followed by the festival proper on the 5th and 6th.

Those who have attended the previous Fiestas already know what to expect; hundreds of wines from all around the world, available for tasting. Good discounts on many of the wines, and a chance to talk with winemakers and someliers.

Tickets are going at \$188 per person for the Winemakers' Table Dinner and \$88 and \$78 for the Fiesta Day 1 and 2 respectively. You can get the tickets here.

Bite-sized chunks: Wine Discovery Weekend

For another stalwart, one need only turn to the Wine Discovery Weekend, held at the Mandarin Oriental Garden Suite this year.

Determined to score on the artisanal scale, the festival held on 5th October will feature 120+ wines, both from the classic regions and somewhat exotic ones such as Casablanca (Morocco), Ankara (Turkey) and Latakia (Syria).

For those who are looking for new wines from old places, many new wines will be on offer, including Poderi Boscarelli from Montepulciano, Cortijo Los Aguilares from Serrania de Ronda, Domaine d'Arhuy from Burgundy, and Les Vignerons Parisiens from Paris.

While making your way through the wines, four masterclasses will be available:

- 2.30pm – 1.15pm: "Rare Champagnes: Terra-cotta and beyond"
- 1.45pm – 2:30pm: "The dark horse of ancient Languedoc"
- 3.00pm – 3:45pm: "The diversity of Tuscany – Chianti, Montepulciano and Montalcino"
- 4:15pm – 5.00pm: "The legend of Rhone Valley"

If you prefer a sit down setting, there will also be sit-down brunches and dinners.

- 4th October:
 - The Vineyard to Table wine dinner at Ola Cocina del Mar
 - The 2 C's by Yves Cuilleron dinner - at Po restaurant, The Warehouse Hotel
- 5th October:
 - The dark horse of ancient Languedoc dinner at Rhubarb
 - FOC & Ewineasia.com present the Mediterranean Hub: an FOC Perspective
- 6th October
 - The Vintners brunch - at Oscar's, Conrad Hotel.
 - Bordeaux "Dourthe" wine dinner - at Skai, Swissotel
- 7th October
 - Cepage wine dinner - at Lolla
 - Emilio Moro wine dinner - at Flutes

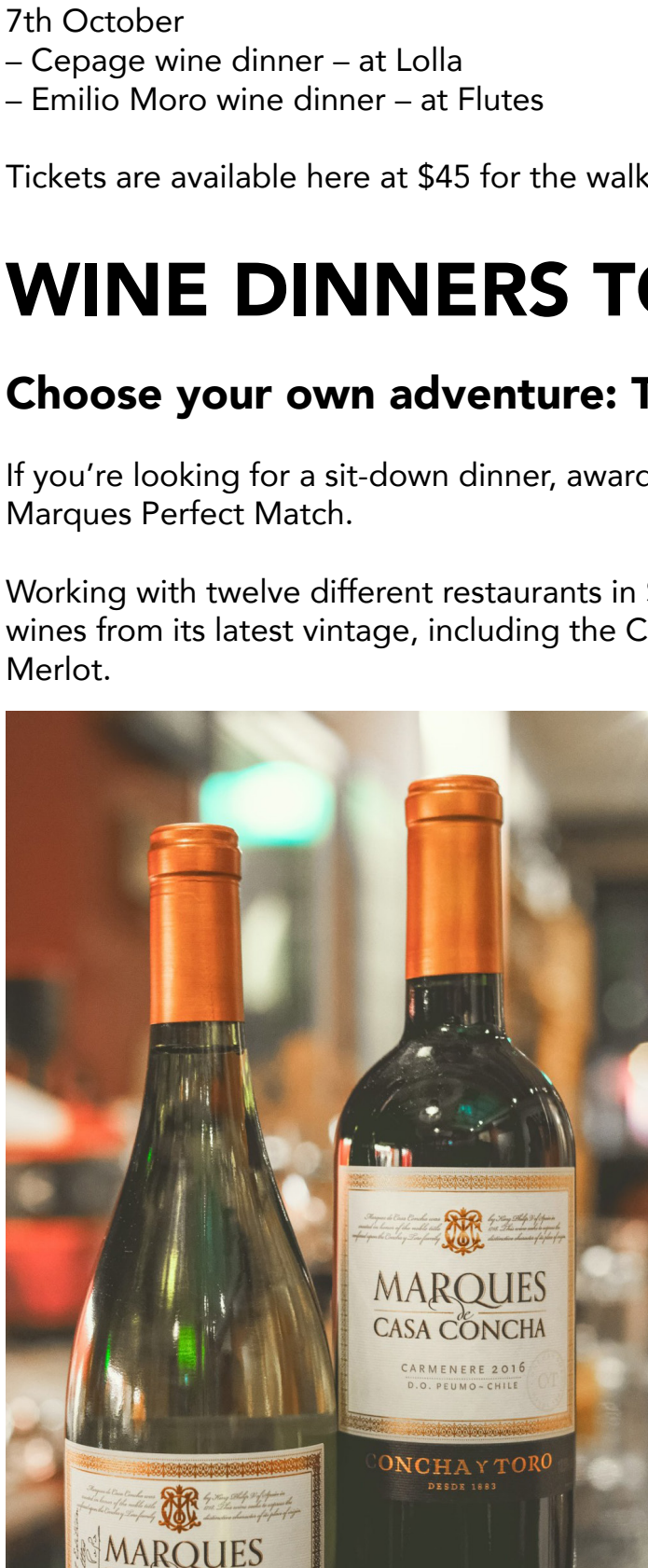
Tickets are available here at \$45 for the walkabout and various prices for the respective dinners.

WINE DINNERS TO ENJOY

Choose your own adventure: The Perfect Marques Match Season Two

If you're looking for a sit-down dinner, award-winning Chilean wine brand Marques de Casa Concha has brought back the Marques Perfect Match.

Working with twelve different restaurants in Singapore, up from last year's eight, Marques de Casa Concha will showcase wines from its latest vintage, including the Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Etiqueta Negra, Carmenere, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.



The beauty of the event is that there will be quite a variety of both cuisine and wine pairings to choose from, from eight course dinners to some simple food and wine pairings.

- Chef's Table by Chef Stefan: Four, six or eight course menus with pairings
- Dusk Restaurant and Bar: Oyster, Prime Angus Ribeye pairings
- Mitzo: Braised Vermicelli with Seafood, XO Fried Rice with Lobster Meat, Vegetables and Mushrooms pairings
- News & Gossip: Portobello Caprese pairing
- Praelum: Caldillo de Mariscos and Cerdo Picante a la Parrilla, Ensalada Chilena pairing
- Rabbit Carrot Gun: Beef Wellington pairing
- Ristorante Luka: Fruitti Di Mare or Spazzatino pairing
- Salt Grill & Sky Bar: Five course menu with pairing
- Smoke & Mirrors: 3 Canapes with a wine cocktail
- The Botanic: Roasted Quail pairing
- White Grass: Five course and eight course menus with pairing
- Wine Universe: Wagyu Beef Cheek with pairing

Well, we prefer something simple ourselves, so we headed down to Praelum for two simple courses. The two courses were paired with wines, which you buy separately at \$5++ for 30ml, \$12 for 75 ml or \$21 for 150ml.

The Cerdo Picante a la Parrilla, Ensalada Chilena (\$16++), a dish of grilled pulled pork, chilli marmalade, tomato and onions on toast, worked quite well with the carmenere. The carmenere has an interesting sage-like herbal flavour to go with dark berried base, both of which work well with the dish.



Cerdo Picante a la Parrilla, Ensalada Chilena with Marques de Casa Concha Chardonnay 2016

The Caldillo de Mariscos (\$30++) was also plain delicious. A hearty broth of roasted cod, scallops, prawns, squid and spiced shellfish that reminds us (a little) of local mee rebus, it is delicious with the apple, pear, lemon and cream of the Marques de Casa Concha Chardonnay 2016.



Caldillo de Mariscos with Marques de Casa Concha Chardonnay

The costs and duration of each of the pairings vary by venue- check out the individual restaurants for details.

Something local: Rhone Valley Treasure- Pierre Amadieu at New Ubin Seafood
For something a little more local, New Ubin Seafood will be featuring French wines from Gigondas in a pairing with its legendary tze-char.

Pierre Amadieu is an old name from the Southern Rhône, having its origins in 1929. If you're counting, it's celebrating its 90th anniversary, and with a new generation at the helm, now seems like a good time to explore a new, rare pairing: Singaporean wok cuisine.

We've not actually tried the pairing yet, but the descriptions sound quite interesting indeed: the Pierre Amadieu Cotes Du Rhone Roulepiere Blanc—a blend of Grenache and Clairette, will be matched with Impossible™ Meat Fries and Bak Kut Teh Shooters. The Pierre Amadieu 'Le Pas de l'Aigle', a heavy, rich Gigondas will be going with pork knuckles- two of them, one braised, one German-style.

There will be two sessions, one on Tuesday, 24 September at New Ubin Chijmes and one on Wednesday, 25 September at New Ubin Zhongshan Park. Seats are available at \$98++ per person, and are available here.

RESTAURANTS TO CHECK OUT

For something Iberian: Basque Kitchen by Aitor

Basque cuisine, both food and wine, is somewhat underrepresented in Singapore. This does seem surprising, given that some of the world's best restaurants are in the Basque country (four of the World's 50 Best Restaurants in 2018). If food is somewhat neglected- just imagine the wine.



Some rather interesting wines

Well, Chef Aitor, formerly of Iggy's, has opened Basque Kitchen by Aitor, and the drought of good Basque food- and wine- seems to be over. With a selection of over 100 labels of wines from Basque Country and the larger Iberian Peninsula, all available at the Wine Room located on the second floor, it's possible to enjoy tapas and wine without having a full-fledged dinner. We, of course, focused on the wine, and there were a few standouts!

We rather liked the Zapiain Sagardoa Zapiain Sidra, Gipuzkoa Spain (\$6++ per glass, \$28++ per bottle). A traditional Spanish cider, it came complete with a small ritual, which involved pouring it teh-tarik style from a great height to aerate it. It was fairly crisp and had high acidity and an apple-funk flavour that reminded us of a Normandy cider.



Pouring cider

The 2014 Quinta do Conde Galodoro (\$80++ per bottle) was fairly unique, as well. A rose wine that doesn't taste much like a rose wine; most wines in the category could be described as whites with degrees of red wine character. The Quinta do Conde, on the other hand, could be said to be a red wine with some white in it. The aromas and flavours are that of grape must, strawberry, lemon, cranberries and a bit of grass.

The final, unlisted surprise was the 2009 Haut Campagnau Soyeux d'Hiver, a Gros Manseng that hails from Gascony. Putting to shame most Sauternes and Eisweins, it has a unique combination of flavours we've not tasted before.



2009 Haut Campagnau Soyeux d'Hiver

In it, we found the "typical" apricot, nectar and peaches. The clincher, however, was a strong aroma and flavour of a high-grade roasted oolong tea, smoke, honey and herbs. The wine had the trifecta of good acidity, pleasant sweetness, and soft, smooth tannins. A knockout.

If you're interested in visting Basque Kitchen by Aitor, check out their website here.

For something French: L'Entrecôte The Steak & Fries Bistro at Customs House

Moving north to France proper, one finds a different style of wine and finger food.

L'Entrecôte, which opened its flagship Steak and Fries Bistro in Duxton ten years ago, recently opened an alfresco bar by Marina Bay. Serving some traditional food, such as La Planche De Charcuteries et Fromages (\$38++), a selection of cheese and some delicious duck rillettes, pâté and foie gras terrine. The rillettes, in particular, were quite amazing indeed. Juicy, full of flavour, yet not rilettes in its decadence.



Cerdo Picante a la PLillet Vive

We think that the French food is especially enjoyable with a Lillet Vive (\$10++ per glass); a refreshing fortified wine-based drink with mint, strawberry and cucumber.



Cerdo Picante a la PLillet Vive

Also available are the classic Beef Tartare Toast (\$6++ per piece), Escargot Tarte Flambée (think French pizza) and juicy chunks of Wagyu Beef Cubes (\$22++) with the secret L'Entrecôte Sauce.

For more information and reservations, visit their website.

For something Italian: Bar Cicheti

Bar Cicheti opened in the middle of the year to some fanfare. There was a lot of praise for its range of handmade pastas and Italian-style seafood.

It did not escape notice that there was an extensive range of wines there, courtesy of Ronald Kamiyama, sommelier-partner at the restaurant.



Ronald Kamiyama

While one will not want for the classic Barolos, Brunellos, Chiantis and Amarones that have become staples of the Singapore wine "diet", there are quite a number of interesting bottles stocked, and available as tasting flights (\$28++ for a flight of 3). We were quite interested in tasting some of the unusual wines within the flights, and we weren't disappointed.



The 2017 Noella Ricci il Sangiovese was a Sangiovese, but hailing from Emilia Romagna, not from the grape's traditional heartland of Tuscany. It has the red cherry and cranberry flavours that somewhat characterise its cousins, but it is both lighter and fruitier than its cousins.

The recent movement into biodynamic, natural wines was represented 2018 Heavy Petting, a bland of Nero d'Avola from Australia(!). With the trademark funk of the natural wines, but also an interesting watermelon and cranberry flavour, it was quite a treat for the senses. We don't recall the last time we found watermelon flavours in our wine.



Alex Craighead Kindeli Otoño 2018

The Alex Craighead Kindeli Otoño 2018 was one of our favourites. A Riesling- Gewürztraminer blend, it had the trademark lychee, nata de coco, peach and apricot aromas. The interesting part was that we also found scents of chamomile and cloudy apple. It has the red cherry and cranberry flavours that somewhat characterise its cousins, but it is both lighter and fruitier than its cousins.

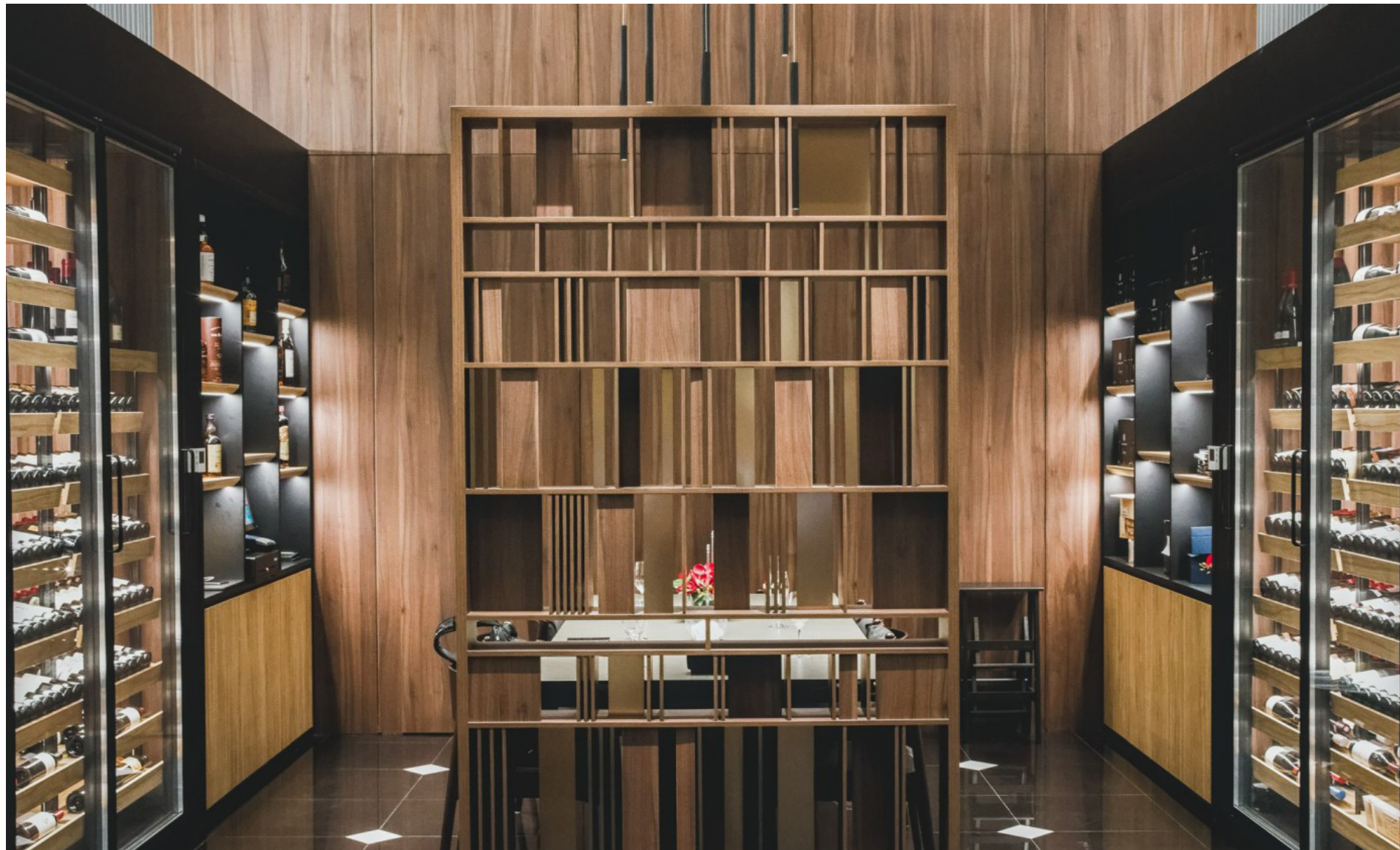
If you're looking for a more traditional experience, the Wines at Bar Cicheti are available by glass, quartino and bottle, with or without the food.

For more information on Bar Cicheti, check out their website here.

PLACES TO BUY, EAT AND DRINK

If you want the best of the best: Grand Cru @ South Courtyard

The lines between retailer and restaurant have blurred in recent years, as retailers came to the conclusion that they too, could sell wine at their own venues. While most such establishments have excellent menus and large ranges, they usually focus on middle to daily drinking wines.



Grand Cru Retail Shop

Grand Cru breaks that mold by having a huge range of wines, most of which are in the high ranges, both in price and in wine rating (Suckling, Parker, Robinson). If you simply can't find a wine you like, they even have a concierge to source one of your specifications. Add in a trained sommelier to guide one through a purchase, and the line blurs even further.

The retail experience does focus heavily on Bordeaux reds, and not a few Haut-Brions, Lafites, and Mouton Rothschilds were spotted on the racks. There is a respectable collection of Burgundies, and a smaller selection of other Old World wines, New World wines and Champagne available at retail.



Some very high-end wine

While we, too were a little intimidated by the stellar (but very pricey) selection, we were informed that there were 100 wines priced under \$5100, and some at as low as \$8.50 a glass during Happy Hour.

Should one feel impatient, wines can be bought at at the retail store and enjoyed at the Courtyard outside with a 10% service charge. Or, one could buy a glass, half or full bottle of wine and enjoy it with light food prepared by Fullerton Hotel itself.



Balinese wine, enjoyed on the Courtyard

For more information and the current menu, check out Grand Cru's website.

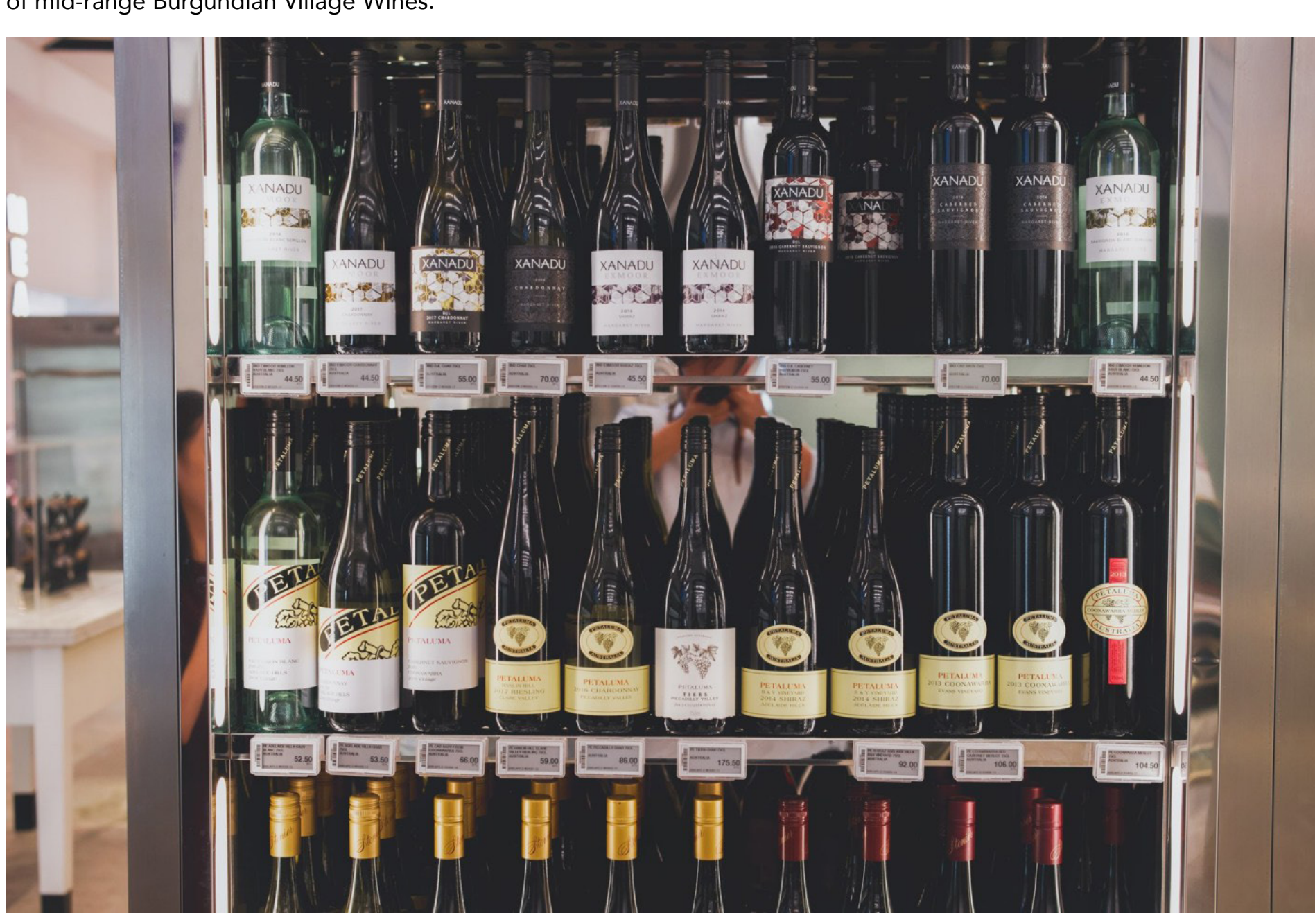
If you want to shop for more than wine: Culina at COMO Dempsey

For something quite different, one can consider Culina's new store at Dempsey. Housed in a spacious high-ceilinged former barracks, it has over 15,000 square feet worth of shopping space.

Think of Culina as the ultimate in Singaporean gourmet supermarkets. With a wide range of food, both cooked and otherwise, there's quite a lot to see and do. We spied some fresh oysters from France, fresh bread baked onsite, all sorts of cured meats and cheese and condiments for every taste.



And that's not even considering the racks and racks of wine on sale. As a gourmet supermarket, many of the wines available are in the mid to high range. We think we've spotted an Opus One somewhere in there, but also a good range of mid-range Burgundian Village Wines.



Our favourite type of shopping

One can even buy fresh produce, get it cooked (for a fee, of course) and enjoy a bottle of wine- all in the same place. There's Black Onyx, Margaret River Fresh Angus Beef, and a range of dry-aged meats that can be seared up for your pleasure.

There's also a bar where one can hang about in the afternoon. Considering that the store is in Dempsey, one can see dropping by for some pre-dinner drinks. We suggest getting a platter of cheese, while you're at it.



Petaluma Hanlin Hill Riesling 2018 with a Cheese platter

There's even a rudimentary cocktail menu, but the Mojito, made with Taittinger, is definitely worth a try. The acidity and biscuit flavours of the Champagne help to both ground and accentuate the mint and lime in the cocktail.



Interested? You can find out more at Culina's website.

AND FINALLY, A WINE IDEA FOR THOSE THINKING AHEAD

La Marca Prosecco

With the holiday season coming soon, one might be wise to stock up on some bubbly. If Champagne is out of the question, then Prosecco might be the answer.

La Marca is a cooperative of 5,000 local winegrowers from Veneto in northern Italy. From their land comes La Marca Prosecco, which represents good quality that won't break the bank. Right now, it goes for under 30 bucks at Fairprice.



La Marca Prosecco

What might be surprising was that it was featured at the Gambero Rosso Top Italian Wines Roadshow (Singapore), and has a good set of characteristics for the price. A dry prosecco with lemon, grapefruit, green apple, and some honeysuckle notes, it retains a good balance of flavours; never coming across as too acidic, nor as saccharine and cloying.

We've tried it with cheese and crackers, also from the supermarket, and we find that a light brie and table water biscuits work beautifully with it. A good way to have parties without breaking the bank, we think.