

# CityBites

TORONTO'S GUIDE TO GREAT FOOD & DRINK

| FREE |  
MAY/JUNE 2007

SUMMER WINES FRENCH  
WINES FOOD WINES  
CHEAP WINES GREAT  
WINES FIZZY WINES  
AND FUNKY TIMES!

LINDSAY GROVES  
AT VIA ALLEGRO

## SPECIAL ISSUE!

THE WINES WE LOVE  
AND THE PEOPLE WHO  
LOVE THEM + **PAGE 17**

THE WINE EXPERIENCE  
WITH *CITY BITES* AND  
WINEONLINE.CA  
+ **PAGE 3**

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**Zoltan Szabo and John Szabo: wine ambassadors extraordinaire (but not related!)**

So here we are entering year three of City Bites, quite a bit fatter and slower moving than before, but much happier, as the quality of the cheese and wine in our lives has much improved.

We owe our success—uh, let's say endurance—to the enthusiasm of Toronto's hospitality industry. At the top of the heap, Zoltan and John Szabo—sommeliers to the stars and tireless advocates for quality wine and food. Even before our first issue, I emailed Zoltan and told him about the magazine. We'd never met, but he took me to Jamie Kennedy Wine Bar and, over a three-and-a-half hour lunch, we blind tasted a bunch of wines and discussed how we could work together on the magazine. And he picked up the cheque! He introduced me to his business partner, John. I asked him how to go about improving my wine knowledge. He said, and I paraphrase: "Just hang out with us and we'll taste some crazy juice."

These fine gentlemen grace our masthead as wine editors, but their contributions go far beyond. In this, our second wine issue, I take the opportunity to say that it's an honour to work with them, to see them approach every task with sincerity and gravity, be that rating \$8 plonk or cracking a rare and expensive bottle for visiting bigwigs. And let's not forget the humour... (or the dancing, in Zoltan's case).

Much of the wine content in this issue is here because of the Szabo connection. For that, much thanks. So we herewith name John and Zoltan the Honorary Hottest Sommeliers in the known and unknown universe. Christ, that's uncorking a can of worms.

Dick Snyder, Editor  
dick@citybites.ca



#### on the cover:

Lindsay Groves of Via Allegro holding a glass of Flat Rock Cellars 2004 Pinot Noir, April 14, 2007

Hair & makeup: Sylvie Mazerolle/judyinc.com

Custom T-shirts: Spot98, 1267 Queen St. W., 416-534-0181, spot98.net

Photography: Paul Giamou Photography

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# THE WINE EXPERIENCE

WineOnline.ca CityBites

## Exclusive offer for City Bites readers!

There are good wines, and there are good wines—and there are great wines. What we have here are great wines—specially selected by WineOnline.ca and City Bites—available exclusively to our readers for a limited time. These are wines of distinction and incredible value, rare finds for discerning palates. Or to show off to your friends.

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### Marc Kreydenweiss 2004 Barbabeille

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### Rovero 2004 Barbera d'Asti Sanpanse DOC

Asti, Italy \$18.95

Barbera is a spicy and fruity little grape with forthright charm. From the town of Asti in the Piemonte region of northern Italy, this wine has soft cherry aromas, with a hint of plum and earth. That's the old world charm talking. It's light in body, soft in tannins, with red berry flavours and faint spice. Great with tomato-based dishes and pizzas; perfect on its own. (Case of 12)

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# CityBites

TORONTO'S GUIDE TO GREAT FOOD & DRINK

**May/June 2007**

Volume 3, Issue 1

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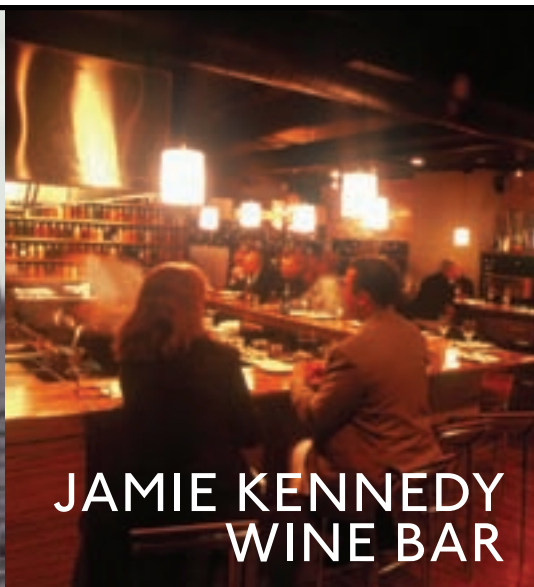
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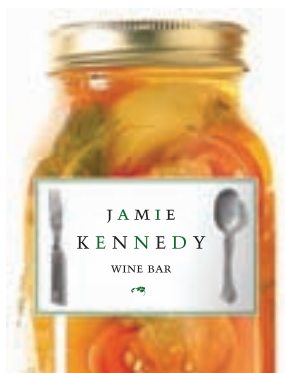


photo: Mary Armstrong





Jason Toner and Rob Picken serve up comfort food and classic rock.

## Gourmet Rec Room

BUNGALOW CAFÉ BRINGS A DOSE OF COZY TO WEST KING WEST

By Lindsay Forsey

**There's something nostalgic about the word "bungalow." Memories of the rec room,** nibbling Mom's snacks and rewinding your favourite cassette for one more listen. While a new King Street West eatery, which is neither a bungalow nor café, does not feature sandwiches with the crusts removed, and has no tape deck, owner Rob Picken does promise patrons "wicked service, great food and amazing music in a comfortable room."

Bungalow Café's dark-stained wood exterior—shades of that wood-panelled family room—is an inviting standout along an otherwise vapid stretch of road. And this haunt is the antithesis of Picken's other joint, The Underground Garage—a churlish rock 'n' roll saloon at King and Peter. Without abandoning his brio, Picken has departed from the foofaraw. Bungalow's interior is warmly understated. A long bar and a few tables stand in the brightly lit front space and more tables fill the rear, where candlelight and incense encourage canoodling. A patio's in the works.

Surrounded by an armada of condo-dwellers, Bungalow is set to embrace home-away-from-home for locals. Rumbling bellies can be quieted with grilled Atlantic salmon paired with crab croquettes and caviar (\$21), served to a classic audio backdrop. (Cue The Guess Who's "These Eyes." The playlist confirms Picken's adoration of rock music in all forms.) Fancy a little raw bar with your James Brown? Nip in for Oyster Funk Fridays and witness Bungalow's manager and champion shucker, Ian Peck, dishing up a dozen mollusks for \$18 (from 4 p.m. until they run out).

Chef Jason Toner, a Glasgow native, crafts "contemporary comfort food" from as many local and organic ingredients as he can muster. Picken describes his connection with Toner (formerly of Monsoon), as a karmic match. "I love his character and the way he talks about food," he says. While a handful of faithful plates, such as the 10 oz Alberta strip (\$24) and the mushroom lasagna (\$14), will hold steady on the menu, Toner is taking his cues from the clientele to see how creative he can get in the kitchen. With lunch and dinner, plus specials, and plans to launch a brunch menu, he'll have plenty of opportunity. And if you've got a finicky meal request (vegans, nota bene) the cheerful Scot is happy to accommodate with notice.

The staff at this Liberty Village newbie is jovial and witty but far from sycophantic, so check your pretension at the door. This place is a bungalow, after all, and a bad attitude just won't jive. **CB**

**Bungalow Café**  
934 King St. W.  
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## DO EAT DRINK

### APRIL 24 (TUESDAY) **CHEF'S TABLE** **WITH DAVID LEE**

A rare opportunity to learn at the feet of a master, Splendido's superlative executive chef. (\$175; 6:30 – 9 p.m., Dish Cooking Studio, 390 Dupont St.; [dishcookingstudio.com](http://dishcookingstudio.com))

### MAY 1 (TUESDAYS) **CHEESE APPRECIATION 1**

"Maitre fromager" Kathy Guidi leads the discussion—along with tastings and expert guest speakers—for this brilliant 8-week course from the Cheese Education Guild. This is what cheese learning should be! (\$525; 6:15 – 8:15 p.m., University of Toronto Faculty Club; [artisancheesemarketing.com](http://artisancheesemarketing.com))

### MAY 8 (TUESDAY) **THE CONSIDERATE TABLE**

This panel discussion—including Monforte's Ruth Klahsen and Gremolata.com publisher and City Bites' columnist Malcolm Jolley—looks at the politics of what's on our plates, while the audience chows down on a five-course tasting menu (with wine pairings). (\$190 per person, includes transportation from Toronto; 5 – 10 p.m., The Church Restaurant, Stratford; RSVP by April 27 to [arlene@eau-de-vie.ca](mailto:arlene@eau-de-vie.ca) or 416-978-8393)

### MAY 10 (THURSDAY) **GRAPES FOR HUMANITY FUNDRAISER**

Tony Aspler has assembled a dinner that's an oenophile's dream, with Stanislas Henriot, president of Champagne Henriot, as part of his ongoing GFH charity for victims of landmines. The silent auction of rare old vintages will blow any wine lover's mind. (\$500, or corporate tables for 8, \$6000; 6:30 p.m., Four Seasons Hotel; [grapesforhumanity.com](http://grapesforhumanity.com))

### MAY 26 & 27 (SATURDAY AND SUNDAY) EVERY SAT. UNTIL OCTOBER **BRICK WORKS FARMERS' MARKET**

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### JULY 12 (THURSDAY) **BOYS NIGHT OUT**

Boy's night! This one's got all the fixings—oysters, cigars, golf and some fine wines from Lifford. It's all in support of prostate cancer research, so don't miss it. (\$95; 6-9:30 p.m., The Fermenting Cellar, Distillery District, [LiffordWineAgency.com](http://LiffordWineAgency.com))

### GOOD EATING...

We love **ASPARAGUS**. We mean the good, seasonal stuff, not the year-round Chilean and California crap. This spring, celebrate Ontario's good stuff, which should start appearing with the end of this perpetual cold. Otherwise, hit the Esplanade **BIER MARKT**'s European White Asparagus festival (April 25 – May 25). Chef **MICHAEL CIPOLLO**, do your stuff.

The **ONTARIO HOSTELRY INSTITUTE**'s awards for the Top 30 Under 30 recognize young talent in hospitality. Winners include David Chow (The Drake Hotel), Ryan Crawford (The Stone Road Grille), Rudy Guo (The Spirit of Hospitality), James Treadwell (Treadwell) and Michael Caballo (Niagara Street Café).

The **CHEESE BOUTIQUE** has booked a roster of jaw-opening chefs for its annual May tasting event, in which chefs take a Saturday or Sunday afternoon to cook and hang with their salivating fans. Highlights include **Donna Dooher** of *Mildred Pierce*, **Keith Froggett** of *Scaramouche*, **Bruce Woods** of *Centro*, **Jonathan Gushue** of *Langdon Hall* and other stars ([cheeseboutique.com](http://cheeseboutique.com)).

For a slice of Toronto dining history, **LOUIS JANNETTA**'s new book is a must-have, as the former head of the **ROYAL YORK**'s Imperial Room dishes up tales from a bygone era, with stories about his brushes with **Tony Bennett**, **Jim Carey**, **Tina Turner**, **Bob Dylan**, **Wayne Gretzky** and more. *The King of the Maitre D's: My Life Among the Stars* is out now (Rain Publishing; [rainbooks.com](http://rainbooks.com)).

Delightfully funky **COCA** is packing 'em in on Queen Street, much to the irritation of the *Globe and Mail*'s Joanne Kates, whose January skewering of the joint—essential because it's busy, hip, noisy and full of attractive people—was the subject of much derision from industry and customers. (Seems Kates prefers to eat with her ears and eyes.) Anyway, Nathan Isberg's menu of quick bites has generated justified appeal. (Rumours of Kates' relevance to 21st-century gourmets continues to be overstated.)

### CHEF SPEAKS

#### On the term “molecular gastronomy”:

*“I find the merger of technology and food fascinating—it’s allowing cuisine to reach new heights and is changing our perception of the dining experience. However, I don’t wear a lab coat. I’m a chef. I don’t subscribe to molecular gastronomy. I think the term is ridiculous and frankly it makes a mockery of modern food and the progression of cuisine.”*

— **Claudio Aprile**, chef/owner of **Colborne Lane**



**Coffee Tree**, Toronto's first-ever on-site roastery is celebrating 19 years, and owner Susan Bate will be giving away a coffee tree seedling on May 12 with every pound of coffee. Reason enough to pop into the Bloor West shop for an intoxicating inhale. Also, they've just started using 100% biodegradable cups. ([coffreetree.ca](http://coffreetree.ca))

### CH-CH-CHAAAAANGES!

We're sad to report **MILDRED PIERCE** is closing its doors at the end of July, after 18 years. We have gone on record to say this is one of our favourite places in Toronto. No word yet on specific plans, but **Donna Dooher** has said she will seek another venue, but it's not likely to retain the name.

Chef extraordinaire (and really, really nice guy) **MICHAEL DIXON** is flying solo after his recent departure from **Jamie Kennedy** at the **Gardiner**, where he held the post of chef de cuisine. His next move remains a mystery... but we'll go where he goes.

Gone after four years: **NECTAR** on **Wellington**. Coming in its place: **MARBEN**.

**HABITAT**, the West Queen West gastro-hip joint, has a new chef in **Martin Warnick**, formerly of **Didier** and **Crush Wine Bar**. Expect a new spring menu any day.

The growing **TERRONI** concern is gearing up to launch a new restaurant at the **Courthouse**, 57 **Adelaide E.**, late summer. Expect authentic “osteria”-style charcuterie, pizza and rare and unusual wines.

**PANAGO** has arrived, the pizza chain from Western Canada, promising gourmet pies and a “think fresh” philosophy. The first downtown location is at 44 **Gerrard St.** and Bay.

From the ever-fertile mind of **BROCK SHEPHERD** of **RICE BAR** in Kensington Market comes the **WHICH? SANDWICH SHOP**, tucked behind the kitchen at **Rice**, where customers can create their own custom sandwiches. Nice, we say—we need more good sandwiches. ([ricebar.ca](http://ricebar.ca))

Congratulations are due to **RODNEY CLARK**, of **RODNEY'S**, who marked 20 years in the oyster business on April 7, with a raucous shucking party at his **King Street West** location.

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## WINE NEWS

Hot on the heels of U.K. wine goddess **JANCIS ROBINSON**, who visited Toronto in January and was hosted by our own duo of Szabos (with the help of **MICHAEL PATARAN**) for a tasting of 70 of Canada's premium wines, comes the gang from *Wine Advocate*, arguably the most influential wine publication in the universe. While **ROBERT PARKER** himself will not be coming, his staffer and former Torontonian **DAVID SCHILDKNECHT** will be visiting local wineries and meeting with vintners and industry folks the week of July 23.

The **JOHN SCHAFER** dinner at Chez Victor on April 25, his first Ontario visit in 20 years, sold out super-fast at a whopping \$395. (One wonders about scalping opportunities?) A structured tasting will be followed by a five-course dinner.

It's spring, which means awards and festivals! The **ONTARIO WINE AWARDS** gala takes place in Niagara-on-the-Lake on Saturday, April 21. Check [ontariowineawards.ca](http://ontariowineawards.ca) for results. And don't miss the public tasting in Toronto, with about 25 Ontario wineries pouring their award-winning wines. (\$50. The Distillery Historic District, Fermenting Cellar, June 12, 7:00 - 9:30 pm, ([tickets@forefrontcom.com](mailto:tickets@forefrontcom.com)))



**Portrait of chef Susan Weaver from a new show by Vivian Reiss.**

Colour in Motion, Portrait of Food opens Sat., April 28, V. Reiss Gallery, 416-836-4575.

And the **SANTÉ** wine festival kicks off May 8 with an embarrassment of great events, too many to enumerate here. Visit [santewinefestival.net](http://santewinefestival.net) or check out the big honking ad in this issue. Drink up!

The 2006 vintage of one of our favourite Rieslings, that of **CHARLES BAKER**, has just been bottled. This is the second vintage of this extraordinary wine, as Baker pursues his grand experiment in expressing the full potential of Niagara Riesling. And Mr. Baker reports: "2006 was a great year for Riesling on the Niagara Escarpment. I find the wine has a fine balance again between the minerality of the Picone Vineyard and the classic nervy acidity of Niagara. I want to give the wine some bottle age before release and aim again to bring it to my customers in September." Interested? Hit [charlesbaker.ca](http://charlesbaker.ca).

## QUICK WINE HITS!

WE LOVE... **CRUSH WINE BAR**, where **JAMIESON KERR** kicks out consistently crazy/awesome monthly wine features.

>> **FLAT ROCK CELLARS**, where you can spend a day "in the winemaker's boots," if you act quickly, as the sessions are selling out. ([flatrockcellars.com](http://flatrockcellars.com)) >> The wine list at **SUPERIOR** on Yonge Street, where owner/sommelier **TOM LEXOVSKY** assembles a value-packed lesson in global and local wines, changing it up as whim strikes, which is often. Lots by the glass. ([superior-restaurant.com](http://superior-restaurant.com)) >> Montreal-based broadcaster and editor of *Effervescence* magazine **STEPHANE MORIN**, who, on an otherwise bleak industry junket to Verona, Italy, taught us that: 1. Polenta sucks. 2. Horse meat rocks. 3. You shouldn't be served Sauvignon Blanc in the middle of Valpolicella. 4. Soaking cork is nothing to be ashamed of, even if you also massage the grapes. 5. An empty wine bottle is never empty: tilt it on its side for a few minutes, and you'll be rewarded with at least one more beautiful sip—frugal and sage advice. ([stephanemorin.com](http://stephanemorin.com))

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# Et tu Thuet?

NOW THIS IS A *PAN* CAKE

**Those closest to me know that I have a** borderline fanatical fascination with brunch. I've spent nearly every Sunday in recent memory in search of the perfect brunch spot. It has been grueling—nothing wears down the soul like bad coffee and over-cooked eggs. My childhood with beautiful croissants and fine French bistros in Montreal has set a dangerously high standard for breakfast foods. Thankfully, salvation in Toronto has come in the form of an imposing bleach-blond Alsatian named Marc Thuet.

You might now be asking yourself, "Doesn't Howard usually write about vegetarian foods... and isn't Thuet, well... not so inclined?" A valid point. I'm fairly certain that if I mentioned I was vegetarian to Marc Thuet he would hit me in the face with a bavette. Alsatian fondness for meats aside, brunch at Bistro & Bakery Thuet provides a short list of spectacular vegetation options.

First off, there are the "pan" cakes (\$14). Not to be mistaken with "pancakes" as we know them, these are truly cakes, about an inch deep with a caramel brown crust and a dense spongy texture (it's like sitting down to your own private little birthday). Served with an excellent coulis, Quebec maple syrup and a healthy chiffonade of mint, these cakes are my favourite in the city. For the savoury palate, I would suggest the *omelette forestière* (\$15; it is vegetarian). This is the template for a properly executed omelette. Light and fluffy, with a balance of tart cheese and caramelized mushrooms, this omelette proves quite definitively that the French know their eggs.

I must mention that Thuet is as proficient with his meat dishes as he is with the vegetarian ones. The eggs Benedict with petite croissant and the nine-grain waffle with Canadian back bacon both stood out as favourites among my panel of trusted tasters. Of course, no trip to Bistro & Bakery Thuet would be complete without the *panier* sampling of baked goods. While a little pricey (\$13 for bread, croissant, pastries and *confiture*), it is nice for a change to see a croissant that isn't pasty yellow or dense as a biscuit. **CB**

Vegetarian chef Howard Dubrovsky can be further explored at [myspace.com/foodcult](http://myspace.com/foodcult).



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# Handing in my Homework

FURTHER DISPATCHES FROM THE COFFEE FILES...

By Brendan Howley

**Right. Where were we? Yes, last time around I was ranting about not knowing enough** about coffee and, d'you know what? I have resources now. I've talked to people who know things about coffee and its commerce and, in my artless Canadian way, I've had a minor epiphany.

I did my homework, as promised. First off, from two Central American ladies who know, I learned how to pick the coffee cherries—in real life, it's brutal hillside work, with a wicker basket between you and the spindly plant, requiring a deft twist of the wrist, like unscrewing a minibulb. All this beneath a canopy of high mountain jungle foliage, alive with insects. I saw photograph after photograph of coffee plantation life in the highlands of Honduras and Nicaragua. Hurricanes and landslides never broke the spirit of these people. And spirit is the keyword: these people know more stuff about the substance of life than I ever dreamt of. All because they're so close to coffee and the land.

Moreover, I heard from several remarkable people who responded to my rants with cheerful correctives [moderating my sense of fair trade's pitfalls: thank you, Karen] and even more enthusiastic reports of buying "grower direct" coffees from sources as far afield as Colombia, Bolivia and Zimbabwe. [Special thanks to Adam Pesce of Reunion Coffee Company and Linda Burnside of Alternative Grounds]—including a lovely note from Chef Eric Madden of Collingwood's Beild House Country Inn, whose coffee's from Ashanti Coffee in Zimbabwe.

And the war stories I heard about award-winning coffee growers continuing to farm and ship their beans despite the hair-raising political situation in Colombia—can Zimbabwe be much different just now?—really inspiring. At its heart, coffee's an art; its growers are artists in spirit.

I've absorbed a number of important coffee concepts, simple things I hadn't known before—so keep 'em coming... there's lots more to learn.

## HERE'S WHAT I LEARNED:

1. Grind accurately and carefully. My wife and I bought a \$29 coffee grinder at Zehr's which does yeoman work and grinds most precisely. But we've shared Las Chicas' natural riserva beans with Dutch friends who ground theirs way too fine: the result was a sour, unpalatable mess.
2. We use reverse-osmosis water at our house, because the local water here in Stratford is so vile. It makes a huge difference. We've played with bottled water in the big blue plastic tanks—not nearly as good. Our reverse-osmosis water has an almost metallic tang—edgy on the palate, which seems to work with the beans we like. The triple-filter process also deep-sixes the nasty chlorine and fluoride bits. Costs us less than two bucks a day and there are no bottles to return; the filters last a couple a years and cost \$30 each.
3. At our house, Bodums give the best result. I have a trick: I wait for the mass of fragmented beans to float to the top, just under the mesh, and then I plunge, really letting the scalding water at those long-suffering beans. Seems to work. Bodums give the worst result for the second damn cup... why hasn't anyone ever invented an insulated sleeve to keep the last sips warm? [I know, I know: we should drink the whole thing at once.]
4. This just in from Susan Bate at the Coffee Tree. Just as I suspected with my sommelier analogy last issue, you can pair coffees with specific foods, either as an ingredient—in Caprese salad or accentuating pepper steak or as a BBQ sauce motif—or as a palate-stimulating contrast to rich chocolate fudge cake. I tried this with the birthday cake I made for my wife, a Nigella Lawson recipe, and the espresso I added made all the difference. Brilliant.

For more, check out the coffee folk who've already helped me: they're bound to help you on your path to the perfect cup. Next time: tithing and coffee-farmers' coops, how every cup you drink can make a political and economic difference—not charity but solidarity with the farmers and their families.

Till next time... keep exploring and keep in touch. **CB**

Coffee thoughts or rants or fat cheques made out to Cash can be sent to [inkfish@rogers.com](mailto:inkfish@rogers.com).

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## China's Little Red (Cook) Book

by Malcolm Jolley

**Fuchsia Dunlop's** *Revolutionary Chinese Cookbook: Recipes from Hunan Province* (W.W. Norton, \$39.95) is the most exciting text on Eastern food since Alford and Duguid's *Hot, Sour, Salty, Sweet*. The book's title is a play on its subject, since Hunan was Chairman Mao's home province. In fact, during the Cultural Revolution the country-style cooking of Hunan enjoyed favour because of the connection to the Beloved Leader. What better way to prove one's anti-bourgeois fervour than to serve his favourite dish, Red Braised Pork?

But the real revolution being spurred by this book has nothing to do with China's 20<sup>th</sup> century turmoil. The revolution is Western and is about our realisation that the label "Chinese food" is about as helpful as the label "European food". China's regions each bring their own sensibilities and cuisines to the table.

After university Dunlop travelled to Sichuan to study the language. She quickly fell in love with the food and somehow managed to get herself enrolled in the local cooking school. After years of travelling, she produced *Sichuan Cookery* in 2001 and the *Revolutionary Chinese Cookbook* is her follow-up on the neighbouring province.

RCC is a thick book at over 300 pages and Dunlop covers everything from low peasant to high pre-revolutionary "banquet" cuisine. There are many very straightforward and easy enough to put together recipes like Chicken with Ginger, or a simply stir-fried daikon dish courtesy of a friend's mother. The text is full of helpful bits about how to stock one's pantry with a basic Hunan arsenal and there's great writing on everything from the complexities and differences of bean curd (she compares it to the Western relationship with different cheeses) to the convoluted history of General Tso's Chicken.

As a trained journalist, Dunlop knows a good story and nearly every dish includes one. This book can be read cover to cover, and ought to be. The author also knows that appearance counts, especially for those of us who aren't sure what our Squab with Five Spheres should look like, and it's a beautifully styled book that could as easily be laid on the coffee table as the kitchen counter. **CB**

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Malcolm Jolley is the publisher of *Gremolata.com*.

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# The Big Heat

DANFORTH HOT SAUCE SHOP  
BRINGS THE BURN

by Yuki Hayashi

**"Hot sauces are about the only food products packaged on sado-masochism,"** says Gerry Mischuk, co-proprietor of Taste, The Fourth Sense, hothead HQ on the Danforth. "They're marketed through references to anal burn, flatulence, devil's work, and so on." Funny yes, but not so much when the punch line—the flavour—sucks. Mischuk insists this isn't a problem you'll encounter at Taste.

"We do the editing and everything's predicated on flavour. I can hurt ya big time with the heat, but I can promise you one thing: it'll taste good, too," he says of his roster of 250-odd hot sauces. Nestled amidst the very specific milieu of souvlaki, organics, fair-trade knick knacks and self-help books that characterizes Danforth at Chester, you'll find Taste, 500 square feet of pure, bottled yumminess. Besides packing the heat, Taste serves up cold-pressed, naturally flavoured oils, gourmet condiments, and handcrafted salad dressing bases, besides being the first retailer to have offered its own line of Niagara-region VQA wine vinegars. Best part: everything in the store is sample-able.

Bring your reading glasses if you want to feel the burn though. "I'll make you sign a liability waiver if you want to buy anything over 200,000 Scoville units," says Mischuk. For your reference, Tabasco is 2,500, and the store's selection tops out at a head-exploding 7.1 million Scovilles. But while the search for ever-increasing burn has led locals and Americans alike to Taste (popularized in part through hotsauceblog.com), Mischuk,



Taste owner Gerry Mischuk and some of his 250 hot sauces.

who personally samples and selects everything in the store, says his preferred poison is the relatively moderate Ring Of Fire line out of San Diego. "They make the best hot sauces in the world. Their Garden Fresh is made from Serrano peppers and is the finest hot sauce I have ever tasted. It's mild, but very unique and I use it on virtually anything I make."

Other heavy hitters in the store are Lezano, a curry-based sauce that is ubiquitous alongside any Costa Rican meal, and the Roadhouse line, a multi-award winner considered by many to be the world's best barbecue sauce. Taste, The Fourth Sense's round-the-world roster of hot sauces come from across North and South America, South Africa, Australia and beyond.

Wanna get your fix? You know it. "Hot sauce is the heroin of the food world," says Mischuk. You've met your new dealer. CB

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PHOTO: RICK O'BRIEN

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## STARTERS: CLASSICS

# A rare, well-aged steak house

By Malcolm Jolley

**“Every time they open one, our business goes up.”**

Arron Barberian is sitting in one of the comfortable dining rooms of his family's steakhouse addressing an impertinent question about the threat of big chain steakhouses. I was surprised, but it makes sense. Barberian's has survived—thrived, actually—since his father opened in 1958 because, as Arron says, they “stick to concept.”

That doesn't mean never changing. The menu has been tweaked here and there, and last summer they quietly introduced a new dining room and two breathtaking private dining areas nestled in one of their legendary wine cellars. Barberian's wine list is arguably the city's best. Just about any trophy wine available (wine geeks: check it out at [barberians.com](http://barberians.com)), but there are also over 400 under \$100.

It's certainly possible to spend a lot of money but by North American steakhouse standards prices are more than reasonable. “My father always said, ‘buy your real estate,’” Arron says. Barberian's has always been landlord-free and this good for everyone, including the staff whose average tenure is 15 years. Then there's a certain Mr. Albright who retains house account #A001, a regular patron from day one. (House accounts are still available, but I get the distinct impression that if you have to ask...).

Barberian's has long been a destination for celebrities: Richard Burton proposed to Elizabeth Taylor—the first time—there. A jean-clad Rachel Welch put the brakes on the dress code. Bad-girl Brit chanteuse Lilly Allen was seen there before her recent concert. But this is an under-the-radar place; no one calls the press to report the wattage. The stars pick up on the down-home vibe as much as they do the bottles of Petrus and Lafite: Barberians is a life-event restaurant from stag(ette) to wake. As Mr. Barberian says, “We don't really see ourselves as owners—more caretakers of something that belongs to Toronto than to our family.” **CB**

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*Malcolm Jolley is the publisher of Gremolata.com, a weekly e-newsletter on gourmet Toronto.*



Arron Barberian sticks to concept.

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## STARTERS: STREET FOOD

# Beyond Wieners

By Gene Shannon

**Goat roti. Spicy Chinese noodles. Gut-busting, two-handed empanadas.** For years, Torontonians on the go have had to duck indoors to satisfy their craving for culinary satisfaction that doesn't come wrapped in a bun. Hit the streets hungry after 10 p.m. and your choices are pretty much limited to a limp sausage or a cab ride to Chinatown.

But two new campaigns to revamp the city's dismal street meat scene offer hope. City councillor and chair of the Toronto Board of Health John Filion says he will petition the board to put on at least one special event this summer to showcase street foods that could be served with some tweaking of provincial health regulations.

It's the provincial regs that are behind the city's anachronistic rules for cart vendors, which limit food preparation to "the reheating of precooked meat products in the form of wieners or similar sausage products to be served on a bun." Cooking of raw meats is prohibited. The regulations also limit condiments to those that do not require refrigeration after opening, leading to the Orwellian—and often ignored—proscription that "grated cheese, squeeze cheese and mayonnaise are hazardous dairy products."

Filion hopes to skirt the legal hassles by acquiring a special permit for his event, similar to the one issued every year to Taste of the Danforth. He also intends to have the Board appeal to the provincial health ministry to amend the food safety regulations and permit more choices on the street.

At the same time, a non-profit urban planning group called Multistory Complex has launched "The Street Food Vending Project," a design competition to come up with a mobile premises for preparing and serving street food that is "healthy, affordable and reflective of Toronto's diverse populations."

The goal is to develop a livelier street food culture, with entrants encouraged to build partnerships with vendors, local farmers, gardeners and kitchens. The winning design will get money to build a prototype, and everyone on the shortlist will be exhibited at the "Alphabet City Food Festival" in October, culminating on World Food Day. **CB**

**Deadline for entries to The Street Food Vending Project is June 15.**  
Check out [multistorycomplex.org](http://multistorycomplex.org).



# Cuckoo for my Coconut Soup

A LITTLE HEAT AND A LITTLE SWEET MAKE SOUP GOOD TO EAT

By Trish Kaliciak

**Exotic flavours were not represented at all in my food repertoire** until I was in my 20s. My palate was defined by deep-fried potatoes and white vinegar. Ordering ethnic was chicken balls and fried rice. Today, fast food is global: Thai, Indian, Jamaican—and every grocery store sells coconut milk, garam masala and couscous.

Indian food was my first love. A friend took me to a tiny restaurant near my first apartment. Spoonful after spoonful of amazing flavours—the spices, the breads, the beer.... Then Thai stole my heart. Bangkok Paradise for pad thai lunches. Nowadays I would never think of ordering pad thai when there are so many other tantalizing and flavourful dishes, especially Tom Kha, lemongrass coconut soup. A bit creamy, a little hot, kind of sweet and so incredibly aromatic.

Coconut. Such an exotic foundation on which to construct a broth. Kei, that non-descript Malaysian joint at Queen and Shaw, has a tasty version. Off Yonge, near Ryerson, is the always-bustling Salad King, where I get

takeout Ton Hai Gai, chicken coconut soup. And if I'm camped out at home, I order in from Coco Rice near Bathurst and King.

New on the prefab soup scene is Butternut Squash and Coconut Curry soup from Knorr. I'm not a fan of canned soups, or even of dried powder from an envelope, but this is surprisingly good. I guess if someone was going to crack this it would be Knorr, who have been turning flavours into seasoning powders since 1838. It's creamy, orange, has a hint of heat and needs salt, but it's a pretty darn good end to 10 minutes of stirring. The catch: it's a limited edition as part of Knorr's Next Great Chef Collection. Maybe when it's gone I'll take a shot at cracking this nut at home. **CB**

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PHOTOS: (COCONUTS) WOLFGANG AMIR/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM; (BOWL) NICK SCHLAX/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM



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## STARTERS: MARKETS



# Farm Fresh

By Geoff Ruby

The street signs on Queen Street west of Bathurst proclaim the "Art & Design District." But with the recent surge in gourmet shops and restaurants, we may expect a push for new signs heralding the "Borough of Gastronomy." Or at least "The Hippy Farmer District."

Some new gourmet grow-ops are claiming turf in the 'hood. Hanna Jacobs is prepping her **MATCHBOX GARDEN AND SEED CO.** for its May 12 opening. Cleverly secreted away off an alley (Farr's Lane) behind Noce restaurant at Elm and Queen, this is Matchbox's second year of supplying fresh-veggie-starved neighbours with perfect produce, seedlings and seeds. Come early this spring for seedlings and lettuce, and then later in the summer for beautiful tomatoes from 11 varieties along with herbs and edible flowers.

On June 5, the brand new **TRINITY BELLWOODS FARMERS' MARKET** joins the scene, with Jacobs' partner Scott Ciniello as manager and Carolyn Wong of the Friends of Trinity Bellwoods Park as co-organizer. Modelled on the good work of other neighbourhood markets, the mandate is to support sustainable agriculture by rural and urban farmers, while educating the community about food sources. The already vibrant park will also have a new social gathering point, this time at the north end.

"Small community-driven farmers' markets are the soul of the communities they support," says Ciniello.

About a dozen vendors have signed on—and all products must be raised or made with ingredients free from GMOs or synthetic pesticides or fertilizers. Meats, cheeses, vegetables, fruits and berries will be on offer, as well as ice cream, eggs, baked goods and fair trade coffee. Plans are underway to conduct workshops on topics such as composting and community gardens. **CB**

See [trinitybellwoods.ca](http://trinitybellwoods.ca). or contact [matchboxgarden@rogers.com](mailto:matchboxgarden@rogers.com) for more info.



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# Hot for Wine

THE (INCOMPLETE)  
CITY BITES LIST OF  
TORONTO'S WINE VIPS

## FIRST OF ALL:

This is not a contest! This is an attempt to recognize the unsung heroes of wine, the ones who make it, who get it to us, and who direct us to the good stuff.

**SECOND OF ALL:** Apologies. There are just too many people in Toronto (and area) doing great things in wine to list here. We put this list together—The Hot Nine of Wine, let's say—not to incite competition or stroke egos, but to celebrate an emerging energy and enthusiasm for wine in our tight-knit epicurean community. (That said, please log on to [citybites.ca](http://citybites.ca) for a full list of accolades.)

We covered a lot of ground in our first wine issue a year ago. Since then, new faces have emerged (some profiled here) to promote wine, from Ontario, Canada and beyond. Big names are tagging along: Dan Aykroyd put his money where his mouth is with a million dollar investment in Niagara wine, and mega-watt U.K. wine writer Jancis Robinson spent a full four hours with City Bites staffers Zoltan Szabo, John Szabo and Michael Pataran as they poured 70 of the country's best wines for her to remark on, which she did in London's *Financial Times*.

Anyway... **THIRDLY:** It's all in good fun. Relax, open a bottle, swirl and savour. Life is too short to drink crappy wine.

**LINDSAY GROVES** VIA ALLEGRO  
Lindsay Groves cultivated a passion for Champagne, Bordeaux and Pinotage by working in vineyards in France and South Africa. Studies in wine and viticulture at Niagara College helped develop her wicked nose and palate: She swept this month's Ontario Wine Awards sommelier challenge, bagging the highest score in a blind tasting of Canadian wines. At Via Allegro, she's more than happy to draw on the restaurant's vault of top Canadian vintages. Niagara Viogniers are a favourite—especially Peninsula Ridge, where she worked during college.



## WINE: FOOD MATCHES

# Pucker up!

By Tonia Wilson

A LITTLE TANNIN IS A GOOD THING—ITS MOUTH-DRYING PROPERTIES ARE KEY TO GREAT FOOD MATCHING

**There are a few objectives for finding the right wine for a certain dish,** one being the goal of “resetting the palate.” By having a sip of a well-chosen wine we can “cleanse” our palates so that each forkful of food is a fresh, new experience tasted on a blank canvas. Think about dining on a hearty plate of unctuous and rich beef stew, by the time you have the third bite your delicate taste buds have become dumbed, and the intricate flavours are muted. By sipping a wine with some “resetting” power we can keep the flavours vivid throughout the meal.

Tannins are astringent compounds found in red wine. They give the wine its pleasant bitter flavour, as well as its structure and age-worthiness. The mouth-drying tannins will dry away any residual sauciness that lingers in the mouth, leaving it ready for the next bite. It is this drying effect that makes a wine “food-friendly.”

If all we wanted to do was dry out our mouths this would be a no-brainer, we would simply choose the most astringent, tannic wine we could find. However, we also need the wine to flatter and compliment the flavours of the food. Think about the personality of the food, what are its aromas and flavours, its intensity and weight. All of these aspects

continued on page 18



**GINT PRUNSKUS**  
EPIC AT FAIRMONT ROYAL YORK  
From St. Catharines to Toronto, via five years in a non-wine day job in Amsterdam, Gint learned about wine by exploring Europe's fine-wine regions and then bussing tables here at home. Having studied at all levels with the International Sommelier Guild, he's now running the floor at Epic. Turn-ons: Wine, women and song. Turn-offs: Italian and German wine law.



**ANGELA AIELLO AND PAXTON ALLEWELL**  
iYELLOW WINE CLUB  
Based on sheer enthusiasm alone, the partners in iYellow Wine Club are making a mark via a bevy of wine-tasting events, tours of Niagara, a continually evolving website and a weekly free e-newsletter that's breathless in its coverage of anything to do with wine, local or otherwise. Sign up, it's free: [iYellowWineClub.com](http://iYellowWineClub.com).

## Essential Summer Wines

### PENINSULA RIDGE 2005 BEAL VINEYARD CABERNET ROSE

Niagara, \$15.15

This producer consistently makes fantastic roses even though each one is quite different year to year. Fresh and full of delicious red berries and juicy summer plums. A dry, *herbs de Provence* finish takes you away to a less humid place. [LCBO]

— Sara d'Amato, *Truffles*

### CARMELO PATTI 2002 MALBEC

Argentina, \$32

A mouthful of cherries. All that's missing is mom's fresh baked pie. [Trade Winds Imports, [info@tradewinds-imports.com](mailto:info@tradewinds-imports.com)]

— Mark Moffatt, *Chez Victor*

### FLAT ROCK 2004 PINOT NOIR

Niagara, \$19.95

On the prowl for cheese flattering wines, I happened on this poised, expressive Pinot and have been enjoying its fragrant fruit and funk (wild yeasts!) with a slew of washed rind treats. Swirl your glass near a pungent wedge of Pied-de-Vent or Clandestin, inhale deeply, and understand that the barnyard is a beautiful place to be. Rare-ish duck and cured meats are brilliant with the charcuterie-spice/tart-berry finish. [Vintages or [WineOnline.ca](http://WineOnline.ca)]

— Julia Rogers, [cheeseculture.ca](http://cheeseculture.ca)

### BALBI SOPRANI BRACHETTO D'ACQUI

Italy, \$19.50

My wine of summer is very light in alcohol, sparkles and tastes of wild strawberries, absolutely delicious—from Piemonte. Right now, the Terroni restaurants have all of it, but the agency is getting more later in the summer. [Mani Agency, [philip.wharton@sympatico.ca](mailto:philip.wharton@sympatico.ca)]

— Tony Aspler, [tonyaspler.com](http://tonyaspler.com)

### DOMAINE FONTSAINTE 2006 ROSÉ GRIS DE GRIS

France, \$22.30

I was drawn by the classic bistro label—when I tasted it I was impressed. A blend of classic Rhone varietals, the grapes all come from the winery's hillside vineyards, located in western Corbieres. The perfumed aromas of bright strawberry and sweet cherry, crisp, bright acidity and round smooth finish make this my ultimate spring/summer wine. Enjoy on its own or with a great charcuterie platter on the patio. [[barrelselect.com](http://barrelselect.com)]

— Dave Billington, *Eggplant*

WATCH FOR MORE ESSENTIAL WINES NEXT ISSUE.

continued from page 17

need to be considered. There's no point matching an enormously tannic Barolo with a subtle filet of sole because we wouldn't even taste the food under the weight of the wine. Foods that go well with tannic wines usually have one or more of the following characteristics: an elevated amount of fat (leg of lamb); a velvety richness (braised veal shank); or an inherent sweetness (rare beef tenderloin).

Now, put this theory to practice. I've included a recipe for a succulent dish of Braised Pork Shoulder and Chorizo sausage. The pairing for the dish is a zesty Tempranillo-based wine from Rioja, it has a good dose of tannin and lovely berry flavours to brighten up the heaviness of the pork. This rustic combination will leave you feeling very contented, and you'll have gained a new taste experience in the process.

“There's no point matching a tannic Barolo with a subtle filet of sole.”

### THE DISH

#### Braised Pork Shoulder with Chorizo Sausage

- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 lb pork shoulder
- 1 1/2 cup white onion, coarsely chopped
- 2 stalk celery, finely chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, whole
- 1 tbsp fresh thyme, chopped fine
- 1 tsp smoked paprika (sweet variety)
- 3 Chorizo or hot Italian sausages, cut into 1" pieces
- 1 cup red wine
- 1 lb Yukon Gold potatoes, cut into 1" pieces
- sea salt and pepper to taste



PHOTO: PAUL GIAMOU

In a large heavy bottomed pot heat the oil over medium high and sear the pork on all sides until deep golden. Remove from pot and set aside.

In same pot sauté the onions, celery, garlic and thyme for 5 minutes. Add sausage and brown, once browned add paprika and stir 1 minute. Add 1 cup red wine, reduce wine by half.

Place pork into pot and add enough cold water to come halfway up the side of the pork. Season well with salt and pepper.

Cover and simmer for 2 1/2 hours, turning the pork over after an hour.

Stir in potatoes for the last half hour of cooking.

Once potatoes are tender season if necessary and serve in a bowl with its juices.

Serve with crusty bread and the suggested wine.

### THE WINE

Cosme Palacio y Hermanos Tinto 2004 Rioja, Spain (Vintages, \$17.95)





**SARA D'AMATO**  
TRUFFLES

The hot wino's hot wino. Our whole list could just be Sara! She studied wine making in France, after university training in astrophysics, world literature and urban planning. (Good god.) As sommelier at Truffles since 2005, she turns the tables on rich wine dudes and really shows them what's what (when she's not winning sommelier and tasting awards, that is).



**TONY ASPLER**

**HARDEST WORKING MAN IN WINE**  
There's no exaggerating Tony's contribution to wine in Canada, as an advocate, critic, consumer watchdog and all-around nose. His picks on 680 News put the word on the street, and *The Wine Atlas of Canada* is a tome to treasure with—not to mention the Ontario Wine Awards, his baby since 1995, and the Grapes for Humanity charity. There's more... [tonyaspler.com](http://tonyaspler.com).

## WINE: GLOBAL WINES

# French Lessons

By Stephen Temkin

EVEN AS THE NEW WORLD CHURNS OUT BETTER AND BETTER WINES, MY HEART (AND PALATE) LEANS TO THE FRENCH. PITY IT'S NOT SO WITH THE LCBO



Over the the last 30 years, the wine world has undergone a tremendous reformation. Prejudices have been challenged. Old hierarchies of quality have been toppled. New viticultural stars to rise every year from different regions of the globe. It is now routinely accepted that fine wines are being made in many places—Italy, Spain, Austria, America, Chile, Argentina, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere. Some of the claims of excellence are valid, some dubious. Either way, the stuffy dominance of Claret, Burgundy, Hock and Port is forever past.

Yet, despite this worldwide explosion of fine wine, I just can't shake my penchant for the wines of France. Some would argue that this is mere habit or chauvinism. But it isn't: France remains the most important country in the world for wines of distinction of almost every type.

As a place to make wine, France is intensely interesting—and becoming more so. The wine boom that has energized quality-conscious winemakers around the world has also made an impact within France. Young, inspired winemakers are applying serious standards of production where mere commercial expediency has been the norm for decades. Moribund appellations are being reinvigorated. Good wines are emerging in places formerly known for little more than supermarket plonk. (At the same time, lackadaisical producers who have been merely banking on the historical fame of certain regions are finding their international competitiveness eroding.)

In other words, it has never been a better time to acquire a passion for the so-called "lesser" wines of France. And nowhere is this more apparent than across the appellations of the Languedoc-Roussillon, the area that abuts the Mediterranean from the Rhône to the Spanish border, and rises up toward the Massif Central. This is the most dynamic wine region in the world today.

But you wouldn't know it if you live in Ontario. The LCBO—specifically

Vintages, the supposed fine wine arm of the state-owned monopoly—has all but abandoned this part of the wine world. The few wines they do acquire are mostly pedestrian; the best wines of the region are being ignored. Were this mere oversight, it might be forgivable. But the neglect is by intent. I can make this assertion because the situation has not always been this grim.

When former wine buyer Lloyd Evans was at the helm of the Vintages Classics Catalogue, the Languedoc-Roussillon category was blossoming. Evans was the most erudite purchaser the LCBO has ever employed. He certainly had his ear to the ground in the south of France. With his departure from the Liquor Board in 2002, the Classics Catalogue, like much of the Vintages program, slid into mediocrity.

The French file is particularly pathetic. With the possible exceptions of red Bordeaux and, weirdly, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, almost every other type of French wine is handled with a laissez faire attitude of mere tokenism. (Burgundy is naturally given some attention, but Vintages acquires mostly B-list wines or worse.)

So, what can you do when a particular merchant doesn't carry the wines that you want? Well, if you lived in places such as New York, London, Brussels, Berlin or even Calgary, you would try competing retailers to see what they had to offer. It stands to reason that the greater the number of competing retailers in any given market, the better the overall selection is likely to be. It is an unconscionable insult that such an option is still not available to the 21st century denizens of Ontario.

In the meantime, if you are interested in French wine, you are better off taking a little road trip into Quebec. Don't get me wrong: I have no great love for the Société des Alcools du Québec (SAQ), the Quebec liquor monopoly. They are the same species of dinosaur as the LCBO. However, due to the obvious demographics, their selection of French wine dwarfs the LCBO's and is more competently chosen.

Prices in Quebec tend to be slightly higher, but not always. Also, unlike Vintages where wines enter the system in bunches through monthly releases, wines in Quebec seem to trickle into the system more haphazardly. Fortunately, the SAQ manages a more effectively organized website with a useful and reliable search tool. If you plan a trip, it's a good idea to check what's available and where. As in Ontario, you can arrange to have wines transferred from one store to another. Of course, in Montreal you can find just about everything. **CB**

Stephen Temkin currently eats, drinks and writes in Toronto.  
[stemkin@sympatico.ca](mailto:stemkin@sympatico.ca)

## Battle of the Monopolies

A sample of wine availability at LCBO versus SAQ, based on [lcbocanada.com](http://lcbocanada.com) and [saq.com](http://saq.com) as of March 20th, 2007.

**BANYULS** LCBO: 4 SAQ: 12

**CABARDÈS** LCBO: 0 SAQ: 5

**COLLIOURE** LCBO: 1 SAQ: 4

**CORBIÈRES** LCBO: 3 SAQ: 34

**FAUGÈRES** LCBO: 0 SAQ: 10

**FITOU** LCBO: 1 SAQ: 8

**LIMOUX** LCBO: 2 SAQ: 6

**MAURY** LCBO: 1 SAQ: 5

**MINERVOIS** LCBO: 5 SAQ: 36

**RIVESALTES** LCBO: 3 SAQ: 9

**SAINT-CHINIAN** LCBO: 1 SAQ: 24



**TONIA WILSON**  
SAVOUR

That rare combination of chef genius and superlative sommelier skills puts Tonia light years ahead of all her epicurean peers. She cooked for the Queen during a stint as head chef at the Canadian Embassy in Rome, and she takes kids on hands-on field trips to learn about farming and food. We love her! [savourflavour.com](http://savourflavour.com)



**YANNICK BIGOURDAN AND CARLO CATALLO**  
SPLENDIDO

Perhaps the closest thing we have to a Michelin-star quality restaurant (so says Jake Richler), guided by the deft hand of co-owner Yannick Bigourdan. The wine program under sommelier/manager Carlo Catallo is ambitious and inspired, not the least for the presence of Ontario's finest wines. Watch for the Exotica Canadiana experience throughout July and August. [splendido.ca](http://splendido.ca)

## WINE: FIVE OF THE BEST

# On the road to Somewhereness

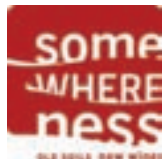
A CHANCE TO TASTE WHAT QUALITY IS ALL ABOUT

We are living in a disconnected age. Most of our daily experiences are anonymous, forgettable, functional processes designed to complete a task rather than generate pleasurable sensory experiences. And this goes for everything from commuting to eating and drinking. Beer and wine is designed to be “easy drinking,” as if flavour and expression would somehow be distracting.

OK, enough kvetching. At *City Bites*, we're fighting the good fight, and the revolution is ours to win. So we're excited to work with five of Ontario's best wineries on a showcase of extraordinary wines. The event is called Somewhereness, a reference to *Wine Spectator* columnist Matt Kramer's use of the term to try to elaborate on the elusive term *terroir*.

The wineries involved are Flat Rock Cellars, Malivoire Wine Company, Norman Hardie Winery, Stratus Vineyards and Tawse Winery. That they are all critically acclaimed is common knowledge. “These wineries are convinced of the potential of the wine-growing regions of Ontario,” says Charles Baker of Stratus, “and that in wine, as in all other pursuits, if it is worth doing, it is worth doing right.”

Though the wineries share a common bond around the philosophy of wine—small estate farms, sustainable practices, rigorous quality control and responsible stewardship of the land—the wines are as individual as the works of any great artists. And this is as it should be.



See p.23 for more.

Tasting events in Ottawa April 25 and Toronto April 30. Toronto's event takes place at the MaRS Discovery District, with proceeds benefiting made-in-Canada discoveries. For more on Somewhereness: [somerhereness.com](http://somerhereness.com).

## WINE: SMACKDOWN

# The Democratic Wine Club

FOR THIS EXPERIMENT, we assembled three panels to judge our wines blind. Two pro sommeliers, two complete amateurs and three aficionados (lovers of wine who've had some professional dealings with the stuff). The scoring is out of 20. Consider 12+ to be good; 15+ very good; 18+ outstanding. Take from this what you will...

THE WINES	AMATEURS	AFICIONADOS	PROS	WHERE TO BUY IT?
<b>DOGRIDGE 2005 UNOAKED CHARDONNAY "The Pup"</b> \$22.20 Australia	15	14.5	14	lesommelier.com
<b>WOLF BLASS BILYARA RESERVE 2006 SAUVIGNON BLANC</b> \$13.95 Australia	14.5	16	13.5	LCBO
<b>CHAMPALOU 2005 VOUVRAY FONDRAUX</b> \$28 France	17	15.5	14.5	daun@barreselect.com
<b>MIKE WEIR ESTATE 2005 PINOT NOIR</b> \$21.95 Niagara	12	15	14.5	Vintages.com
<b>LONG FLAT RED CABERNET MERLOT</b> \$13.15 (1 L tetrapak) Australia	17	12	14.5	LCBO
<b>JABOULET PARALLELE 45 COTES DU RHONE 2005</b> \$15.90 France	11.5	13	14.5	LCBO
<b>PIRRAMMIMA 2003 PETIT VERDOT</b> \$23.95 Australia	16.5	16	15	bwwines.com
<b>VALLIS TRENTINO 2005 PINOT GRIGIO</b> \$9.80 Italy	17	16	12.5	LCBO
<b>DIVINUM MOSELLAND SPATLESE 2004</b> \$12.15 Germany	11.5	15	16	LCBO
<b>PANNONHALMI APATSAGI 2004 TRICOLLIS CUVÉE</b> \$11.85 Hungary	17.5	13.5	13.5	LCBO
<b>LE ROSELLE 2003 RIPASSO VALPOLICELLA CLASSICO</b> \$16.20 Italy	14	14.5	13	LCBO
<b>PENMARA 2004 FIVE FAMILIES SHIRAZ</b> \$14.35 Australia	20	16	15	LCBO
<b>NORMAN HARDIE 2005 PINOT NOIR</b> \$39 Niagara	16	15.5	14	normanhardie.com

\*Thanks to The Savoy, Sette Mezzo, Penninsula Ridge and Zoltan Szabo for the wine.





**LYDIA TOMEK**  
HERNDER ESTATES WINES  
Inspired by wine's historical curative applications, Niagara native Lydia Tomek has created Hernder's 2006 Pink, a blend of cabernet sauvignon and sauvignon blanc. Three dollars from every bottle sold goes to the Niagara Cancer Centre through the Hernder Picasso Foundation. (The juice gets the nod from our own Zoltan Szabo!) \$12.95, winery only; hernder.com.



**DEACON DR. FRESH**  
GANGSTA OF THE GRAPE  
The good doctor pulls no punches and takes no prisoners. He's no friend of corporate winedom, and calls the egregious to task. Kudos for his latest headline: "It's official! Tim Atkins is a pecker!" Check out his website for an explanation. Or hit the Ontario Wine Awards April 21, which he's co-hosting with Tony Aspler. [deaconwinelist.blogspot.com](http://deaconwinelist.blogspot.com).

## WINE: SZABOS

# Feel (and taste) the Burn

LESSONS LEARNED FROM A TOTAL OVERHAUL OF THE WINE LIST AT THE INDIAN RICE FACTORY. A SPICY DISH AND A GREAT BIG RED CAN INDEED ROCK YOUR WORLD

By John Szabo, MS

**An interesting project came my way a few weeks ago. I got a call** from Aman Patel asking if I could assist in putting together a cutting edge wine list. No problem, I thought, that's my day job. But this was far from the usual gig. You see, Aman is the son of Mrs. Patel, the legendary chef who first brought authentic Indian cuisine to Toronto more than 37 years ago at the now-legendary Indian Rice Factory on Dupont.

That's right. Indian food. Bring on the beer, right? Well yes, beer does work well with spicy dishes because of its low alcohol content and palate-refreshing qualities. But the gauntlet was down. No all-beer list with a few token critter label wines to satisfy the ladies and effete gentlemen. Aman rightly believed that something new needed to be done. As you know, the "wine list" at most Indian restaurants is as woeful as the beer selection at Pearson International. I was determined to take things beyond the standard "Gewürztraminer-with-spicy-dishes" prescription.

So the stage was set to embark on an exploration of the sub-continent's cuisine, with all of the pitfalls and challenges. I enlisted the assistance of some experts: Michael Pataran, a five-star chef who has an understanding of horizontal and vertical food vibrations, buccal resonance and chemical reactions that would embarrass many a NASA employee; and Zoltan Szabo, a sommelier whose tasting sensitivity, acuity and understanding of food and wine harmony eclipses that of most mortals. We all sat around the back table at the Indian Rice Factory with Aman and got to work.

The biggest challenge is that Indian food is so damned flavourful. It is associated with herbs and spices, sometimes hot, sometimes just layered with complex flavours. Most wines throw in the towel after the first sensory assault by a chili pepper. That is why equally flavourful wines like a big and luscious, highly aromatic and slightly off-dry Gewürztraminer work so well, becoming somewhat of a cliché due to their success. But according to Indian sommelier Magandeep Singh, based in New Delhi: "The old-school fuddy-duddy belief of sweet wines for all things Asian needs a serious makeover!"

Typical ingredients found in Ms. Patel's secret recipes include five-alarm chilies of all colours, shapes and sizes, soapy coriander and pun-



Owner Aman Patel at the 37-year-old Indian Rice Factory.

gent spices like cardamom, cloves, cumin and ginger. Joining the mix: fatty cashews and coco-nuts, sweet raisins, cinnamon, and sweet-tangy elements like orange and tamarind. In most cases, to make matters more complex, the individual elements are combined, as in the traditional seasoning garam masala, so that the sommelier is faced with a multilayered, highly pungent dish that plays on dozens of notes, not just a few, as most wine-friendly cooking does. And of course Indians eat a bunch of dishes all at once, meat, vegetables, lentils, curries, etc., so it's impossible to match one wine per course. With this in mind, we trialed a few "classic" matches, plus a few we didn't think stood a chance, just for the sake of thoroughness.

On the white side, traditional wisdom in these matters shuns oak, as the added flavour dimension of an oak-aged wine would seem, logically, like sensory overload. Prescribed instead are refreshing, high-acid whites with low alcohol that won't fuel the fire raging in your mouth. Cool climate, flavourful but low-alcohol Riesling (Ontario, Germany, Alsace) offers a reliable match; especially with a pinch of sweetness to simmer the sensation of spicy heat. Try Flatrock Cellars, Vineland semi-dry or

**Indian Rice Factory**  
**414 Dupont St.**  
**Toronto**  
**416-961-3472**

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Cave Spring, all from Niagara. Sauvignon Blanc works well for similar reasons, notching up the herbal component (Vineland, Château des Charmes, Creekside). Sparkling wine is a good default choice, too, for the refreshment angle. (High acid and bubbles—what's not to love?)

But we found that these wine styles merely cleansed the palate between bites without interacting or enhancing the flavour experience. We needed more fruit, so we kicked it up a notch with a delicious, fat, round and fruity Alsatian-style Pinot Gris (2005 Mission Hill, Okanagan, B.C.), which had enough flavour to work well with the chicken tikka. Along similar lines, we tried a Gruner Veltliner (2005 Kies, Kurt Angerer, Austria), a fruity-herbal Spanish white (2005 Verdejo, Cantosán) and a floral Müller-Thürgau from the Alto Adige in Italy (2005 Abbazia di Novacella), all of which held their own with a number of dishes.

Then the biggest surprise: We pulled out a bold, ripe new world style oaky chardonnay (2003 Tawse, Niagara) just to confirm its unsuitability. Behold, the fat, oaky number sang with the chicken kashabad (stuffed with paneer, raisins, coriander and nuts in a cashew nut curry), the spicy-wood notes matching and melding with the rich cheese stuffing. Then we put it up with the monkfish in green lentil curry, and again it worked best. Singh agrees with wood: "Oak wines accompany tandoor (clay oven) preparations exceptionally well." So it seems there is definitely a place at the Indian table for tropical, fruit-forward wooded whites.

In red wines it is the presence of tannin (the mouth-puckering compound found in grape skins) that generally causes the problems, as their astringent character is generally heightened by sweet, salty, acid and bitter flavours. (Hmm, that about sums up all of the known flavours.) Protein is a tannin-tamer, but as many Indian dishes are vegetarian, there is not much room for tannic wines. We tried a Baco Noir (2005 Henry of Pelham), a low-tannin, high-acid red with distinctive smoky,

gamey flavours—it worked brilliantly with tandoor spicing, the rich lamb roganjosh and many other dishes. Similar reds, such as bright Barbera or velvety young Tempranillo do the job nicely.

Again we pulled out a big, alcoholic, tannic, oaky red (2004 Montefalco Rosso, Le Mura Saracene, Umbria), just in case. For the ultimate test, Aman brought out the lamb vindaloo, a sommelier's nightmare if ever there was one. Surprise again. The intense, black fruit, sweet-smoky oak flavour was just what the vindaloo needed. And, surprise again, we could actually taste the wine. The tannins did their thing with the protein, and the alcohol accentuated the burn so prized by Indians, Aman assures me, creating the authentic "muzza" experience akin to drinking hot tea on a hot day with hot spicy food. Similar results would apply with new world Zinfandel and jammy Merlot and Shiraz. A word to the wise: Serve these reds slightly chilled, not at your average Mumbai room temp.

The sake selection brought by Michael and supplied by specialist importer Shotaro (Ozawa Canada) also yielded many surprises. Despite the relatively high alcohol in most sake, the depth of flavour and deceptive delicacy works. Try the Wakatake Onikoroshi "Dragon Slayer" Dai Ginjo with the butter chicken or the sweet-unfiltered Sho Chiku Bai Nigori Sake from California with the vindaloo. And then, the coup de coeur of the evening: Umenoyado Blueberry Sparkling sake, infused with fresh Hokkaido blueberries. It works with just about everything—a true panty-remover.

Our research complete, the new list is now in place and waiting to surprise and educate. But just in case you aren't feeling adventurous, there are also a few good brews on hand. **CB**

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*Master Sommelier John Szabo designs wine lists for astute eateries.*

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# Name Dropping?

Artisanal Italian • Benchmark Bordeaux • Classic California

Groth • Philip Togni • Kistler • Justin • von Strasser • Schramsberg  
Kalin • Murphy-Goode • McManis • Whitehall Lane • Crane Canyon  
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**WHERE:** MaRS Discovery District, 101 College St.

For more information visit [www.somewhereness.com](http://www.somewhereness.com)

#### TRADE TASTING 11 A.M. TO 4 P.M.

2 complimentary passes per establishment. \$10 per each additional attendee (payable at the door). Proceeds to benefit MaRS Discovery District. **Please RSVP your attendance to Tonia Wilson at [tonia@savourflavour.com](mailto:tonia@savourflavour.com) by Friday April 27.**

#### PUBLIC TASTING 6 P.M. TO 9 P.M.

Tickets are \$68 (+GST). Meet Ontario's celebrated winemakers, taste new releases and enjoy samplings of local artisan foods. Includes tasting voucher redeemable at participating wineries (\$50 value). Proceeds to benefit MaRS Discovery District. Tickets are available at: [www.somewhereness.com](http://www.somewhereness.com)



# Sour Grapes? Sure, but not in the bottle

THE ART OF FINE VINEGAR-MAKING IS ALIVE IN NIAGARA

By Konrad Ejrich

## GENUINE SOUR GRAPES

(Max 5 stars for quality & value)

### Crown Bench Verjus

[Beamsville] ★★★★★

Green, under ripe Vidal grapes are picked in August, crushed, filtered and bottled. This sour grape juice is a superior kitchen replacement for lemon juice. Richer flavours, thicker texture and complex fruit flavours make for better marinades, salad dressings and pan reductions. (Fine food stores, \$10.95/750ml.) Crown Bench Estates, 905-563-3959, [crownbenchestates.com](http://crownbenchestates.com).

### Lanson "Black Label" Brut

[Champagne] ★★★★★

Champagne is the coolest wine region in the world, yielding wines of brilliance, crispness, complexity and refreshing acidity. This one rocks, with light lemony freshness, a bouquet of honeyed gingersnaps, and a long, tasty finish. (Vintages Essential, \$45.15) Mark Anthony Group, 905-268-6731, [lanson.fr](http://lanson.fr)

### Martell XO Extra Old

[Cognac] ★★★★★

Only the finest sour grapes are chosen from the cognac sub-districts of Grande Champagne (for power) and Borderies (for elegance). The first whiff of dried fruit and flowers gives way to an extraordinary honeyed "rancio" character. Intense and complex, with everlasting flavours of white pepper, Asian five-spice powder, honey, vanilla, old leather, sandalwood incense and toasted hazelnuts. (Vintages, \$199.95) Corby Distilleries, 416-369-1859, [martell.com](http://martell.com)

Sick of dealing with the arrogant KGB, grape growers Martin Gemmrich and Wolfgang Woerthle packed in their dreams of producing fine Ontario wine and switched focus. For their new venture, **ACETO NIAGARA**, they kept their vineyards, wine presses and fermentation tanks and now produce Ontario's finest vinegars.

The partners buy no crappy, second-rate wine for their delightful delicacies—they wouldn't even accept it for free—and they refuse to use essences or additives as do most industrial vinegar producers. The January morning I visited the start-up business, Woerthle was crushing night-picked Vidal grapes at 46 Brix (a measurement of grape sugars), producing a spectacularly concentrated syrup. From this Gemmrich will generate an **ICEWINE VINEGAR** on a par with *aceto balsamico* from Modena.

Besides icewine vinegar, the partnership makes apricot, cherry, peach and tomato vinegars at the standard concentration of five per cent acetic acid.

Aceto Niagara is also breaking ground with two new products, **ICEWINE ACETO** and **ICEWINE & CHERRY ACETO** reduced to only three per cent acetic acid. The lower acidity and oak barrel aging soften any harsh or sharp tones and provide the quality time that's needed to develop secondary aromas and complex flavours. They have named these products aceto to differentiate them from the vinegar. Acetos are meant to be sipped straight or in cocktails before or after meals, as stimulating aperitifs, or as relaxing digestives.

Overcoming the anticipated yuck-factor, I tried 'em, and I actually liked 'em. They taste like "vinegar-light," the white like young tangy icewine, the red like liquid cherry pie that bites back. Though unique and delicious, I still prefer champagne before and cognac after.

The most amazing product I tasted that morning, though, was the vinegar made from tomatoes. It is so flavourful, Gemmrich and Woerthle sell it with a perfume atomizer. One spritz or two on a salad brings out the wow.

Vinegar has a legendary reputation for having health-giving qualities. It is both antibiotic and anti-septic. It kills salmonella and streptococcus on contact and is said to prevent such common ailments as heart disease, arthritis, cancer, deteriorating eyesight and even dementia. It's been used for millennia in the treatment of pain, cramps, indigestion and gas. It relieves itches and sunburn and can be used as an underarm deodorant.

In the kitchen, vinegar acts as both a tenderizer and a preservative. The entire sushi industry is based on vinegar's capacity to prevent bacteria from growing on raw fish, and to eliminate fishy odours.

Aceto Niagara products are available at A Bisket - A Basket in the St Lawrence Market, All the Best Fine Food, Pusateri's and Whole Foods Market. For more locations, see [aceton Niagara.com](http://aceton Niagara.com). CB

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[aceton Niagara.com](http://aceton Niagara.com)



KONRAD EJBICH delivers wine wisdom to publications worldwide, including *Decanter* and *Wine Spectator*. He fields caller questions regularly on CBC Radio, and penned *A Pocket Guide to Ontario Wines, Wineries, Vineyards & Vines* in 2005.



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- Quinta de Ventozelo 2001 Douro Reserva, Douro, Portugal (LCBO #21329) @ \$22.95/btl.
- Pirramimma 2003 Cabernet, McLaren Vale, Australia (LCBO #730374) @ \$22.95/btl.

For more information please email [bwwines@bwwines.com](mailto:bwwines@bwwines.com) or visit [bwwines.com](http://bwwines.com)



# Spring's Bounty

THE SEASON'S WHISKEY RELEASES—THE GOOD, THE GREAT AND THE M.I.A.

By Stephen Beaumont

**It's spring, a time of hope and joy and renewal,** a season when old habits are cast aside and new experiences embraced, for good or, occasionally, for bad.

What better time to break out of your whisky or whiskey rut and try something out of the ordinary, even unconventional? Such as, for instance, an Irish spirit of a decidedly different pedigree.

**GREENORE**, from the good folk at the Cooley Distillery, Ireland's only independent, Irish-owned distiller, is billed as a single grain whiskey (\$58.95). What this means is that rather than the mix of malted and unmalted grains that go into a typical whiskey from Eire, this is crafted from nothing but ordinary grain whiskies, which are typically used to soften and sweeten blended whiskeys like Kilbeggan and Paddy and Bushmills. The result is much more appealing than some might expect, with vanilla and green apple notes in the nose and a soft and lightly sweet, fruity-caramelly character, with a lingering note of charred oak in the finish. "Elegant" is its best descriptive.

More forceful are Cooley's other two recently released whiskeys: the **CONNEMARA PEATED SINGLE MALT** (\$64.95) and the **CONNEMARA CASK-STRENGTH PEATED SINGLE MALT** (\$86.95). I've written about these two before, in the April 2006 issue, so I won't rehash the mythology of how Irish whiskeys are for some reason *supposed* to be unpeated, despite the fact that the island is teeming with peat. What I will note, however, is that the Cask Strength Connemara is something to try neat. No water, just on its own. Trust me.

Flying the Canadian flag are two new releases from **GIBSON'S: RARE NEW OAK** (\$29.15) and **RARE BOURBON CASK** (\$29.15), each name referring to the type of wood in which the spirit spent its final days. While the former is a shade lighter than the latter, both are caramelly gold with rich, vanilla-soaked aromas. The Bourbon Cask is the sweeter of the two, in both aroma and body, while the New Oak is, for me, the more palatable, with loads of vanilla and fruit up front and plenty of smoky, charred wood notes in the finish. Neither of these is going to instantly transform a Scottish single malt

fan into a Canadian whisky diehard, but they will soften even the hardest of the anti-rye prejudiced hearts, like my own.

And speaking of the Scots, as usual, their whiskies account for the lion's share of new and recent arrivals, with a couple sticking out as being particularly worthy of a walk down the road less travelled.

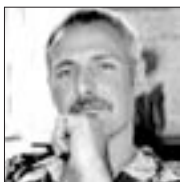
**COMPASS BOX MAGIC CASK** (\$96.65) is a vatted whisky, meaning one which is composed of malts from different distillers—therefore not a single malt—and yet contains no grain whisky, so neither is it a blend. Like the rest of the Compass Box line, it is a superlative spirit, with perfume of ripe plum on the nose and a distinguished palate of honeysuckle, golden raisins, yellow plum and lingering peat on the finish.

"The Cask Strength Connemara is something to try neat. Trust me."

On the blended whisky front, **CUTTY SARK 15 YEAR OLD** (\$71.95) is a blend designed to make a believer out of the most ardent single malt snob. A weighty whisky with a pronounced Speyside character and plentiful orange peel on the nose, it boasts a gently sweet and floral front followed by a full and mildly spicy body accented by sherry and vanilla notes. There aren't too many Scottish whiskies I'd be comfortable pairing with chocolate, but this is one of them.

Well, that's new Ireland, Canada and Scotland, how about new and interesting American whiskeys? Sorry, forget it. There aren't any. Judging by the LCBO's website listing, if the label doesn't say "Jack Daniel's", your likelihood of being an American whiskey for sale in Ontario is slim.

Why is that, particularly when there's much new and exciting going on south of the border? Don't ask me, talk to the LCBO. **CB**



STEPHEN BEAUMONT penned this column with the help of a generous dram of Compass Box Peat Monster, another welcome whisky arrival. Visit [worldofbeer.com](http://worldofbeer.com) for more.



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# Small Bars, Big Hearts

GIVE ME THE GRITTY WHEN I'VE HAD TOO MUCH OF THE GLAM

By Laura Panter

There are the big, splashy, fancy places in this city, the bars and clubs that take meticulous planning to get through the doors—pulling on strings for a reservation, dressing to the nines and strutting out smelling like money, all for the joy of feeling ten feet off the ground. There's nothing wrong with these indulgent nights, except for an empty wallet and a vague feeling of emptiness the next morning. You look in the mirror and say, "Ah, Cinderella, I get your vibe now."

After years of *fabulous fun* hangovers, I have learned that there is no better way to rub off that glitter and get back to earth than to head downscale; seriously downscale, to the smallest bar with the friendliest bartender, shabby furniture and that sense of welcoming you just don't get in chic-land. Hidden away, you might never have heard of these gems, but they are always full of regulars ready to greet you and make you feel whole again. I'll share them with you, but please, keep it hush hush...

**KITTY O'SHEA'S** 2375A Queen St. E. Down at the end of the Beaches (or is it *Beach?*), past the sidewalks jammed with strollers and puppies, lies the most precious little pub in Toronto. Across the street, the perennially popular Quigley's fills up with Beach-y locals, but Kitty's has a life of its own; an ambiance reminiscent of someone's basement rec room, with the addition of an exceptionally good pint of Guinness.

**DONE RIGHT INN** 861 Queen St. W. It's not that they make the best drinks ever, or that they are wildly unique, but any place that accepts Canadian Tire money without batting

an eyelash deserves a pat on the back. What's also great is the decided lack of attitude. Unlike some places that either hate the style-less or glare menacingly at the well-dressed, DRI lets anyone buy a drink; anyone from the guy off the street to the suit who read it was seedy-cool.

**SWEAT BETTY'S** 13 Ossington Ave. It's sassy, like a cute girl giving you the finger. Cool, almost too cool, but you are drawn in anyway, mainly because they are trying so hard to be liked by being as cheeky as possible. They serve marmite, the bartender is super-friendly and they endeavour to build a community with music and poetry series, all within their tiny confines. If it's too crowded, try the equally delightful Crooked Star down the street.

**EMBASSY** 223 Augusta Ave. I have always felt that any bar in Kensington was somewhat protected from being overrun by scenesters just by its geography; since I was a teenager I have consistently met Torontonians who have rarely, if ever, explored the market. But the area is picking up, with great places like Torito and Rice Bar, and young hang-outs like Supermarket bringing new life to the neighbourhood. Embassy fills up with the "hip but conscious" crowd, and maintains that insular community feel that Kensington is known for. **CB**



The quest for cocktail excellence is a passion for LAURA PANTER. With the fabulous Michelle Hunt, Laura owns Toronto's renowned drinks-event company The Martini Club. Check out [martiniclub.com](http://martiniclub.com).



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Buying consignment wines from an agent is easy and it's the only way to access the 75 per cent of great wine imported into Ontario that never makes it onto the LCBO shelves.

The wines still go through the LCBO's warehouse and testing program, but agents are able to bring in specialty wines for purchase only by restaurants or private customers. Here's what to do: Call or email the agent to get the latest price list. (Ask to receive email updates and invitations to tasting events.) You must order by the case; that's 6 or 12 bottles. Ontario wines can be mixed within a case. Home or office delivery is often free, although sometimes there's a small charge. You'll have your wine in about two days. Magic!



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Sora Olah at Golden Wheat Bakery on College.

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## Sora Olah’s Favourite

**TAKEOUT:** Island Foods, 1182 King St. W., 416-532-6298

**SANDWICH:** Wagamama Pastries & Café, 766 King St. W., 416-603-0369

**VEGGIES:** Fresh on Crawford, 894 Queen St. W., 416-913-2720

**LUNCH UNDER \$10:** The Prague, 638 Queen St. W., 416-504-5787

**DESSERT:** Golden Wheat Bakery & Pastry, 652 College St., 416-534-1107

**BRUNCH:** Warehouse Grill, 70 Fraser Ave., 416-533-2446

**WEIRD MEATS:** Chinatown

**UNPRETENTIOUS HANGOUT:** Moonbean Coffee Company, 30 St. Andrew St., 416-595-0327

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# Say Olah

THE *STREET EATS* HOST GETS TO EXPLORE THE MANY FACES OF TORONTO’S FOOD SCENE—FOR WORK AND FOR FUN

If anyone should understand the range of the city’s culinary offerings, it should be Sora Olah. Transplanted to Toronto from Montreal four years ago, the mischief-eyed actress has since married her professional career to her love of good eating. For the past two years she’s been exploring the kitchens of the city’s best ethnic restaurants as the host of SUN TV’s *Street Eats*; then in the off-season, she has a laugh about another side of the food biz as the voice of stripper Cherry Lafontaine on Teletoon’s *Sons of Butcher*.

She’s tried midtown living—Deer Park and “horrible hoochy-poochy” Yorkville—but found her comfort zone in the west end, in Liberty Village and now on King West. Her acting career has also found its sweet spot, with a lead role in a Bravo! short called *The Yard Sale* debuting in May and filming for the third season of *Street Eats* starting up in the summer.

What’s caught her attention about the city is the *craft* of what gets served up here. “You can find really authentic food in Toronto, it’s amazing they’ll bring in spices from Ethiopia from a certain village to make an Ethiopian dish. Korean food in Toronto tastes like it does in Korea.”

### HOW DOES FOOD MAKE YOU FEEL?

It’s really a very important part of my life and always has been, mostly because of how I was raised—my mom’s Korean, my dad’s Hungarian—so as a kid I was exposed to different foods and the importance of food in culture.

### WHAT HAVE YOU DISCOVERED THROUGH THE SHOW?

I had some things that would be considered strange here, but are delicacies in those countries. So, for the Philippines episode, I ate balut, which is a half-boiled duck embryo. We eat chopped up cows at McDonald’s, and this is a natural egg, with protein, full of nutrients. It’s quite tasty, I was shocked. I even said in the episode, if you close your eyes and you don’t know what it is, then it’s really easy to eat.

### WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT WINE?

I don’t know that much. I think people who are true wine connoisseurs—like the top 50 in the world—I don’t think it’s even about the wine any more. It’s about geography and economics and politics and the soil. But I love wine, I’m a big wino.

### WHEN DID YOU HAVE YOUR FIRST GLASS OF WINE?

I was young, probably three years old. My dad’s Hungarian, they drink!

### WHAT COOKBOOKS DO YOU LIKE?

Jamie Oliver’s Italian edition (*Jamie’s Italy*, Hyperion, \$34.95). I really believe a cookbook should have pictures on every page, or I don’t buy it. All the recipes are easy to make, and they are ingredients you can find.

### WHAT’S IN YOUR FRIDGE RIGHT NOW?

Five Tupperware containers of homemade dog food.

### THE FOOD THAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY?

Soups. I love dumpling soup, minestrone, all soups.



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