

Ottimista Enoteca-Cafe Newsletter

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Ciao Melissa,

Welcome to Ottimista's new monthly newsletter, designed to keep you informed about wine bar events and special offerings. You're getting this because you've either signed up, or as friends of Ottimista, we thought you might enjoy it. But if you ever decide you don't want to receive the newsletter, please email melissa@ottimistasf.com, and we'll promptly remove your name.

First of all, a big thank you to the Cow Hollow/Marina neighborhood for welcoming Ottimista Enoteca-Cafe with open arms! We appreciate your enthusiastic patronage, and are thrilled to see such a fun group of regulars returning. We promise to keep things interesting by continually rotating the wines by the glass and food menu, so stop by and see what's new.

And after two chaotic but wonderful months in business on Union street, we're finally settling into a groove at Ottimista, and getting around to some of the fun stuff we had to put on the back burner in the holiday rush. One of which is our new wine education program, launched this week with a sold out Port & cheese pairing on Wednesday, February 8th. Moving forward, we'll feature a casual weekly or bi-monthly event, including regional wine tastings, food & wine pairings, winemaker discussions and dinners, and seasonal celebrations. You'll be notified of events in this monthly newsletter, and can always find the current schedule of events on our website, www.ottimistasf.com/events.

Enjoy this issue, and please feel free to email me with any comments or suggestions.

Italian lessons & vino

Starting Sunday Feb. 26



Ottimista is happy to introduce its Italian lessons & vino series. Join us Sunday afternoons (3- 4:15) on the patio for a 30-minute lesson led by Bergamo, Italy-native Timothy Morzenti, followed by 45 minutes of conversation practice, wine tasting and small nibbles (vino gets *l'italiano* flowing). Each lesson will cover conversation basics on a different practical theme relevant to travelers, and is designed to be a standalone module - so you can pick and choose topics of interest, and do not have to attend the full series to learn real conversation skills. And of course, we'll taste some good wine and have fun as we go along.

Note: attendees do not have to attend the whole series. Lessons are designed to stand alone, so that students walk away with solid conversational skills on a specific topic.

Cost: \$45 per person, including lesson, materials, wine flight and nibbles.

Conversation Topics:

- Week 1 - Feb. 26th: Conversation basics
- Week 2 - March 5: Making friends
- Week 3 - March 12: Ordering at a restaurant
- Week 4 - March 19: Hotel & transportation logistics

Upcoming Events



All events will be held on Ottimista's front patio.

Tasting, educational materials and small bites are included. Attendees also receive 10% off wine bottle purchases the day of the event. To sign up for events, please email Melissa Gisler or call 415.674.8400. Credit card required for class registration. Cancellations must be made 72 hours in advance.

Sunday, February 12th 3-4:30pm - Sparkling wine tasting

Impress your Valentine with knowledge of the diverse sparkling wines of California, Italy, France and Spain. Session includes a discussion of the different styles, then a tasting of 6 wines. Cost: \$45 per person

Tuesday, February 21st - Venetian Carnivale celebration

6-7:15pm Wines of the Veneto Tasting

The Veneto is Italy's largest wine-producing region, yet its terrific value wines remain relatively undiscovered. Join us for a discussion and tasting of 6 wines from the Veneto, including Prosecco, Valpolicella and Soave. Cost: \$40 per person

5-10pm Carnivale party

The word carnival comes from the Latin for "Farewell, meat!". As Lent (which begins on Ash Wednesday) obliged people to fast, during the period up to Ash Wednesday all meat, butter and eggs had to be used up. This religious formality became the excuse for a party that echoed pagan festivities. At Ottimista we'll celebrate the kick-off of Carnivale with a special Venetian tasting menu and flights of wines from the Veneto. Reservations will be accepted for dinner this evening. Cost: Menu pricing

Sunday, February 26th, 3:00pm - Italian Lessons & Vino: Conversation basics

The first lesson covers conversational basics to help students feel comfortable just starting to speak Italian. Cost: \$45 per person

Sunday, March 5th, 3:00pm - Italian Lessons & Vino: Making Friends

The second lesson in the series introduces you to the art of meeting and greeting in Italiano. Cost: \$45 per person

Saturday, March 11th 3-4:15pm - Regional tasting & seminar: Wines of Alto Adige

Join us at Ottimista as we kick off a series of wine tasting seminars, each focusing on a region of Italy where we're finding amazing wines at incredible values. Each session will start with a 30-minute lecture, followed by a tasting and discussion of 4-5 wines. This week's session highlights the region of Alto Adige in Italy's Northeast, bordering Austria, a mountainous area known for crisp, aromatic whites. Grapes covered include: Pinot Bianco, Gewurztraminer, Kerner and Lagrein. Cost: \$35 per person.

Sunday, March 12th, 3:00pm - Italian Lessons & Vino: Ordering at a restaurant

This week's lesson focuses on a most important topic - eating and drinking in Italian. Cost: \$45 per person

Tuesday, March 14th 6-7:15pm - Wine Pairing: Amarone & Cheese

Experience a decadent treat, and join Wine Director Jerad Ruhl for a casual, fun way to learn more about Italy's big, rich red, Amarone, and how it pairs with the hearty cheeses of the Veneto and Lombardy regions. We'll start with a 20-minute



lecture on what makes Amarone unique, followed by a tasting of 3-4 Amarones with cheese pairings. Cost: \$45 per person.

Sunday, March 19th, 3:00pm - Italian Lessons & Vino: Hotel & transportation logistics

An important session for anyone planning a trip to Italy - getting around and dealing with hotels, trains, planes and automobiles. Cost: \$45 per person

Find out more....

Now serving lunch & brunch



You know us for great wine and dinner - but did you know that Ottimista now serves lunch Tuesday- Friday 11:30-3:00 and brunch Saturday - Sunday 11:00-3:00?

You'll find many of your favorite small plates on the lunch menu, plus a rotating selection of seasonal bigger plates, including grilled panini, thin crust pizza, big salads, soup and pasta. Our Italian- inspired brunch menu features breakfast pizza, fried egg & pancetta panini, frittata, stuffed French toast and house made granola in addition to daily panini, pizza, soup and salad specials. We also serve espresso and coffee from Caffe Roma, and welcome lunchtime take-out orders.

So grab your pooch, park yourself on Ottimista's heated patio with the newspaper, and enjoy lunch or brunch on the best people watching perch around. (Yes, our patio is dog friendly too!)

New at Ottimista: Retail wine sales



You've enjoyed our eclectic wines at Ottimista's marble-topped bar, now you can take a bit of Italy (or Sonoma or France or Spain) home with you. Most of our wines by the bottle are available to buy and take home for a reduced price. Ask us for a retail list, or check it out online - the full list and downloadable order form will be available at www.ottimistasf.com by mid-February. Tell your friends - Ottimista is now Cow Hollow's local wine shop, and the best place to buy unique, great value Italian and California wines!

Find out more....

New: Happy Hour at Ottimista!



In the hopes of making these dreary winter days a bit

sunnier, we've christened Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 3:00-6:30 happy hour at Ottimista! You'll find 2 for 1 wines by the glass (up to \$12), \$3 olives and \$5 crostini.

[Find out more....](#)



Jerad's Wine Picks: February

Each month we'll feature a selection of new and fun wines at a special price. Here are wine director Jerad Ruhl's picks for February:



NV Mosby 'Stelline di Cortese' (Sparkling Cortese)

From William Mosby, a Santa Barbara- California producer focused on Italian varietals, comes a dry, well-balanced California sparkling wine that exhibits green apple and under-ripe peach with a hint of nut

and mineral in the finish. As far as we know, this is the only Sparkling Cortese ever made. Cortese, a grape that calls the Gavi region of Piedmont home, is generally made into a dry white that is full of citrus zest and minerals, and sometimes even salty or oceanic. What a fun new expression of Cortese, just in time for Valentines Day. Retail price: \$26

2004 Fratoria La Monacesca 'La Monacesca' Verdicchio di Matelica

Within the Marche region of central Italy are two sub- regions for the Verdicchio grape, Castelli di Jesi and Matelica (pronounced like the heavy metal band). Matelica, further inland and at a higher elevation, coaxes out the mineral and floral side of Verdicchio, considered the queen of native Italian white grapes. A straw-colored, dry white wine, the 'La Monacesca' is the perfect complement to almost any shellfish or seafood dish. Retail price: \$24

2003 St. Michael-Eppan Blauburgunder-Pinot Nero

This Pino Nero, a clone of Pinot Noir, expresses a perfect balance between strawberry fruit, healthy acidity and just the right hint of smoke and earth. It hails from Alto Adige, the most Northern and Eastern region in Italy, which only formally became part of Italy after WWII and is still very heavily influenced by its Austro-Hungarian roots. This explains why the label includes the Austrian name of the grape, Blauburgunder, before the Italian Pinot Nero. To find a Pinot of this quality at this price point seems to be the new Holy Grail of the wine world. Retail price: \$25

2001 Renard 'Peay Vineyard' Syrah

This Syrah shows its cool climate influence with a heady mix of black pepper, clove, sour cherry, earth and leather. Renard, an ultra-boutique winery in Sonoma, produces Rhone varietals like Syrah, Roussane, Granache and Viognier and even a Syrah Rose, from vineyards across Central and Northern California. This amazing project is held together by the efforts of one Renaissance man, Bayard Fox, who is not only the owner/winemaker of Renard but also holds down a full-time cooperage sales job and a wonderful marriage. When does he sleep? Retail price: \$36

[Find out more....](#)

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Don's Corner: Varietal Adventures



An interesting and sexy Valentines varietal: **Lagrein**.

Although this grape has grown in almost total obscurity in the valleys of Trentino and Alto Adige for several hundred years, it's finally becoming available in the states.

At Ottimista, we happen to have some wonderful, and yes, sexy examples at Ottimista that would put the finishing touch on any Valentine's dinner. But first, a little background info on this unique varietal and the region from whence it comes.

It's story starts in the shadow of the Dolomites, in far northeastern Italy. Since this area was once the southernmost end of the Austrian empire, there remains a distinct Germanic influence, especially obvious in varietal names like Lagrein (and Traminer, Muller-Thurgau, Weissburgunder, etc.). Even the road signs list both the Italian and German names for the towns and villages in this beautiful region.

The name Lagrein itself has traditionally been made in two distinct styles. The first is a dry, dark red style called **scuro** in Italian and **Dunkel** in German (meaning "dark" in both languages). The second rendition is a spicy, robust rose. In both cases the color is indeed quite dark, with deep, purplish hues in the red version and a dark, brickish pink in the rose.

I find the nose of a dark style Lagrein to be one of the most interesting aromas in all Italian wine. It starts out funky and a bit barnyard, while the funk is balanced by a perfumy and floral component that is often compared to violets. There can also be a wet stony aroma and lots of dark berry fruits, and maybe even a hint of leather or coffee. This tension between earthy, funky components and pretty and lush ones make for a truly intoxicating experience.

This dynamic push-pull follows through on the palate as well with dark, plummy fruits showcased in framework of earthy and savory flavors and polished off with great acidity. As you would expect, these wines are wonderful with hearty meat and game dishes like the ones you would probably be enjoying in Alto Adige, or elsewhere around northern Italy.

Currently we are featuring two wonderful examples of scuro Lagreins at Ottimista. One is from Elena Walch in Alto Adige, a sultry wine with silky tannins and just a little funk. The other is a lush, incredibly deep version from Mosby in Santa Barbara County called "La Seduzione". I really can't think of a more appropriate Valentine's day wine than that!

The rose version is also an enticing little number with surprising savory flavors and a robust structure for a rose. The rose' also seem to have great natural acidity and even a little spice on the finish that makes them a great match for a wide range of foods, especially pasta or pizza.

Our current selection of Lagrein roses includes an impressively structured version from Cantina Terlan, and it's rich fruit reminds me of fresh crushed cherries. I also like the slightly lighter and prettier style of Alois Lageder, which has a freshness to its acidity that would make it a great choice with a light appetizer course.

I must admit that all this talk about Lagrein is getting me a little emotional. I only hope that my Valentine's date this year is like a good Lagrein; a little pretty, a little dirty and extremely deep and complex. Salute!

Find out more....

Valentines Day at Ottimista



We've had many calls about the big V-day, so here it is: we will be open as usual, but are accepting reservations for this special evening. In addition to our regular menu, we'll also feature a few decadent menu additions, including a chef's 4-course tasting menu with wine pairings.

So bring your sweetie, or come meet a new one! For more information, or to make a reservation, please call us at 674-8400.

[Find out more....](#)

Bon Appetito!

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