

Vino Locale: A European-Inspired Enotheca and Art Gallery in Palo Alto

Eat local. Shop local. Drink local wines. Support local artists. Vino Locale, a European-inspired oenotheca and art gallery in Palo Alto is all about the local connection in food, wine and art.

Whether you have been there many times or come in for the first time you will find Vino Locale to be a home away from home: a place to relax, enjoy good fresh food and excellent wine, and meet and make new friends. The 103 year-old Victorian (on the historic register) just off University Avenue is just a few doors from the busy center of Palo Alto but is a world apart. Everything about Vino Locale is warm and inviting. The owner, Randy Robinson, welcomes you as you step in, and the art enlivening the walls draws you in. According to Randy, "Like wine and food, art is a huge part of what makes our region of the world such a great place to live." This is a real community meeting place, where neighbors and regulars stop in to chat and relax.

You can visit with Randy at the bar while sipping a glass of local wine; he has a story to tell about each wine he pours. Or enjoy lunch or dinner in the front room where you can view the art gallery or sit in the lovely, quiet garden in back. I recently savored a delicious harvest soup of herbed squash and potato, along with a grilled sausage Panini. All of the food on the menu is fresh and in season, and is made from scratch. "We are strong supporters of Slow Food and our support is reflected in the food and wine that we carry. We carry as many local products as possible, as well as others that are natural and organic," says Randy, an avid locavore. The menu changes daily, and includes delicious local cheeses (goat cheese from Harley Farm in Pescadero and Pt. Reyes' Cowgirl Creamery); salads, soups, sausages, paninis and desserts.

The wine served and sold is from local wineries, mostly the small, family-owned boutique wineries in the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Santa Clara Valley. A good selection is available by the glass at the bar or with a meal. Just about all of the Santa Cruz Mountains wineries are represented with wine sold by the bottle, including such premium producers as Ahlgren, Fleming Jenkins, Martin Ranch, Mount Eden, Muns Vineyard, Ridge, Silver Mountain, Storrs, and many more. Vino Locale features a wine of the month with a 'meet the winemaker' tasting and special pricing for its Wine Club members.

The gallery show featuring local artists changes monthly and is on the monthly Palo Alto art walk. December's show will feature the latest oil and acrylic paintings of artist William Vinci. Vinci's landscapes and mindscapes are works in abstract and impressionist styles. The Vino Locale show includes a tryptich just completed of the Pinot Noir vineyard at Muns Vineyard in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The artist's reception for William Vinci is December 14, 2:00-5:00pm, at which Muns Vineyard will pour three vintages of their Pinot Noir. Muns Vineyard will also be the weekly featured winery with a tasting on December 6, 6:00-9:00pm. Muns Vineyard, on the Loma Prieta ridge top at 2600' elevation represents the high mountain Pinot Noir vineyards of the region, and recently won Gold Medals for each of its Pinot Noirs from AppellationAmerica.com in its Best of Appellation Awards.

Vino Locale is inspired by Randy's visits to France and Italy, where local wines are celebrated in local shops and bars. The old Victorian that is Vino Locale, with its warm and personable feel, was exactly what Randy was looking for when he opened it four years ago. Pay a visit, relax with a glass of local wine, enjoy some hearty good food and the art gallery, and discover yourself what this local oenoteca is all about.

- Mary Lindsay

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Upcoming Events:

December 6, 6-9:00pm: Muns Vineyard wine tasting (Pinot Noirs)

December 14, 2-5:00pm: Artist Reception with William Vinci