

# Sipping Spree

*Three new wine shops in town strive to make buying wine as pleasurable as drinking it.*

If anything can make the harried holidays go down more smoothly, it's wine. Laying down a few bottles now to get past the impromptu get-togethers and marathon meals that lie ahead will help preserve your sanity, especially when yet another unexpected guest drops by for a glass of winter cheer.

But gazing at the endless shelves at your local wine shop—the labels a sea of foreign place names and varietals—can induce just as much anxiety as a houseful of in-laws does. Which is why it's important this season, or really any time of year, to buy wine from retailers you feel comfortable calling on for help. We checked in with three of the newest wine merchants in town to see how their retail philosophies and personal wine preferences might make those taxing wine-shopping excursions seem duty-free.

At the airy, uncluttered Cork, Darryl Joannides, who with his wife, Sarah, owned Sellwood's Assaggio Italian restaurant for a decade, offers knowledgeable one-on-one service to those customers who feel a bit in the dark about wine, while witty shelf-talkers ably guide more self-reliant browsers through selections arranged cleverly by price and region. Joannides specializes in bang-for-the-buck wines (most of the bottles are in the \$10-20 range), and over half of his inventory comes from Europe, while 20 percent hails from the Pacific Northwest.

**What wines do you bring to dinner parties?**  
Part of my mission is to introduce people to new wines, so I like to bring esoteric varietals that they probably haven't had before. I might take whites from Austria made from kerner or sylvaner grapes or an unusual valpolicella.

**What's a great wine to give to just about anyone?**  
Preludio, a newer import from Mendoza, makes totally beautiful single-varietal malbec, syrah and tempranillo, all less than \$18. People like stories with their wine, and this label has an embossed pattern that simulates the movement of tango dancers.

## CORK

2901 NE Alberta, 503-281-2675  
(tastings Fri 5-9 p.m.; \$10-20)

**Can you recommend an impressive but reasonably priced wine for friends who fancy themselves aficionados?**

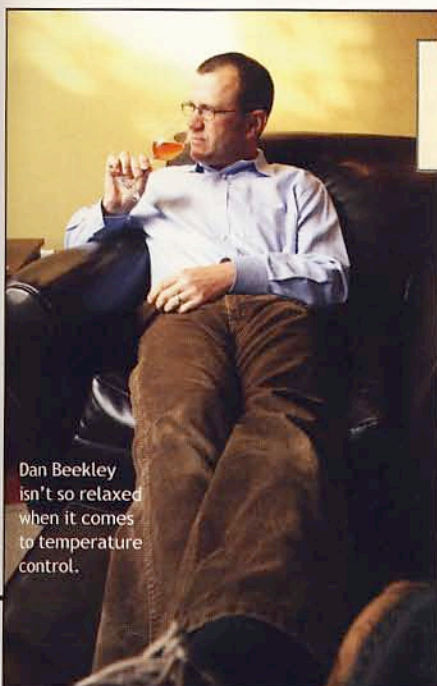
Go for something offbeat like a single-vineyard grüner veltliner from Austria. They're great for converting drinkers who shun whites and for the collector who wants something special.

**What bubbly is worth splurging for?**  
Andre Clouet is a grand cru that blows Veuve Clicquot out of the water. It's got great texture and richness, and it's from a small grower (\$42).

**What's a good wine for a chilly Oregon night?**  
A nice big cab from Walla Walla. I like Buty (\$22).



Darryl Joannides specializes in wines under \$20.



Dan Beekley isn't so relaxed when it comes to temperature control.

## SQUARE DEAL

2321 NW Thurman, 503-226-9463  
(Sit-down tastings with cheese throughout each month; \$15)

**Dan Beekley, owner of this Nob Hill wine shop, admits he is obsessive about temperature control, but he sees no reason why wine shouldn't arrive at his shop in the same, optimal condition it was in when it left the winery.** "Heat damage shows itself in a number of ways—namely, a wine loses fruit purity. It's like the difference between eating a really fresh apple and eating an apple that's been sitting in the sun," Beekley explains. To avoid heat exposure, Square Deal imports bottles directly from winemakers. Cutting out the distributor also means Beekley can offer lower prices.

**What's the most memorable wine you ever received as a gift?**  
A bottle of Vouvray from Philippe Poniatowski,

the amazing proprietor of Le Clos Baudoin in the Loire Valley. It was perfectly conditioned old chenin blanc, unlabeled and marked only with the vintage written in chalk on the bottom of the bottle—1959! I drank it later that day.

**If you've got grandparents who like wine but don't know anything about it, what should you bring to their holiday dinner?**  
A slightly off-dry German riesling. They're great for just drinking or having with the meal.

**What's a good bargain bottle to stock up on for impromptu parties?**  
A youthful but uncommonly rich Côtes du Rhône from Jaume. At \$10, it totally delivers. For white, a Château Turcaud bordeaux (a sauvignon blanc/semillon blend) from Entre-Deux-Mers; it's our most popular wine, and it's \$11.

**What wines do you always have on hand at home?**  
A rosé, a few Alsations and a white with high acid like Sancerre or Vouvray.

**VINIDEUS**

8317 SE 13th Ave, 503-235-8002  
 1019 NW 11th Ave, 503-421-9374  
 (complimentary tastings Tue-Thur 5-7 p.m.,  
 Fri 5-8 p.m., Sat 2-8 p.m. and Sun noon-5)

When Didier Sudre and Frederic Raclot met, they discovered they had much in common: Gallic heritage, black belts in judo, wives who teach at the Portland French School and a deep love of wine. They were also both frustrated that so few decent yet well-priced French wines were available in Portland. To solve the problem, Sudre and Raclot opened Vinideus in Sellwood in August and a second store in the Pearl in November. Both are stocked with value-priced bottles (half of them French, many from Bordeaux) that you're unlikely to find elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest. "We get the best quality for the price because

we negotiate with small producers who haven't had an outlet in Oregon, or even in the U.S., ever before," Sudre says.

How did you get involved in the wine industry?

**Sudre:** As a *négociant* in Bordeaux I was a wine

buyer for several groups, and my family owns wineries in Bordeaux. **Raclot:** I also come from wine people but in the Northeast, in the Alsace and Languedoc. Knowing the wine growers personally allows us to find wines that most Americans have not seen before.

What question do your customers ask most?

**Sudre:** "What matches best with Bordeaux?" I usually tell them steak or a good cut of beef.

What's the most unusual request you've received from customers recently?

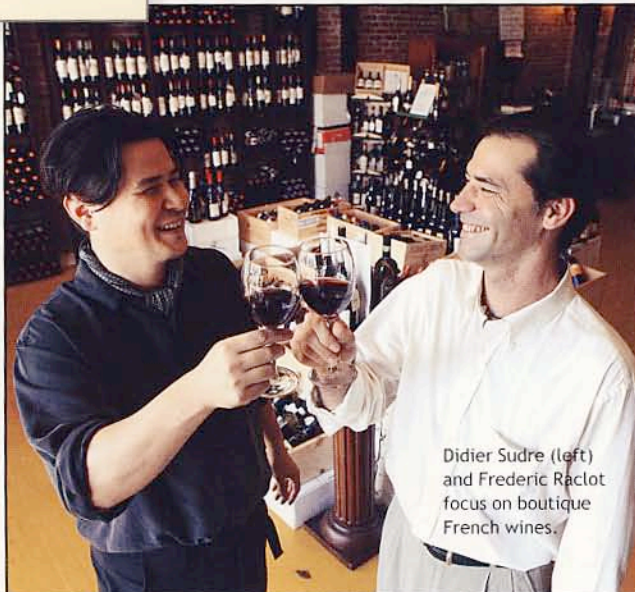
**Raclot:** A man came in asking if we could track down a 1986 Château Petrus for his collection. This bottle is very expensive and very hard to find, but we'll do everything we can to get it.

What's the best moderately priced bubbly to serve to a crowd?

**Raclot:** There is a very good sparkling rosé from Bordeaux made with cabernet sauvignon grapes that is very fruity and comes in the most gorgeous bottle (Château le Grand Housteau "Milady," \$22).

Do you know of a wine that can suit everyone on your list?

**Sudre:** Bordeaux from Château de Reignac and from Château le Bourdillot. Both were highly rated in France's *Le Guide Hachette* and are very hard to find. They are just \$24.99 each, a great buy. ■



Didier Sudre (left) and Frederic Raclot focus on boutique French wines.