



M Victoria

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED how nice it would be to have your own private sommelier? Well that's more or less what you get at upmarket wine store M if you join its My Case scheme.

"First we invite you in for a free one-hour tasting," explains sommelier Lenart Cernelic.

"We take a few twists and turns to see how adventurous you are and how much we can stretch your palate and then we keep all our notes on file. When you need some wine you tell us how many bottles of red and white you require and the budget you have for the case and

we will personally select wine that we know you will really enjoy and deliver free of charge."

You don't need to buy wine by the case to enjoy a tasting in the store. At the tasting table there's a row of enomatic wine machines with a range of bottles you can sample in a blind tasting. "You can buy 75ml glasses of all eight wines for the half-price cost of £20. If you get all eight right, you win a £50 gift card," says Lenart.

Below the shop M's subterranean steakhouse serves 120 wines by the glass along with some of the best steaks in the capital. *74 Victoria Street*

Raise a glass

Whether you fancy a crisp white wine or a spicy red, Victoria's shops and restaurants have it covered

BY ANTONIA WINDSOR

Debunking wine myths

FREDDIE COBB, wine buyer for Vagabond, grew up on a vineyard in Portugal and is a trained winemaker. Here he debunks some wine myths.

MYTH: You should never put ice in wine.

Freddie says: “You can’t be wrong with wine. In South Africa they regularly put a cube of ice in a glass of white on a hot summer’s day. You can also chill some reds.”

MYTH: A pale rosé is the best.

Freddie says: “Don’t judge a wine by its colour. Provence rosé has championed the salmon pink style and people think they have to go for that colour to get a dry, light rosé. But that is not always the case. Darker rosés can have the same taste profile. If you are looking for something a little sweeter go for a blush or a white Zinfandel.”

MYTH: Screw-cap wine is cheaper.

Freddie says: “Considering that nearly 90 per cent of all the wine that comes out of New Zealand is under screw cap, it just isn’t true that a screw-cap is the reserve of the supermarket bargain bins. Obviously my country, Portugal, is a large exporter of cork, so it would be sacrilege for them to put anything else on their wine bottles – even the cheap ones.”

MYTH: You don’t need to taste the wine if the bottle has a screw-cap.

Freddie says: “Even wine under a screw-cap can be oxidised, so it is always worth tasting the wine. A corked wine will taste worse the longer you leave the bottle open. Considering that about nine per cent of wine that is served is corked, we Brits only ever send about one per cent back.”



Vagabond

LIKE THE IDEA of sampling several different wines before deciding what you’ll be quaffing on a Friday night? Well, that’s just what you can do at Vagabond, the Nova flagship bar of the urban winery that produces wine down by Battersea Power Station. You’ll find their own wines among another 100-odd bottles in the innovative wine-dispensing machines at the Nova-based bar.

Buy a top-up card and then select 25ml, 125ml or 175ml of whichever wine you choose. Wines are arranged by style rather than region so you can choose between crisp, aromatic or rich whites and between vibrant, elegant, spicy or bold reds.

Other places for a tittle

BATONNAGE

This cosy little independent wine bar is a recent addition to Eccleston Place and has a cheese counter, deli products and mezzanine bar with wines by the glass.

23 Eccleston Place

LORNE

Seasonal British produce takes centre stage with sommelier Katie Exton, formerly of the much-loved River Cafe, ensuring wine is the star of the show.

76 Wilton Road

THE DRUNKEN OYSTER

Jason Atherton’s stylish cocktail bar, on the first floor of his New York-style Italian restaurant, Hai Cenato, offers a generous Italian wine list and a cosy atmosphere. Perfect for a first date.

2 Sir Simon Milton Square