

# THAT LITTLE WINE BAR

## James The Sommelier – Service

‘Wine honors the soul, so honor it with yours.’

### Valentine’s Day: A day for Merlot

Valentine’s Day has been and gone with the usual professions of love, despite some religious groups in Indonesia declaring it as ‘haram’ and ‘headscarf day’... but, each to their own. And with that in mind, That Little Wine Bar celebrated it in the only way it knows how – with excellent food and wine. With the choice of a set meal or a la carte, customers were treated to expansive yet also bespoke food menus. But what about the wine? Looking back on the evening, there was a certain trend in the drinking habits and, I’m pleased to say, everybody chose – whether recommended or not – very good wines. So, what exactly was drunk on the evening of love.



It was an outstanding night for Merlot. Not quite the grape of seductive sex-appeal – I think that would traditionally go to Pinot Noir – but not surprising as to its smooth, silky body. Merlot is most commonly used as a blending grape due to its non-tannic and non-acidic character which balances well with more powerful grapes such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. The right bank of the Gironde River in Bordeaux, France, concentrates its yields on the Merlot grape - giving us the famous communes of St. Emilion and Pomerol - which use a portion of the yields of Merlot to contribute to the famous bottles of Bordeaux blends – Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Merlot. Also in Italy, a country famous for making slightly

more acidic red wines, Merlot is used to soften Sangiovese grown in areas such as Tuscany, Veneto, Alto Adige and Umbria. During the Valentine’s Day meal, the favorite blend was a Villa Maria Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot 2009, New Zealand, 58% Merlot, 28% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc and 4% Malbec a traditional Bordeaux blend.

However, it is used to make varietal red wines and, when done so, displays a character of plum, berry and current culminating in a soft but fleshy, medium bodied red wine. On Valentine’s Day, its agreeable and subservient character did not fail to please our local Malaysian crowd of guests. One label, the Chateau Floquet St. Emilion 2009, was particularly popular and it is always a bottle that I enjoy seeing on the table of a less experienced wine drinker. Certainly, for the local Malaysian wine palate exploring any complex wines of note - such as from Bordeaux - the discovery into the taste of wine not displaying an overbearing fruity character (from Australia... for example) leaves them with an obvious sense of shock over the realization that there is more to wine than first thought. Being a blend of 70% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, this label does more than just provide for easy drinking but challenges the drinker with its predominantly earthy character interspersed with plum and fine tannin. Paired with our special main of the night, Argentinian Grass-fed Baby Tenderloin, it complimented the slight sweetness of the truffle mash and beetroot while the wine’s nine month age in tank before bottling aided in balancing the protein rich tenderloin. Even with the dessert, Cherry Clafouti, the cherry fruit lifted the label’s subtle fruit and stood up to its fleshy character.

Of course, as evening to celebrate, these are but a few examples of what wines were quaffed on Valentine’s Day. But, full credit must go to everybody who celebrated at That Little Wine Bar for profiling wine as what it should be – a drink, to drink, to get drunk and enjoy a memorable evening.

**For more information about wine join our wine classes**

at

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