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FRESH DISH

Ciao says hi to iPad sommelier

BY STEVEN DAVEY

Unless you can tell your Syrah from your Spumante, ordering the right bottle of wine in a fancy restaurant can be a daunting task. Who can remember if white wine goes with red meat or if it's the other way round?

The good folks at Ciao Wine Bar (133 Yorkville, at Hazelton, 416-925-2143, ciaowinebar.com) have taken the guesswork out of this potentially embarrassing situation with the introduction of Virtual Sommelier, a web-based app that allows customers to pair any one of the 300-plus bottles on the resto's wine list with its Mediterranean-inspired menu.

Ciao supplies the iPads, and you pick the vino, a glass of o8 Feudi di San Gregorio Fiano di Avellino (\$16), perhaps. Not only will VS tell you everything you need to know about this Italian white to impress your friends – “intense straw-yellow colour with greenish shimmer balanced by a lively freshness and mineral hints” – but it also points you to chef Roberto Punzo's beef carpaccio (\$16) and Sicilian-style ravioli stuffed with aged ricotta and pesto (\$19).

Will the Virtual Sommelier put the real thing out of work?

“Not at all,” says Liberty Group honcho Nick Di Donato, who introduces his iPad app to both the Rosewater Supper Club and Spice Route shortly. “The sommelier's job has expanded. Now he or she has to do the research and give us the pairings and definitions. If anything, he's more involved. The iPad just makes him available to more people.”

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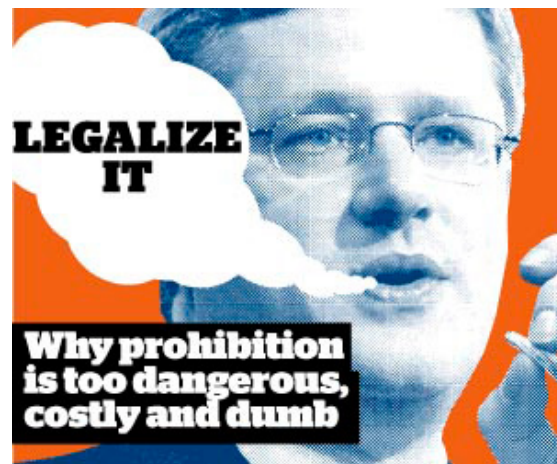
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