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Wine by Design

Curating a winning wine-by-the-glass list embodies all the elements of great design

by Michael J. Solender

Style, timelessness, utility, and delight: here is how wine-by-the-glass is done at one of Charlotte's most stylish restaurants.

William Farquharson, beverage manager at the **Kimpton Tryon Park Hotel**, knows his way around the wine cellar.

One clear way Farquharson looks to enhance the guest experience at **Angeline's**, the Uptown hotel's contemporary-styled Northern Italian restaurant, is to curate special wine offerings. Through this, he encourages diners to explore new-to-them varietals chosen to complement menu choices and, ultimately offer a delightful experience.

"There's an old adage that says, 'Wherever you're eating, drink from what's found there,'" says Farquharson. "It makes sense to pair our menu with predominantly Italian wines that so nicely complement our cuisine. The Italians have been doing this for thousands of years, and while our wine-by-the-glass list is not yet 100 percent Italian, that is ultimately our goal."

Farquharson's interest in wine started while attending East Carolina University studying Hospitality Management and blossomed while working at The Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs where he received certification as a sommelier. Returning to Charlotte to start a family,



Farquharson, 31, spent four years at The Palm in SouthPark before joining the team at the Kimpton Tryon Park.

Designing a wine-by-the-glass list is considerably more involved than many diners may realize. Offerings must simultaneously complement the menu, deliver a variety of style characteristics and flavor profiles, appeal to both men and women, offer accessible pricing, be consistently available, and work economically for the restaurant.

I wanted to get a peek

behind the curtain at the process and sat down with Farquharson as my guide.

Michael J. Solender: Your current list has six sparkling, five white, and nine reds by the glass. How did you come upon this construction?

William Farquharson: What we want to accomplish is have something Italian, or full Italian, by-the-glass list and be able to represent the great varieties that are similar (to Californians and what people may be more familiar with).

Like chardonnay. A lot of

people don't think chardonnay can come from Italy. But chardonnay is pretty much grown everywhere, so we want to have that style and open people's ideas to enjoying something that might be in a different style than what they are used to, and bridge that gap.

We have a good number of sparklers because everybody loves bubbles. They are a great aperitif and palate cleanser. They help your senses get ready to enjoy food. Sparkling is just a great thing to have before you switch to a still wine, white or red. The effervescence and acidity — it's very pleasing overall on the palate.

I want our wine-by-the-glass list to be inviting and encourage the diner to experiment in a way they might not when committing to a full bottle purchase.

A wonderful red I like to recommend for dinner service is the **Rocca delle Macie Chianti Classico**, Sangiovese. It goes perfect with the chicken Parmesan. The chicken is pounded out, and it comes with a focaccia bread crumb, a little fried mozzarella, and a little bit of pasta as well. The Parmesan cheese and mozzarella that's on it is very well complemented with the sangiovese.

Stylistically, the sangiovese is going to be medium-bodied, easy drinking, not overly heavy on the tannic structure. There's a little bit of ripe, red fruit in it, which

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simply allows the diner to taste the wine and not overpower the dish they're enjoying.

MJS: As far as list design, what type of palate range do you need to cover?

WF: The biggest challenge I have to try to resonate with the guests is either a dry wine or a sweet wine. By technical standards, most wines are dry. There are some that are either off dry that tend to the sweet side, very similar to a lot of rieslings, they're kind of in the off dry to sweet range.

Another important element is fruit character. Many people associate wine with fruit. If you're talking about between a full-bodied and a light-bodied red wine, on the nose you're smelling a lot of the fruit character, that's a lot of ripe red fruits or black fruits like plums, cherries, blackberries. On the dry side are the non-fruit elements that are found in the Old-World wines, such as those you get in France and Italy and sometimes Spain. Flavor profiles here may include cedar, tobacco, and earthiness in the reds and mineral, clay, and rock in the whites.

When creating a wine-by-the-glass list, we want wines that will go with the menu in a few different ways. We want them to be able to pair with several options on the menu. And, of course, we consult with chef (executive chef, Robert Hoffman).

I also don't want to

overwhelm — guests or servers. Twenty is about the right number for us. We have a tap system that allows us to have some unique offerings and maintain the quality of our wine. We also offer a generous 6-ounce pour.

MJS: How do you work with your distributors on list design?

WF: We rotate wines on our list quarterly. I meet with up to 15 wine reps and give them criteria from a style, price and accessibility standpoint. While it sounds like a fun job, and it is of course, it is a lot of work to go through the various portfolios and tastings and try and come up with what will resonate with guests.

I certainly love to help guests choose new and different wines to try, though many guests look for familiar names.

A well-curated list should take that into consideration.

Taittinger is well known for Champagne, **Stemmari**, (pinot grigio) is known as well. **Michael Trujillo** is known.

They have a lot of different wines that they produce, from a lot of different regions. And they can go from the more entry price point to a high-end **Brunellos**.

For reds, you have the **Rocca delle Macie**, from **Chianti Classico**, which is a great producer there. **DAOU** from **Paso Robles** is starting to become very popular, especially because of cabernet, so they do an amazing job there. And

then, we have **La Flor**, by Paul Hobbs, which is extremely well-known in California. He is known more so for his extremely large cult wines, but, as really a passion project, and outside, goes down to Argentina and produces a malbec.

MJS: What are some of your favorite by-the-glass offerings and best values on your list at **Angeline's**?

WF: A very popular red is our **Abbona Barolo**. It's hard to find a by-the-glass pour for a Barolo (due to price). Ours is \$22 a glass. The bottle on the list is \$89. For most Barolos, you're looking in mid-\$100 to beyond, so this is a great value we can offer.

It's got the tannic structure. It's not too rustic. It's light enough that it'll go with a lot of the dishes, and it's young enough that it's able to pair

with something that's heavier, like our **Bistecca**, 21-day dry aged rib-eye. It's able to still cut through that fat of the steak.

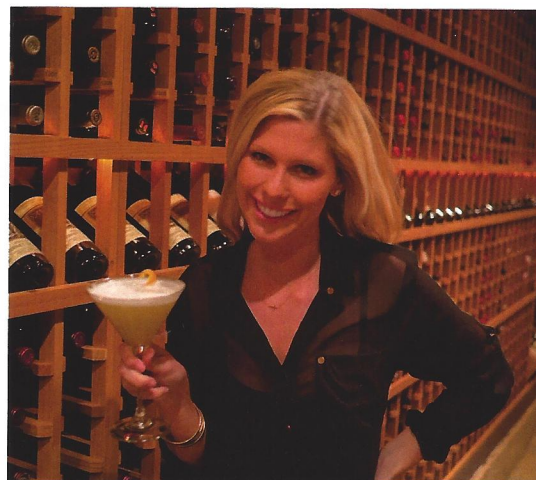
With our Italian whites, the **Gavi di Gavi** (Michele Chiarlo) is a hidden gem. It's light and crisp and pairs so well with everything from salads to fish to pasta.

MJS: What do you want your guests to know about your wine-by-the-glass list?

WF: We know our market. Being in uptown Charlotte, there's a lot of banks around. Charlotte has a lot of medical, and there's a lot of finance in this town. We want our guests to know you can dine with us and to have something that is pocket friendly, and experiment with wines with which they can have a little bit of fun. We're here to help navigate — have some fun and experiment. ☺

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