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Lifestyle

Glass act: Single wine pours on the rise

By Dave McIntyre



Single and loving it: Customers are willing to splurge on high-end wines by the glass. (Barbara Johnston - For The Washington Post) Restaurant diners are buying more wines by the glass — and are willing to splurge on high-end labels by the glass — even though the overall amount of money they spend on wine has dropped in the past few years, according to a [survey released last week](#).

The survey, conducted by the marketing firm [Ink Foundry](#), was commissioned by [Napa Technology](#), manufacturer of the WineStation. That's the glitzy, high-tech wine dispenser you've seen at places like [Evo Bistro](#) in McLean or behind the bar at [Proof](#) in Penn Quarter.

The marketing firm polled more than 150 sommeliers, wine directors and restaurant and hotel beverage managers about their customers' habits. Nearly 90 percent said diners are more wine savvy today than they were four years ago, and that they are requesting greater variety in wine by-the-glass offerings. About 73 percent said customers are willing to pay for a glass of a rare, expensive or high-end wine, even if they wouldn't shell out for a full bottle. And 87 percent said by-the-glass sales have increased over the last four years, while a similar percentage said bottle sales have declined as a proportion of their revenues.

This makes sense: A down economy has us looking for ways to trim our restaurant tabs, and the increasing variety of wines available by the glass allows us to do so while maintaining a sense of exploration. Sure, \$20 seems high for a glass of wine. But if it's a once-in-a-lifetime rarity, and a preservation system like the WineStation gives us confidence that the wine hasn't been sitting open and exposed to air since the last time someone splurged, the single-pour experience can still give us a sense of indulgence while keeping overall costs down.

Whether restaurants invest in a preservation system, use an elaborate [keg system for wines](#) or rely on quick turnover to avoid spoilage, the recent growth in by-the-glass programs in restaurants is something for wine lovers to cheer.

By Dave McIntyre | 08:00 AM ET, 06/01/2011