

The Coolest Wine Tasting



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by Liza Zimmerman, [S.F. Wine & Cocktail Examiner](#)

I have been to a lot of wine tastings in my day (and way into the night). Many have their strong points, but few offer an original collection of wines and are also well run. The [Wine & Spirits Magazine](#) (full disclosure: I once wrote for them) put on a helluva tasting the other night at the Mint Building.



This tasting features the magazine's top rated wines over the past year. So it runs the gamut from the usual California favorites to oddball picks from places like Greece of which editor Tara Thomas is so fond.

The usual and surprising assortment of wines present aside, what was so great about this tasting was how unique it seemed. It was my first time attending but I do genuinely feel that the lineup here changes from year to year, based on the human palate and not wine business politics. And that's both refreshing and new.

Some of my favorites included [Luigi Einaudi 2003 Barolo Cannubi from Piedmonte](#) and the biodynamic [Weninger 2006 Blaufränkisch from Burgenland in Austria](#).

What's more it was beautifully organized with a roadmap leading guests to different types of wine, by category rather than producer or region. It was also exceptionally calm, free from a lot of the ruckus (and drunkenness) that can dominate other tastings held in the evening for big ticket prices. The food was also quite good and abundant. So many firsts!

The ticket price was \$120, which isn't inexpensive but is still a solid deal for the wines that were on offer. Need I say that I am also a big fan of the magazine as well?

Also hometown Italian favorite [Oliveto](#) in Oakland has launched its new cafe menu featuring items such as divine sardines and luscious potato, leek and fontina pizza. How much do I wish

they delivered to Pac Heights? Unusual and fun wine pairings fit with owner Bob Klein's ethic of "non-tricked out wines."

I also finally sampled the fare at [La Mar](#) down near the Ferry Building. The service and ceviche both need some help and some of the cocktails are strange. However other dishes like the anticucho of octopus and empanadas are great.

Cheers,