

With its European flavors and brasserie sensibility, Francie's curated wine list includes uncommon wines from European importers

LITTLE EUROPE



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IN WINE, WE FIND LIFE

In wine we seek truth, craft and the passion of discovery. In life, we seek to build a community connected by a love for wine and wine culture. We are Maze Row Wine Merchant. We inspire a culture of fine wine discovery, a life that talks of people and their sense of place, of truth, craft and endeavor. An enriching journey, encompassing heritage, terroir, culture and philosophy. Through our curation of wines, stories and immersive experiences, we share the best of life with the adventurers, the bon vivants, the passionate connoisseurs.



TORNATORE

With premier vineyards on Mount Etna's northern slopes, Tornatore makes wines of grace and depth from native varieties.

Francie’s signature dish the “dry-aged crown of Rohan duck,” and service director Paris Pryor

Francie is a neighborhood brasserie bringing the spirit of Europe to Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The story happened quite by chance when restaurateur John Winterman, founder of the Michelin-starred Tribeca eatery Bâtard, spotted an irresistible spot — a limestone-clad former bank on the corner of Broadway and Bedford. Chef Christopher Cipollone, who had run the Michelin Starred Piora and was spending some time in San Francisco, was planning a return to New York. And so, the two teamed up, secured the lease, engaged architect Glen Coben and began shaping an inviting space centered around the open kitchen. Francie opened its doors in December 2020, winning a Michelin star — all this in the midst of a pandemic.

The menu here is classic brasserie style, easy to navigate and inspired by the flavors of Europe. Likewise, the wine program is organized and arranged geographically according to country and region and includes European classics as well as wines from the US and South America. Paris Pryor, service director at Francie, explains the philosophy behind the wine menu.



Francie is the brainchild of restaurateur John Winterman and chef Christopher Cipollone, who turned a limestone-clad former bank in Brooklyn into a neighborhood brasserie

How did you curate your original wine program?
We consulted with Raj Vaidya, head sommelier at Daniel, who created an initial list and set up relationships with some of the top importing companies. Having the opportunity to sit down with these wonderful individuals and decide where we wanted to take the wine program has allowed us to realize what direction we want to go.

What’s the process of selection?
I’m always excited to see what wine merchants are jazzed about, so I can widen my horizons, but I also do my own research and branch out from there. By happenstance, many of our wine merchants are former friends from restaurants past, and so it feels good to now have a relationship where we can help one another with our successes.

What is Francie’s philosophy when selecting the wines?
Wine programs can have a reputation for being intimidating, overwhelming, expensive — luxuries that many would shy away from. This wasn’t for us. When Francie opened, I came to see the space, and studied the clientele we were expecting and the atmosphere we should build.

... and this would be?
We aim to be a hip and fun Williamsburg destination restaurant, where you want to have a grand old time. From the food to the beverage and service — these are all founding blocks to a tower of success. And, if a customer can drink something they recognize, or experience

a wine that they’ve never heard of, it adds to their overall experience in the best way possible.

How does this approach translate to your wine program?
We have built an approachable list, with wines that we love and we feel will make our guests happy. For me the wine list has to be egalitarian and fun, no matter what level of expertise you may have. It should encourage our guests to ask for the sommelier’s assistance, not because they don’t understand the wines, but because they are curious. Our job is to help curate a fun night filled with one or two or three bottles (no judgement... we aren’t keeping count) of great wines.

How important a role does the wine list play in the overall Francie experience?
Our wines are out of the box and selected to make the experience memorable. There are, for sure, styles that you will recognize, or regions that guests are familiar with, but the choices are designed to get our guests jazzed.

How do you engage diners, exciting and enticing them to be explorative?
Our guests have the opportunity to explore the wine selection, after which they may ask our wonderful sommelier, Holly Do, for a bottle or glass recommendation to pair with their food or mood. We investigate what they like, dislike, gauge their palate and take it from there. Most of the guests are very trusting and are excited about going on a journey with us in terms of wine.

What is your ultimate aim with the wine program?
Knowing all the ins and outs of wine, vintages, appellations — all this is a grand talent, and I am always impressed by knowledge. Using that information as a tool to finalize your credibility with your table is one thing. But, making wine fun and exciting is another, and I go out of my way to ensure this happens with our wines at Francie.

What’s the one insider recommendation you can share about exploring a menu?
Pick something that you and your team are jazzed about, that you know will make the guest smile when they take that first sip. Choose a wine to complement the cuisine but may also just hold a special place in your heart.

What dish best expresses Francie?
Our “dry-aged crown of Rohan duck” for two is truly a dish that we never thought would take off the way it has. But now, with 30 ducks a night and the smiles on the guests’ face, it is what Francie is all about. Somewhat old-school in its presentation, we bring the duck to the table, then back to the kitchen, have it sliced and returned to the table on a silver tray with all its sides.

And what wine would you pair it with?
Ratti’s 2019 Ochetti Nebbiolo is a stellar pairing for the duck.

Alternative dining options to explore: Alinea and EMG.



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