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epiQueerean
BY JENNY NGUYEN

I want to drink your wine

As Hollow's Eve nears, the dark inner beast inside us all craves a little bit of that ruby red fruit juice. Go ahead, get dolled up in your best gothic and goblin and head for any of Portland's many sultry and sinful fermented grape palaces. Here are three samplings from every creepy creed. Try them all if you dare.

Noble Rot • 2724 S.E. Ankeny St.

Once hailed as Restaurant of the Year 2003, this place still has it going on. Named after the water-sucking fungus botrytis, which grows on grapes and makes them sugary sweet, Noble Rot can suck the skeptic out, leaving a syrupy devotee. From an exquisite hand-picked wine list to delicately executed plates, this dark cavern off the royal Burnside and 28th strip is a wine lover's wet dream. The cheese plate is bare-bone with four divinely buttery and creamy portions. Tasting wines by region or varietal is made simple with five different flights ranging from \$9 to \$16 consisting of three two-ounce pours. The sautéed scallops were plump and near perfection, as was the delicate, moist texture of the black cod fillet with zucchini flan. Noble Rot is first-class, which explains why you'll wait an hour and pay top dollar to have this fungus grow on you.

Every Day Wine • 1520 N.E. Alberta St.

OK, so they don't serve food. Big deal. They have a wall of wine to choose from featuring a hearty selection of the local stuff, tons of artsy things to see...and there's the people-watching. Service and atmosphere (and price) is ultra-casual, making any and everyone feel at home. Every Day Wine is a perfect pit stop before that housewarming party but, better yet, a terrific place to bulk up yer brain on da vine knowledge. Oh yeah, did I mention they don't serve any food?

Vino Paradiso • 417 N.W. 10th Ave.

If looks could kill, this gay-owned bistro would be an Uzi. Mod-chic design marries a glass and steel bar with the world's most comfortable leather chairs to create the V.P. universe. Step inside and right away you resist the temptation to stare agape at the separate climate-controlled glass room housing ceiling-to-floor bottles of el vino. Mad props for a wine list that's diverse yet not overwhelming, and equal shout-out for OG wine-food pairings that keep it real. Duck rillette with cornichons and chicken liver pâté with quince jelly are like four peas in a pod when paired with pinots. Arrive between 4 and 6 p.m. and get a bottle half-off; enough of those combined with the sex appeal of this NKOTB and it won't be the only thing half-off.

Need a dictionary for all of J-Money's slang? Get in the know by writing JENNY NGUYEN at jenny0080@hotmail.com.

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