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Eat, Drink and Be Merry

Vino Paradiso's Timothy Nishimoto pairs the finer things in life

The New York Times may have called Vino Paradiso "Portland's swankiest wine bar," but owner Timothy Nishimoto says you don't have to consider yourself swanky to enjoy a glass of wine at his establishment. "People tell us all the time that we're kind of like a neighborhood bar," he says.

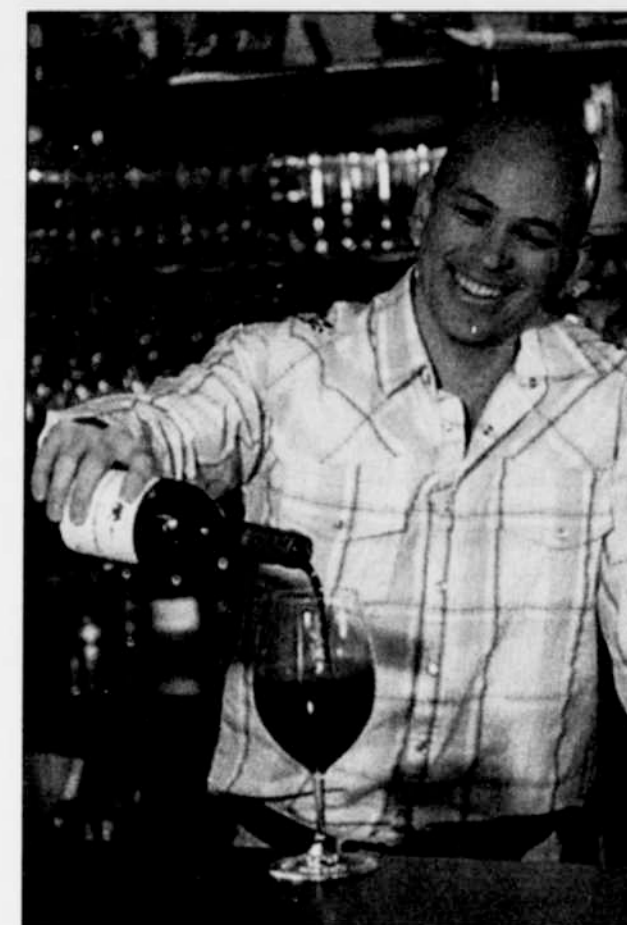
Originally from Los Angeles, Nishimoto, 46, moved to Portland in 1992. After working at several local restaurants and as wine steward at Nature's, he bought the space for his bar and bistro, formerly a wine bar called Vigne, in 2005. He changed the interior and the focus, making his place "less elitist [with] more food, more friendly, more approachable in a lot of ways," he says.

Despite the stigma, wine need not be a snooty interest, according to Nishimoto. Newcomers should not fear. "I don't think any question is too elementary. It's fun, we [the staff of Vino Paradiso] enjoy talking about wine." As far as individual tastes go, he comments, "It doesn't have to be expensive or fancy ... If you like it, it's good."

Vino Paradiso has appeared in *The New York Times* and *Sunset* magazine and has earned *Wine Spectator's* "Award of Excellence" five years in a row. The bar offers approximately 35 wines by the glass and 175 in the cellar. Nishimoto is a certified Sommelier by the Court of Master Sommeliers, one of two internationally recognized associations. And although the term is associated with wine, the sommelier certification also includes knowledge of beer, spirits and cigars, he notes.

When not seeking out new wines or busy managing the restaurant, Nishimoto sings and plays percussion with Pink Martini.

His biggest passion right now, he says, is



"Whenever I have the chance to involve wine and food and music, that's the ultimate goal. That's the ultimate evening ... and that's why I love doing what I do."

-TIMOTHY NISHIMOTO

wine and food pairings: "I'm striving constantly to find epiphanies with wine and food." For Nishimoto, it's all about complement—from food and wine to music and setting.

"Whenever I have the chance to involve wine and food and music, that's the ultimate goal," he says. "That's the ultimate evening ... and that's why I love doing what I do."

—KIRA LESLEY

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