

Eau de Vie

Wine & food stores on the coast fulfill gourmet needs. BY SUZI STEFFEN

Wary oenophile Willamette Valley residents headed to the Oregon Coast often pack several bottles of wine, stashing them alongside wetsuits, hiking boots and tents and that blue Bill Sullivan book. But the coast is no blasted domain where visitors can only find tiny bottles of cheap wine in fluorescent-lit convenience store refrigerators. Instead, a variety of options make the coast a wine destination.

In the late spring of 2004, Carrie Yano opened a gourmet food store in an old art co-op building. Yano, originally from Monterey, Calif., visited Yachats in 2003. She was about to begin Lutheran seminary school in Berkeley. "I never went back," she says. "Yachats was perfect." Yano thought that the only thing missing — as coastal travelers who have gone in search of certain ingredients might know — was a place to buy "prosciutto, good feta cheese, good olive oil, minced ginger." In the summer, Yano didn't mind driving to Eugene or Newport for higher-end food ingredients, but in the winter? "I was driving in 40-50 mile an hour winds, and I thought, I can't handle this. We need a store in Yachats."

So Yano opened Gourmet Lady, with foods ranging from Swedish ginger cookies to specialty cheese and smoked salmon. She decided to have one rack of wine, with room for 80 bottles of Oregon wine.

Those 80 bottles didn't last long. With hordes of townspeople and tourists descending upon the wine rack, Yano's next decision was easy even if she wasn't fully prepared.

"All I knew was that they grow good pinot here — that was the extent of my Oregon wine knowledge," she says. With the advice of an Oregon wine rep who lives in Yachats, she learned enough to move her wine rack across the deck into her new store, The Wine Place (Hwy 101 & Fourth). Now, Yano carries about 800 bottles of 350 different wines, and she's

expanding The Wine Place so that there will be more room for wine and local winery tastings. Those tastings, events in which visitors pepper the winemakers with questions and happily sip a variety of wines, come at 1 pm each Saturday.

The original rack now holds "Carrie's recommendations," which currently include Medittrina, a pinot noir/syrah/zinfandel blend from Sokol Blosser in Dundee; a "rising star" pinot noir from Piluso, a small winery in Marion County; and Cramer's pinot noirs. "A really fun one," she says, "is the Red Hawk Winery Grateful Red pinot noir." At \$12 a bottle, the wine flies off the rack.

But Yano's business isn't alone in bringing vino-culture to the coast or even to Yachats. A couple of months ago, managers Marsii and Harley Charron opened The Yachats Wine Trader (125 Ocean View Drive), a wine bar and café with a strong selection of European and South American wines in the bottle room. For food, Marsii recommends Harley's prosciutto-wrapped peaches. South American whites like Lo Tengo Torrentés are selling well this summer, she says, and she recommends trying rosés as well. "They're really exciting, complex wines," she says.

A little closer to Eugene, Florence's The Grape Leaf (1269 Bay St.) serves dinner on Wednesday and Thursday nights amidst a large selection of wine. And farther up the coast, Newport's Village Market & Deli (741 NW Third) provides gourmet cheeses and other gourmet food while the highly popular Blu Cork Wine Bar (613 SW Third) is open from noon to midnight for the summer and has recently expanded its tapas menu to include wood-fired pizzas.

For those who worry about driving after imbibing, there's more decadence available: Coastal Luxury Limo tours (www.coastalluxurylimos.com) stops at the Wine Place and local vineyards. Now *that* sounds like bliss. ★



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