

Selanne Steak Tavern Earns Storied Wine Spectator Award

[July 28, 2017](#) [Valory Reed](#)



We're lucky wine lovers in Orange County. Restaurants here hail their wine experience as much as their food. Many are honored in the August issue of *Wine Spectator* for their starry wine programs, earning the coveted *Wine Spectator* Award of Excellence, Best of Award of Excellence, or Grand Award distinction. Local restaurants with an exemplary wine game include Studio, Napa Rose, Splashes, The Ranch, The Winery, Michael's on Naples, whose chef Eric Samaniego was formerly the chef at the defunct Little Sparrow in Santa Ana; and more. The full list is available here: [Wine Spectator Restaurant Awards 2017](#)



[Selanne Steak Tavern](#) in Laguna Beach joined this elite crew last year, earning the Award of Excellence. Impressively, the restaurant has moved up to a Best of Award of Excellence level in 2017 for its California and Burgundy wines. This prestigious nod recognizes restaurants whose wine program has a thoughtful breadth of wines across several regions and/or a noted vertical depth of premier wines. Selanne Steak Tavern's cellar has more than 2,750 bottles from the world's finest regions, curated by [Certified Sommelier Vito Pasquale](#). Co-owned by Teemu Selanne and Kevin Pratt, Selanne Steak Tavern resides in a stylishly restored 1934 home along Laguna's Pacific Coast Highway, teeming with ambience and savoir faire. Knowing the time, investment, and skill it takes to develop a thoughtful wine program, I connected with co-owner Kevin Pratt to talk about the award.

Are dining reservations, and more specifically, wine sales affected by the Wine Spectator awards?

The magazine is widely read around the globe, which has helped to elevate Selanne Steak Tavern's awareness on an international level. My business partner, Teemu Selanne, is known internationally in the sports world, so it's nice to make international strides and be respected in the wine world, too. We do see traveling guests who stop in to experience the restaurant and the wine list. With the recent elevated "Best of" award, I think we'll see more readers of *Wine Spectator* dine with us. What's nice about the magazine is that the readers are not only interested in learning more about wine, but are interested in travel and dining out. They are about lifestyle, which is what our restaurant is about, too.

I love the approachability of your list, with its whimsical section titles.

Our wine team had the idea to layout the list in a storybook style as they wanted to spark readers' interest right away. The storybook concept and leather-bound book very much fits in with our "home away from home" approach with guests—as well as our bungalow ambience.



All photos courtesy of Selanne Steak Tavern

The wine list reads easily, with its well-known brands and cult bottles. Is there a desire to go more esoteric or "unicorn" for the deep, deep wine geek?

We design our wine list around the guests and their likes, and while we do have more well-known wines on the list, we include a few eclectic ones, including Chateau Musar Rouge, 1998

from Lebanon; a 2010 Cirillo 1850 Grenache from South Australia; and Rebholz Kastanienbusch GG Riesling 2012 from Pfalz, Germany.

We typically have a bit more fun with our wine-by-the-glass program. Our more esoteric wines by the glass include Fontanafredda Barolo, Serralunga d'Alba (nebbiolo) from Piedmont, Italy; Bluegray Priorat (grenache blend) from Catalunya, Spain; Domaine Pichot Vouvray (chenin blanc) from the Loire Valley, and Patrick Piuze Terroir de Courgis Chablis (chardonnay) from Burgundy.

What is the next step or goal in the restaurant's wine experience?

We'll continue staff education and ensure our servers are knowledgeable about our wine offerings. We'll also focus on making the wine selection less intimidating for our guests. Everyone has a different palate and there is no "right" or "wrong" with wine. Our list has something for everyone.

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