

A night of vino, food and friends

It's a familiar quandary.

On a recent evening, I was planning to meet up with my gal pals for a long overdue cocktails-and-gossip session, yet we couldn't quite agree on the perfect spot to begin. One friend suggested margaritas at the Rio, another was craving the cucumber mojito over at Zengo, and I had my heart set on an icy martini at one of downtown's trendy lounges. In the end, we agreed on a simple solution: an always-appropriate crowd pleaser, the wine bar.

We trotted our stiletto-heeled selves down to Larimer Square, where we wandered into Cru, a newish spot known for its wine list as well as great people watching and a killer chocolate fondue dessert (always a plus for girl gossip). I soaked up the atmosphere, appreciating the Lodo-bistro decor, complete with brick walls, white table linens, tiny candles, and a cozy downstairs lounge. But though the cute little nook seemed stylish and comfortable, the bartender soon made it abundantly clear that good looks and good service do not necessarily go hand in hand. It wasn't that he sported a snarky sommelier attitude, exactly. However, when a new customer plops her derriere down at the bar and asks for a recommendation, it's utterly poor form for the bartender to immediately push the most expensive item on the menu. He sang the praises of a California cabernet and I agreed to follow his suggestion. That is, until he began to pour a glass and mentioned — as if it was an afterthought — that this fab cab ran \$25. “Per glass?” I asked. He nodded yes. I shook my head no. I politely refused the drink, perused the wine list myself, and opted for a perfectly drinkable \$8 glass of pinot noir.

Naturally, we didn't stay for fondue. Instead we meandered across the street to Corridor 44, an elegant, Frenchified champagne bar practically dripping in



crystal chandeliers. We slid into a half-round white leather booth and prepared to try again. Bubbly is the name of the game at Corridor 44, and the wine list offers a generous array of sparklers by the glass and bottle, along with plenty of still wines and old-fashioned cocktails. The mirror behind the vintage mahogany bar is even etched with Dom Perignon's famous declaration, “Come quickly, I'm drinking stars!” I ordered a Kir Royale, (champagne and crème de cassis, \$8) which came beautifully presented in a delicate flute, garnished with fresh black currants and a lemon twist. In between juicy tidbits of rumor, scandal and other not-so-ladylike topics, we sipped our bubbles and nibbled on chilled oysters and crab-and-corn flan. Ah, perfection.

Eventually, we had our fill of champagne and good food, even if we never seem to have as much time as we'd like for our girlfriends. Still. Next time we hit the town, we'll know exactly where to go. Third booth on the left, bubbling cocktails raised in a toast to friendship and fancy drinks.

~ Kat Valentine King

FINE WINES

Cru

1442 Larimer St.
303-893-9463

Hint: Skip the bar and have a seat at one of the patio tables during warmer nights for great Larimer Square people-watching late into the evening.

Corridor 44

1433 Larimer St.
303-893-0044

Hint: Drop by Monday through Friday between 3 and 7 p.m. for happy hour, featuring \$4 champagne cocktails.

Paris Wine Bar

1553 Platte St.
303-217-5805

Hint: Satisfy a mixed craving with wine and cheese at Paris Wine Bar and hot java next door at the venerable Paris on the Platte coffee house.

The Robusto Room

9535 Park Meadows Dr., Lone Tree
303-790-7363

Hint: Jazz it up with live music on Thursdays and Saturdays, or relax in the adjacent (but separate) cigar room.

Solera Restaurant and Bar

5410 E. Colfax Ave.
303-388-8429

Hint: Solera offers a great deal during Wine Tasting Wednesdays: taste a series of five related wines between 5 and 7:30 p.m. weekly for only \$10.

Village Cork

1300 South Pearl St.
303-282-8399

Hint: Visit this dainty wine bar after 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, or after 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday

nights for \$5 by-the-glass specials on any open bottle.

