

Food With Legs

Growing. Cooking. Eating.



Apps at e11even

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by foodwithlegs.



I have an admission that some readers probably won't like: I have never, not once, directly used the services of a restaurant's sommelier. Sure, sommeliers decide what wines make it into a restaurant's cellar and onto its list and are key players in delivering a restaurant's services, but I have never brought myself to say something like, "I'm thinking of having the short ribs, can you recommend a wine that will go well with that dish?"

Not many Toronto restaurants have a sommelier so the opportunity to use one is pretty rare but even when it is there I find myself cautiously shying away from it. [Toronto Life feature](#) compared the role to being "equal parts psychotherapist, fishing buddy, performance artist, real estate agent, magician, and private eye." The parallel to the mixed interests of a real estate agent (is the sommelier really trying to help me find the wine that will go best with my meal or improve his restaurant's revenue?) is what drives my skepticism.

When I was invited to a media tasting at e11even I was given the chance to re-examine my take on the diner-sommelier relationship. Before I talk more about the wine a few words are definitely due to the delicious food, selections from the appetisers on the menu, we tried.



Delicious bacon at e11even

I don't care if the bacon appetiser (that's two, thick slices of house-smoked bacon, straight up (\$9) seems gimmicky, this is something I would definitely order because, frankly, it's delicious. Equally the spinach and artichoke dip (\$14) with housemade tortilla chips deserves the self-back-patting it gets from the e11even staff for being an original take on a classic that avoids cuteness. The crab cake (\$19 and pictured at the top of the post)—I was goaded into eating two of the very generous portions—with large lump meat, limited filler, and a spot-on mustard remoulade was my favourite of the night.



Spinach and artichoke dip with housemade tortillas

Value is difficult to judge at these (free) media tastings but nineteen bucks is probably too much for an under-seasoned meatball, no matter how rotund it is or how much beer-soaked grain the Kobe cows ate.

Jennifer Huether (one of only three Master Sommeliers in Canada) leads the MLSE wine service team. At e11even the very capable expertise of three dedicated sommeliers is augmented by a fairly unique tool: the wine list comes on an iPad.

and sort these wines by touching on several of the criteria at

+ Kurt Angerer 'Kies' Grüner Veltliner, Kamptal, Austria	2009	\$16
+ Tawse 'Echos' Chardonnay, Niagara, Canada	2009	\$15
+ Cave Spring 'Dolomite' Riesling (Dry), Ontario, Canada	2009	\$13
+ Chateau Puligny Montrachet, Puligny-Montrachet Villages, Burgundy, France	2007	\$75
+ Jean-Marc Brocard 'St. Claire' Chablis, Burgundy, France	2009	\$20
+ Cesari Pinot Grigio, Veneto, Italy	2009	\$12
+ BV 'Coastal' Sauvignon Blanc, California, USA	2009	\$9
+ Miner Chardonnay Napa Valley, California, USA	2006	\$32
+ Sterling 'Vintner's Collection' Chardonnay, California, USA	2009	\$14

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Back Selects

The selection of whites by the glass displayed on the iPad wine list.

The iPad wine list app offers the sort of interaction you would expect (photos, tables, and the ability to browse by a number of characteristics) but really earns it keep with the “Add to My Selections” button. Customers can build a list of preferred choices that should guide the sommelier’s input and therefore take back a good measure of control in this relationship. Personally, this seems like a good step towards making me feel like the sommelier is helping rather than just selling.

They are also working on a feature that will let diners virtually visit a winery using Google Earth. Wine is grape juice that earns its premium for being especially delicious, intoxicating us, and taking us to a different time and place. In a world where electronic devices have robbed many of their ability to imagine I can

There is an interesting frisson of ideas here. A masculine, retro menu (that recalls a decade when it was a novel idea to have numbers stand in for letters in a restaurant’s name) somehow complements the innovative, refined take on wine service.

e11even: 15 York St., Toronto (in the Maple Leaf Square condo development); 416-815-1111;
e11even.ca

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