

“Ever since I can remember, I have been passionate about food,” says Paola Embry, sommelier and co-owner of Christopher’s Restaurant and Crush Lounge in the Biltmore Fashion Park. Growing up in Chile, she helped at her grandparents’ tiny four-table restaurant as a child, and now after 18 years of her own foodie success, she says, “the restaurant business is in my blood.”



Embry has co-owned Christopher’s since 1998 (originally in a different Biltmore location) with partner Christopher Gross, and has been a leader in the Valley dining scene. “I like to think that our longevity in the restaurant business is the result of providing our guests with the best possible food, wine and dining experience available in the Valley,” she says. “But the real secret to our success has been the people who we have had the opportunity to work with and the wonderful guests who we have had the privilege to serve.”

At work, Embry, a certified sommelier (she has also earned the Certificat de Merite from Le Comite National des Vins de France and a Degree of Honor from Les Amis du Vin International Wine Society), is responsible for choosing the entire Christopher’s wine list, which includes approximately 200 labels and 60 wines by the glass. “I trust my palate and don’t rely on wine reviews and scores to make my selections,” she says. Embry offers wines that she refers to as “seriously fun,” and insists that her guests should not have to be experts in order to understand her wine list and choose a special bottle to accompany their meal. She also doesn’t believe that price always equals value. “I don’t like wine lists that limit the guest to the big name/big price wines,” she says. “I like to offer wines that taste great and have subtlety and complexity but haven’t yet become popular and pricey.”

Always up for adventure, Embry has travelled to 57 countries for both work and pleasure, and aims to reach 100. Her journeys are reflected in her ever-changing wine and drink picks. Embry’s favorite wines of the moment come from Chile, after rediscovering her home country on a recent work trip. And her current drinks of choice are the Aperol cocktails she designed for the restaurant’s drink menu after an inspiring summer trip to Italy. One thing that doesn’t change, however, is Embry’s taste for Champagne: “My favorite thing is just chilling out and sharing a glass of bubbles with the people I care about.”

[Click here for more information about Christopher’s Restaurant and Crush Lounge.](#)