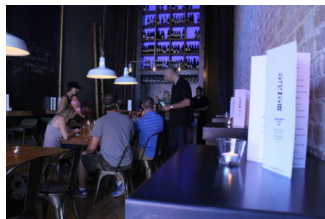


Unplugged lights up Tucson's wine scene

Written by Amanda Savage



by: Alyssa DeMember

[Unplugged](#), a wine bar that opened downtown at the end of September, brings the art of truly fine wines to Tucson. Located on 118 E. Congress, the European-esque space, small and intimate, offers only handcrafted, all-natural wines from across the world.

This place is driven by the obsession to find good wines, owner Frank Lietzau said. "Not everything that should be available is available," Lietzau said of the wine selection in Tucson. He said that many people have "an epiphany" when they try real wine for the first time, adding that it often shocks people when it "doesn't taste like medicine." Lietzau is from Germany, and his thick accent, warm demeanor and attentive hospitality brings a sense of relaxation, as if customers were entering a little part of Europe right in the heart of downtown Tucson.



Unplugged is rustic and chic, with a sophisticated ambiance. Thick, sturdy wooden tables are set in the center of the bar and smaller, high-top tables line the sides, with small tea candles flickering at each. Jazzy, instrumental music fills the room as passersby peek their heads in to take a look, the allure pulling them in to sit down and have a glass.

The wine menu at Unplugged is extensive, with riesling from Germany, pinot noir from California, sauvignon blanc from New Zealand and malbec from Argentina. The list of wines goes on, and seven different beers are offered as well, including "Dragoon IPA" from Tucson and "Bell's Oberon," a summer ale from Kalamazoo. The back of the menu is devoted to a small selection of fine foods to complement the wine.



The bar offers flights in sets of three 1.5-ounce pours of wine, allowing customers to sample several different varieties. The "Obscure" flight is "full of rare and unusual varietals," according to the menu. It includes a German sauvignon blanc, rosé, and Dornfelder, a darker red wine.

The sauvignon blanc, a radiant golden liquid, was light, sweet, and absolutely delightful.

The rosé, containing a blend of merlot, Dornfelder, and cabernet sauvignon, had a rich, full taste—crisp, fresh, and full of complementing flavors. Lietzau stressed that a true rosé is made from fermenting all three grape varieties together in one barrel. It is illegal in Europe to simply make each wine and mix them all together afterward, he said. "That's cheating."



The Dornfelder was the richest of the three wines, and while bitter in its deeper red, came off delicately smooth.

Customers can purchase wines by the bottle as well, with a separate menu devoted to the bottles available.

It's casual and relaxed, yet alive here. As the sun begins to set, the atmosphere at Unplugged picks up, with more customers entering, filling

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the bar with the sounds of light chatter, laughter, and the clinking of wine glasses.

Unplugged is open from Sunday-Wednesday, 4 p.m.-midnight, and Thursday-Saturday, 4 p.m.-2 a.m.