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Eastern Promises: Mother Vine and The Tasting Room

WINE (/FOOD-WINE-COFFEE/CATEGORY/WINE)

By David Knight

July 7, 2014

“When people think, ‘I want to go for a glass of wine’, it’s not necessarily a specific place but its about coming to Vardon Avenue, it’s about coming to the east end for a selection of places.”

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The reemergence of the city’s east end as a quality food and wine district continues with the addition of Mother Vine and The Tasting Room.

Rundle Street’s east end used to be a haven for food and wine lovers. It lost its appeal after many institutions closed and streets such as Waymouth, Leigh and Peel emerged as food and wine hotspots. This was exacerbated by the closure of the Universal Wine Bar last year, and it seemed all was lost for Rundle Street and its adjoining laneways.

But there were signs of life, as Ebenezer Place evolved into the food destination it had promised for many years with numerous cafes and lunch spots such as Hey Jupiter, Sad Cafe and Nano. And late last year, Rundle Street snagged the quality gastronomic destination it was waiting for with the opening of Jock Zonfrillo’s Street ADL and Orana (/food-wine-coffee/article/street-adl-and-orana).

One premium wine destination has been a constant throughout all these changes – East End Cellars. Michael Andrewartha's much-loved wine retailer, importer and wholesaler, called Adelaide's best wine shop by wine writer Max Allen, has been an institution on Vardon Avenue (which runs parallel to Rundle St, near Ebenezer Place) for 16 years. It has now moved across the avenue to bigger premises. It's not just a larger space. The shop includes The Tasting Room, a licensed area where you can enjoy a glass of wine or two with food options including imported and local ham and salami, toasted sandwiches, antipasto and a Ploughman's Platter.



Andrewartha is also involved in the premium wine bar Mother Vine, located in the old East End Cellars building. Due to open in the middle of July, Andrewartha is responsible for Mother Vine along with Amalfi's Frank Hannon-Tan, East End Cellars' Pablo Theodoros and Master of Wine David LeMire from Shaw + Smith. The small bar license was the genesis for both the Tasting Room and Mother Vine. Andrewartha and Hannon-Tan want the area to be a food and wine hub and for their businesses to complement existing east end food and wine premises such as Street ADL and Orana, The Botanic and the National Wine Centre.

"There's been a long tradition of wine bars in Rundle Street from the days of Universal and Tapas," explains Hannon-Tan.

"And that space [Tapas] was a wine bar continuously from 1920s up until Tapas closed, according to Howard Twelftree [the late Adelaide Review food reviewer]."

Hannon-Tan, who owns Frome Street's Amalfi, said he felt there was a change of direction on Rundle St when hospitality businesses moved out to be replaced by fashion shops.

"I think the pendulum has swung back and corrected itself with the laneways behind Rundle St," he explains.

"It's an equilibrium. I don't want to criticise that period but it swings in roundabouts. I think this is a part of a balancing out of the city as well – there's a lot happening in the west end and it's provided an impetus to redevelop here. This is never going to be the late night precinct that it once was, and that's not a bad thing."

"We've both been in the east end for the same amount of time, about 16 years," explains Andrewartha.

"It's funny how we've now joined forces to open this new bar. I think both venues will work off each other fairly well. The Tasting Room is a lot smaller, it's licensed for 75, but across the road [Mother Vine] we're licensed for 120. This [The Tasting Room] is a not a late night venue, you won't be hanging off the rafters at 2am, it closes at 10 o'clock at the latest. And across the road it will go to one o'clock on Friday and Saturday nights only but normally midnight, so they are not late night venues as such."



Mother Vine's wine list will be 300-strong and driven by Lemire.

"He's looking at a wine list that showcases the best of independent winemakers in Australia and around the world, with a focus on France, Italy and Spain as well as some German wines."

Andrewartha says the Tasting Room and Mother Vine will be separate businesses with different identities, as he'll be the face of the Tasting Room and East End Cellars while Hannon-Tan, Theodoros and Lemire will be the faces of Mother Vine.

“Of course there will be some crosspollination of clients who will drink wine there and want to buy it here,” he explains.

“It’s about creating a wine hub,” Hannon-Tan says.

“When people think, ‘I want to go for a glass of wine’, it’s not necessarily a specific place but its about coming to Vardon Avenue, it’s about coming to the east end for a selection of places.”



eastendcellars.com.au (<http://eastendcellars.com.au>)

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