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The World's Smartest Wine Bar



SELF-SERVE VinoVenue's high-tech carousels let customers help themselves while preserving open wine.



TWO BAY AREA passions—wine and tech—have joined forces at VinoVenue, a wine bar recently opened in San Francisco. The twist? There's no bartender needed. Instead, a new system from Italy's Enomatic lets drinkers serve themselves, filling their wineglasses an ounce at a time at dispensers that look like high-tech soda fountains.

Each of VinoVenue's \$20,000 Enoround

carousels holds 16 bottles, and above each spout is an LED displaying the price per pour. Customers use smart cards to pay for their drinks. As the dispenser fills a glass, it replaces the lost liquid in the bottle with argon, an inert gas that seals the remaining wine against oxidation. That innovation preserves even white wine for as long as two months and allows VinoVenue to serve more than 110 vintages by the glass—about three times the offerings of most wine bars.

Because the carousels don't waste a drop, VinoVenue can offer more affordable tastings of even the rarest wines. That's one reason owner Mary Lynn Slattery, a veteran of Bay Area gaming startups Mindscape and Microprose, thinks the concept is ripe for expansion. The first in the United States to sell self-dispensed wine, she plans to open VinoVenues in Chicago, San Diego, and Seattle by the end of next year. — PAUL KAIHLA