

OVERSEAS NEWS

Airport supplies – Changing labels for a warmer world – Glass that thinks it's a decanter.

FLIGHTS OF FANCY

American airports are gastronomic wildernesses for wine and food lovers. *Vino Volo* – a nationwide group of airport-based sipping and savouring retreats – plans to change all that. “We are a completely new concept in wine retail and travel,” founder Doug Tomlinson says. “We are offering our guests a comfortable refuge with the opportunity to enjoy extraordinary wines at all price points.”

At New York's John F Kennedy International Airport, for example, you can settle into a welcoming leather chair in *Vino Volo*'s wine lounge in the American Airlines Terminal pre-boarding area and choose from 22 fine wines by the glass or bottle, or as tasting flights. *Vino Volo*, by the way, is Italian for wine flight. There are top drops, such as California's 2005 Ferrari-Carano Chardonnay for US\$13 a glass, or the Spanish 2004 *Viña Salceda* Rioja at US\$9. There are eight themed wine flights, in each of which you get 114ml pours of three different wines for between US\$13 and US\$24.

If you're peckish, you can pair small plates of gourmet nibbles with your wines. For white worshippers, there are Tuscan chicken sandwiches, smoked salmon rolls or artisanal cheeses with crostini. On the red side, there's a choice of duck confit and lentils, a cold collation of home-cured meats, or New York strip steak skewers with caramelised shallots and smashed potato salad. Snacks are priced from US\$10 to US\$14, and if you order these palate pleasers to go, they make a preferable alternative to the meagre fare that most US airlines serve on domestic flights. Wines are available too, at the adjacent *Vino Volo* bottle shop, although staff will point out that anyone caught trying to drink their wines on-board will be in for an earful from flight attendants.

You can find *Vino Volo* wine havens at Washington DC Dulles, Seattle-Tacoma, Sacramento, and Baltimore/Washington international airports as well as at New York's JFK. If you're looking for a taste of the terroir, each location features local wines. Sacramento's *Sierra Reds*, for example, showcases zinfandel, syrah and barbera from the Sierra foothills. *Vino Volo*'s goal is to have 50 airport wine sanctuaries over the next five years. That's one for every wine-producing state in America. **ANTHONY MANIFOLD**

GETTING SMART ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

Dr Richard Smart, canopy management expert and flying winemaker, has controversially suggested that the fashion for prominently displaying the grape variety on wine labels is a mistake. Smart was speaking at the second Conference on Climate Change and Wine in Barcelona, Spain, in February 2008.

According to Smart, as the climate heats up, many wine regions – such as the Barossa Valley – will become unviable, and there will be a need to change either the location of vineyards, or to adapt varieties to new ones better suited to heat and water stress.

“I think that the fact that we have developed varietal labels will be seen in

15 to 20 years to be a mistake, and we will be forced in the future to go back to regional labelling, not grape labelling,” Smart says.

If forced to change the location of vines, he continues, the New World has an advantage in that its present regions are not as well known to consumers, so if producers do need to develop new, cooler regions, it won't be met with huge resistance. However, the New World has hung its hat on varietal labelling for the past decade, so if there is a need to change varieties, or to produce entirely new hybrids, they may encounter more problems.

Smart suggests that if Old World regions, such as Bordeaux, change grape varieties or begin to blend their wines with a mix of classic and new varieties, they won't need to change their entire appellation-led labelling, thus keeping a “recognised” name to reassure the consumer.

“Maybe the answer is for us to make up more generic regional names,” he says. “It will make it easier for consumers to accept any future changes.” **JANE ANSON**

BREATHE EASY

Although there is no scientific evidence to support manufacturers' claims that crystal glasses designed for wine actually improve aroma and taste, most cork dorks believe they do make a difference. Now German stemware producer Eisch Glaskultur has developed “breathable” crystal wine glasses, using technology that subjects them to oxygenation after manufacture. The result is that wines poured into these glasses exhibit the same signs of aeration as if they had been decanted for one or two hours.

Advocates claim that fine wines become rounder and more harmonious when served in breathable glasses without risk of oxidising or premature ageing. The character and structure of the wine is maintained, and it opens up within minutes, gaining taste and volume. It's a bonus for restaurants offering premium wines and seeking to turn tables over on a timely basis. For home consumers, the glasses solve the riddle of how long their vintage wines should be decanted for.

Ronn Wiegand, MW and master sommelier, comments: “I found they softened wines and enhanced their characteristics within just

a few minutes. I was especially impressed with how they truly improved unoaked whites, such as riesling, and Italian wines and lighter reds, notably pinot noir.” He also believes they can help diminish reductive problems and grassiness in wines, which makes them a good choice for wines in bottles with screwcaps. “It pushes the fruit forward,” he says.

So, are the days of the decanter over? Not according to Eisch Glaskultur, which also makes crystal decanters: “A decanter enhances the dining decor, which is why it's preferable to a wine bottle. Open the wine bottle, immediately pour the wine in a decanting carafe and instantly enjoy the wine served in a breathable glass. This satisfies both the aesthete and the connoisseur at the table.” **AM**

