

ourage omics

reloading posse are over.
are turning their crews
annah Karp

HT boxing
yd May-
red fans
\$100 bills
the Hard
ven men,
his every
otypical
reload-

tions, and starts his days at 5:15 a.m. Underperforming security guards, personal assistants and coordinators can be fired for offenses like ogling women or falling out of shape. "It's no different than working for Xerox," Mr. Ellerbe says.

Troublemakers, sycophants and hangers-on, your days are numbered. Athletes are turning the entourage—once a big punch line in sports—from liability to asset. Taking a page from veterans who have learned the hard way and from

Please turn to page W4



India's Masters shows how golf's center of gravity is shifting from the U.S. **W5**

TASTINGS



What good wine bars need. The word from Washington, where they've blossomed. **W3**

Plus

ADVISER: A rising opera star's new concept album **W2**

THE JOURNAL CROSSWORD: 'Bad Trading Day' **W5**

TV: A documentary looks at cancer without flinching .. **W10**

Born to Renovate



Max Weinberg of the E Street Band and his house in central New Jersey.

neres and Billy Joel have scooped up lavish spreads and then dumped them just as quickly, often at substantial profits. Mr. Weinberg is a different sort of real-estate obsessive, the sort who spends hours leafing through property records at town hall, who throws around names of architects the way most people throw around names of rock stars.

"If you ask somebody, 'Give me the stereotypical description of a star,' th

WINE

TASTINGS by Dorothy J. Gaiter and John Brecher

A Capital Idea

D.C.'s Wine Bars Catch Up With a National Trend Well Worth Following



Photography by Ron Blunt

DIANE GROSS and Khalid Pitts led an interesting life in Washington, D.C. She was a consulting counsel for the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and before that counsel to Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski of Maryland. He is director of strategic campaigns for the Service Employees International Union, working on health care, voting rights and economic issues. During the decade or so before they got married last May, their private passion was wine. During a trip to Paris, the



RIEDEL
THE WINE GLASS COMPANY

JUST TASTE IT!

CABERNET

other. Good wine bars are pouring interesting wines that you might not be able to try otherwise—and, in any event, trying a taste of wine at a wine bar is a much smaller risk than buying a whole bottle of something new and unusual that you may or may not like. This quick tour of a few of the wine bars of Washington (which we visited anonymously, of course) will give you some idea what wine bars can offer, and the kind of things we hope to see at good wine bars everywhere.

A FRESH TAKE ON WHITE WINES

First and foremost, of course, are **unusual wines**. Have you had a Vin de Savoie recently, or, for that matter, any wine made from the Jacquère grape? No, neither had we. This is a delightful, almost ephemeral white made along the foothills of the Alps in France, and we tried a lovely one at Cork (\$11). One fascinating subtext of our tour of the wine bars was how very many lovely, fresh white wines are out there that we rarely see because they've been drowned under an ocean of sweet Chardonnay. At Cork, we also tried a deep, dark Marcillac from France (\$6), made from the Fer Servadou grape, that we last saw when we were in Paris last summer. We taste wine for a living and try thousands of bottles a year, but at every wine bar we visited, we saw several wines we'd never tried before, sometimes from regions whose wines rarely make it to the U.S. To us, this is pretty close to heaven. A lovely place called Urbana might have been more restaurant than wine bar, but it still took its wine seriously and gave us a chance to try a Cantina Nalles Gewürztraminer from the Alto Adige region of Italy (\$10) that was beautiful, with the kind of varietal kick that we look for in a Gewurz.

At a real wine bar, there must be **knowledgeable people** behind the bar. Sure, this seems obvious, but you'd be amazed how many people behind the bars of today's new wine bars have no idea what they're talking about. At place after place in Washington, the people knew wine and, even more important, were eager to talk about it. At a lovely wine-centric restaurant called Proof, we only had to say a few words about our appreciation of the wines on the list before the bartender be-



gan chatting. He told us that if we really liked unusual stuff, we really needed to try a glass of the Punkt Genau sparkling Grüner Veltliner (\$10). As you know, we're big fans of Austria's national white, but we had never tried a sparkling Grüner and it was indeed lovely. It would have been great with seafood.

Real wine bars should have a **system for keeping wine fresh**. There are all sorts of fancy systems that use gas now, and several of the wine bars in Washington had them. This meant we could order fresh, light whites and expect that they would taste like they just came from the cellar, and they did. At far too many wine bars we have visited, the wines are simply recorked and put back on the shelf, and that wouldn't be a problem if the wine bars went through these opened bottles very quickly. However, too often we've asked to see the bottle only to discover that by the bar's own dating system, the bottle of what should have been a fresh white had been open for three days, which explains why it's oxidized. That annoys the heck out of us, especially at a place that calls itself a wine bar. Proof's owner, Mark Kuller, a tax attorney, told us when we called later that he paid \$50,000 for his Italian Enomatic system that dispenses 32 wines. "It's paid for itself," he told us. "Our wine sales are just extraordinary, slightly ahead of our food sales, and the restaurant is always packed. We do \$6,000 a night in wine sales."

In terms of deciding what is really a wine bar, one thing we look for are **interesting flights of wine**. A flight is simply a group of wines that have something in common—maybe Sauvignon Blancs from around the world. At Veritas in Washington, the 25 flights were outstanding, well-conceived and reasonably priced. We tried three light whites from Austria, for instance—a Grüner, a Riesling and a Muscat (\$14)—which allowed us to talk about the national character of the wines of Austria. Adam Manson, who co-owns Veritas with Joe Englert, says business is fantastic and they're opening another place, Enology, in two months that will offer only domestic wines and spirits.

It's important for a real wine bar to offer

Pinot Noir from Oregon—just \$5 for a glass because it was happy hour—and it had the kind of depth and complexity we like in a Pinot. Did the glass have anything to do with it? Maybe. Paul Carlson, who owns Vinoteca, said they use 28¾-ounce Oneida glasses that run about \$8 a stem. These lovely glasses, however, are not problem-free. "Our customers have complained about a short pour," he told us. "We have had to explain that we use 28¾-ounce glasses," which makes the five-ounce pour appear small. "These glasses do have a lot of breakage," he added, "but it has decreased as we continuously train our front and back of the house employees on how to handle them. We believe these glasses add to the experience." That they do.

ORGANIZATION COUNTS

The wine list at a wine bar should offer a wide selection of wines by the glass as well as by the bottle—and this is key: **The list should be organized** in some way that helps everyone, both novice and expert, make their way around it easily. A good wine list should actually be fun to study and certainly that should be the case at a wine bar. The 70-wine by-the-glass list we were handed at Vinoteca was organized by New World and Old World, and then by light body, medium body and full body. The organization needn't be complex or overly geeky or too cute to be useful.

We must say that we can see ourselves spending a great deal of time at just about any of the wine bars in Washington. But we have a soft spot for Cork. Here's the quirk: Its wine list is long and fascinating, but doesn't include a single wine from the U.S., or from Australia, for that matter. "Our focus is on Old World wines because that's what we like," Ms. Gross says. "We like New World wines, too, but we felt that with Old World wines there were a lot of them that are unexplored, they exemplify where they are from, and they're affordable. It was a bit of an experiment." For our money, a wine bar that makes a statement like that is actually making a larger statement: This is a place for people who really enjoy new wines and new tastes and are comfortable outside their comfort zones. As a result, it's clear that Cork attracts people like us, who enjoy wine for what it is—a fun, complex and very interesting beverage.

It's possible that wine bars are a fad that's just about reached its zenith, but we don't think so. One thing many good wine bars also have in common is this: **women**. People who own and run wine bars have told us for years that the majority of their customers are women who prefer the ambiance to regular bars that often feature loud guys and televisions turned to sports. There's certainly a

Starting at
\$299.95

FREE SHIPPING
on Silent Wine Refrigerators
Until April 21st

Safety Deposit Box

28-Bottle Silent Wine Refrigerator

Keep your reds and whites under lock and key*, in the safety of this digital thermoelectric cooling unit. Ultra-quiet and energy-efficient, it's designed to store your wine in the ideal environment.

See our entire collection at WineEnthusiast.com/silent



THE ULTIMATE SOURCE FOR EVERYTHING WINE
WineEnthusiast.com 800.377.3330

*Lock and key included with select models only © 2008 Wine Enthusiast Companies WJSJP08

wines we'd never tried before, some from regions whose wines rarely make it to the U.S. To us, this is pretty close to heaven. A lovely place called Urbana might have been more restaurant than wine bar, but it still took its wine seriously and gave us a chance to try a Cantina Nalles Gewürztraminer from the Alto Adige region of Italy (\$10) that was beautiful, with the kind of varietal kick that we look for in a Gewurz.

At a real wine bar, there must be **knowledgeable people** behind the bar. Sure, this seems obvious, but you'd be amazed how many people behind the bars of today's new wine bars have no idea what they're talking about. At place after place in Washington, the people knew wine and, even more important, were eager to talk about it. At a lovely wine-centric restaurant called Proof, we only had to say a few words about our appreciation of the wines on the list before the bartender be-



went through these opened bottles very quickly. However, too often we've asked to see the bottle only to discover that by the bar's own dating system, the bottle of what should have been a fresh white had been open for three days, which explains why it's oxidized. That annoys the heck out of us, especially at a place that calls itself a wine bar. Proof's owner, Mark Kuller, a tax attorney, told us when we called later that he paid \$50,000 for his Italian Enomatic system that dispenses 32 wines. "It's paid for itself," he told us. "Our wine sales are just extraordinary, slightly ahead of our food sales, and the restaurant is always packed. We do \$6,000 a night in wine sales."

In terms of deciding what is really a wine bar, one thing we look for are **interesting flights of wine**. A flight is simply a group of wines that have something in common—maybe Sauvignon Blancs from around the world. At Veritas in Washington, the 25 flights were outstanding, well-conceived and reasonably priced. We tried three light whites from Austria, for instance—a Grüner, a Riesling and a Muscat (\$14)—which allowed us to talk about the national character of the wines of Austria. Adam Manson, who co-owns Veritas with Joe Englert, says business is fantastic and they're opening another place, Enology, in two months that will offer only domestic wines and spirits.

It's important for a real wine bar to offer **small tastes** as well as wines by the glass (and full bottles, of course). In Washington, Sonoma, for instance, serves wines by a 3-ounce pour, which means that it's possible to try some of its pricier wines, such as Gold-eneye Pinot Noir, without breaking the bank. Proof goes a step further, with tastes at 2 ounces, 6 ounces and 8.5 ounces. A Muskateller we tried, for instance, cost \$3.50, \$10 or \$14 depending on the size of the taste, and an opportunity to check out a well-cared-for German Muscat for \$3.50 was a good deal.

This is far-too-often overlooked, but **good stemware** matters. It's not just that the wine tastes better in fine glasses. At a wine bar

or overly geeky or too cute to be useful.

We must say that we can see ourselves spending a great deal of time at just about any of the wine bars in Washington. But we have a soft spot for Cork. Here's the quirk: Its wine list is long and fascinating, but doesn't include a single wine from the U.S., or from Australia, for that matter. "Our focus is on Old World wines because that's what we like," Ms. Gross says. "We like New World wines, too, but we felt that with Old World wines there were a lot of them that are unexplored, they exemplify where they are from, and they're affordable. It was a bit of an experiment." For our money, a wine bar that makes a statement like that is actually making a larger statement: This is a place for people who really enjoy new wines and new tastes and are comfortable outside their comfort zones. As a result, it's clear that Cork attracts people like us, who enjoy wine for what it is—a fun, complex and very interesting beverage.

It's possible that wine bars are a fad that's just about reached its zenith, but we don't think so. One thing many good wine bars also have in common is this: **women**. People who own and run wine bars have told us for years that the majority of their customers are women who prefer the ambiance to regular bars that often feature loud guys and televisions turned to sports. There's certainly a place for sports bars and the like, but it's clear that there's also a place for wine bars, so we expect this little boomlet to continue.

Melanie Grayce West contributed to this column. Our email address is wine@wsj.com.

For an interactive map of the wine bars mentioned in this column and links to their Web sites, go to wsj.com/Tastings.

WSJ.com

Watch John and Dottie talk about wine bars in Washington, D.C., and see an interactive map, at WSJ.com/Tastings.

Safety Deposit Box

28-Bottle Silent Wine Refrigerator

Keep your reds and whites under lock and key*, in the safety of this digital thermoelectric cooling unit. Ultra-quiet and energy-efficient, it's designed to store your wine in the ideal environment.

See our entire collection at WineEnthusiast.com/silent



WINEENTHUSIAST

THE ULTIMATE SOURCE FOR EVERYTHING WINE

WineEnthusiast.com 800.377.3330

*Lock and key included with select models only

© 2008 Wine Enthusiast Companies WSJSP08

Why Settle?

CAREER JOURNAL

Every Tuesday in
Personal Journal

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

1AC677

Rent a villa in

italy

free catalog

800 280 2811

www.parkervillas.com