

What a difference a wine glass makes!

BY ELEANOR HEALD
CORRESPONDENT

Do you enjoy wine to accompany an eating-out experience? If that answer is yes, does the wine glass used by the restaurant make a difference? It should.

In 1974, Claus Riedel discovered that glass shape had a dramatic effect on the aroma and taste of wine. In this account, Riedel, the maker of the finest Austrian wine glasses, introduced its Sommeliers line of wine stemware. Slowly and controversially over time, the Riedel philosophy caught on.

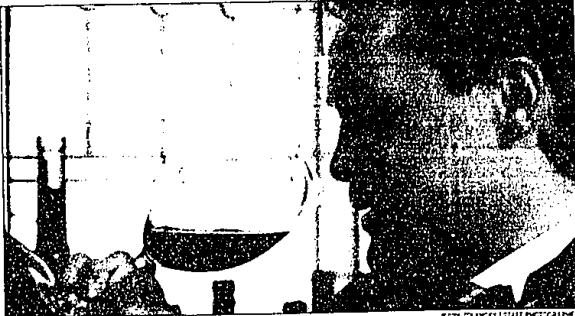
New nationwide, wine drinkers are literally furling restaurants to pay attention. In their homes for years, consumers have been using Riedel glasses for their wines. They realize that they don't want to spend upwards of \$30 for a bottle of wine in a restaurant to drink from glasses that don't maximize pleasure.

Since the debut of Riedel wine stemware, Claus Riedel's son, Georg, significantly expanded the line. Yet, it was not until Georg's son, Maximilian, moved to the U.S. two years ago that he recognized the inroads Riedel's competitors were making in restaurants. Riedel therefore designed a new range of glasses, dubbed the Restaurant Series, specifically for use in restaurants and bars.

The new series is based on Riedel's acclaimed Vinum bowls. Produced with non-lead glass, suitable for restaurant dishwasher racks, they have a slightly wider base and a stronger, round, seamless stem, affording both elegance and durability.

MORTON'S COMMITS

Recently Morton's, The Steakhouse made a corporate commitment to improve an overall dining experience by using the new Riedel stemware in all its restaurants. At Morton's Southfield location, it has met with diner enthusiasm. "As a recognized leader in the steakhouse category," said Southfield Morton's General Manager Steve Salmon, "Morton's partnered with Riedel for the obvious reason that they make the best wine glasses in the world. Morton's believes the wine experience is greatly enhanced by using the best



Morton's Steakhouse General Manager Steve Salmon takes in the aroma of a 1999 Crystal Valley Cabernet Sauvignon.

stemware and this translates into an overall dining experience, taken to a new level.

"Morton's chose a white wine glass that was crafted to enhance the enjoyment of Chardonnay and another for Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and other Bordeaux varieties. This is a correct fit for Morton's sales mix and guest profile. The company did exhaustive testing of different stemware styles and these were the choices that our guests made."

REPEATING THE TEST

As the Observer & Eccentric wine columnist, Morton's invited my husband, Ray, and me to try some red wines in the new Riedel restaurant stemware. We expanded the "test" to include other glassware, such as the beaded rim balloons, formerly used by Morton's, and thin-rimmed balloons from our home collection.

Hands down, the Riedel Restaurant Series significantly enhanced the following wines: 1999 Stag's Leap Wine Cellars Merlot \$80, 2000 Gaja Ca' Mareanda Magari \$123, 1996 Charles Krug Vintage Selection Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley \$50 and 1989 Chateau Grand Larose, St. Julien \$189.

Each wine tasted from Morton's former wine glasses had a low aromatic profile. Swirling wine to increase aroma perception in that glass was impossible without wine overboard. Even though the glasses were squeaky clean, our balloons made each wine smell

slightly stinky. The Riedels brought out high-toned aromatics and in the case of the Charles Krug, it was difficult to determine whether this wine was corked until we tried it in the Riedel. One whiff, no debate; corked. The multiple layers of flavors revealed by wines in the Riedels were simply amazing. We wondered then, do elevated wine characters also improve the impression of

Morton's steaks? While sampling Morton's top-seller, the 14-ounce Double Cut Filet and the New York Strip, we repeated the wine tasting in the various glassware. The steaks were also enhanced by the wine in the Riedel glasses.

We never recommend a Merlot with a great steak. Cabernet is the best fit. We'll not say that again! Yes, some Merlots are a lot like Cabs and the Riedel glass proved that

MORTON'S, THE STEAKHOUSE

Where: 1 Town Square, Southfield (248)354-6006.

Open: 5:30-11 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 5-10 p.m. Sunday
Food style: USDA prime aged beef and lobster.

Cost: A la carte menu with entrees \$20-\$34.

Reservations: Advised.

with the Stag's Leap Merlot. It was a gorgeous, sumptuous wine with the filet.

Why? Riedel wine glasses with fine, thin, polished-rim bowls direct wine precisely to the palate's correct zone and dramatically enhance perception.

Riedels are recognized among professionals as finely-tuned instruments, shaped to deliver the best possible bouquet and wine taste.

Morton's, The Steakhouse has taken a corporate lead in providing its guests, who order wine (and the plurality do) with an enriched wine and food experience. The next time you

order a \$30 or higher bottle of wine in a restaurant and are obliged to drink it in other than a fine, thin-rimmed glass, such as the Riedel Restaurant Series, ask management why.

Wine markup in restaurants can support the purchase of the best, durable glassware. High-end restaurants that are not using the latest high-tech glassware for expensive wines should ask, are we really interested in offering the best dining experience? Without top wine stemware, that answer must be "no."

Although Riedel Restaurant Series glasses are available solely to restaurants, the company's other collections, including Sommeliers (\$55-\$89), Vinum Extreme (\$28-\$30), Vinum (\$10-\$30), Wine (\$11-\$12.50), Overture (\$10), and Basic (\$10), designed to fit in a dishwasher, are available at fine wine merchants. For local retailers and more information, visit Riedel's Web site, www.RiedelCrystal.com. Prices in parentheses represent the range per stem in the various series.

Eleanor Heald is a Troy resident who writes about restaurants, food, wine and spirits for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave her a voice mail message, dial (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, mailbox 18644.



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