

Enoteche: The Italian Food Lover's Alternative to Tapas

Small plates go Italian at these snack and wine bars.

BY: JULIA SEXTON

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ore foodie than wine bars, and more winey than snack bars, enoteche are the newest restaurant genre to hit Westchester in numbers. These super-casual restaurants take their inspiration from Italian wine shops, which traditionally offer glasses of locally produced vintages along with modest, Italian-style bar bites. Not surprisingly, in American hands, the traditional enoteca menu has been super-sized; our enoteche offer pastas, secondi, and even a little glamour.

While scale can differ, the essentials of enoteche are the same: they're perfect, no-fuss spots to sample a variety of wines. By-the-glass lists are broad, and wines often come in sippable, swappable quartinos, as well as in half-bottles. Best of all, enoteche offer addictive Italian bar snacks, from bruschetti to panini, from salumi to formaggio. If you're lucky, you'll even find irresistible, salty/greasy fritti (fried things), and, really—who wants more in bar food?

We took a tour of Westchester's favorite enoteche and here's what we found.

Mima Vinoteca

63 Main St, Irvington_(914) 591-1300; mimarestaurant.com

Yonkers's wildly successful Zuppa has a cozier younger sibling, Mima, which stepped smartly into the adorable tin-and-tile Irvington spot vacated last year by Red Hat. With charming waiters (clad in black shirts that insist, "drink wine"), cheerful chalkboard wine specials, and a wine program designed by Zuppa's Randall Restiano and Armando Santucci, it's an easy place to spend an Italophilic _evening. Still better, in warm weather, diners can enjoy sunset river views from Mima's sidewalk tables.

Mima's wines are available in mezzos (three ounces), quartinos (six ounces), and bottiglie (full 25+ ounce bottles), and are helpfully listed by grape, region, and where that region appears on the "boot." This simplifying format provides a great vantage point to the wines of Italy, which span an overwhelming profusion of grapes and tiny regionalisms. Even more appealingly, Mima's mezzos are priced for casual exploration, with many offered in the \$4 to \$6 range.

Mima's antipasti menu features the classic wine-pairing snacks of Italy, including diner-designed affettati (sliced things)—wooden-board compositions of Italian cheeses, boutique hams, and cured meats. Those looking for more substantial fare can opt for small plates, including soup, salads, and lemon/salt-dusted seafood fritti misti. Others can linger for Mima's familiar range of pastas and secondi. Whatever meal you choose—snack, light supper, or dinner—it's best to save room for Mima's delightful marble-sized bombolini. These warm, deep-fried dough balls are the perfect prelude to a chest-warming shot of grappa.

Julia Sexton is a confirmed Italophile, spending as much time as she can afford in a nebbia-washed, three-room, three-story studiolo in Bologna with a rented Fiat Panda out front. Like everyone else in Bologna, she dresses in English Barbour jackets and layers of tweedy sweaters—though hers are somewhat stained with Pignoletto and coppa di testa.