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The Carlton Restaurant takes new approach to highlight wine

Pittsburgh Business Times - by [Tim Schooley](#)

Across the newly renovated dining room, Kevin Joyce eyes a diner stepping up to his restaurant's new, 450-bottle wall of wine that showcases every varietal, price and vintage, allowing guests to inspect and touch everything from cellar-aged French Bourdeaux to Australian Viogniers.

"Look at this guy!" he says.

Joyce jumps up to engage him, telling him the basics of his new approach and getting his feedback, slapping the friendly customer on the back. As the guest leaves, Joyce calls after him, "It's the ultimate wine store!"

For the years that he's owned and operated **The Carlton Restaurant**, Downtown, Joyce has faced the major challenge of every entrepreneurial oenophile. When you have 650 wines by the bottle, how do you best present them to your diners?

After a \$1 million renovation of his 25-year-old restaurant, Joyce has retired the 45-page wine list to establish what he's calling The Carlton's new wine library.

It's his own fine-dining, clicks-and-bricks approach to offering wine that combines the tactile opportunity for diners to approach the restaurant's wine selection on a fine wood-lined case, with iPads on which guests can search for wines in greater detail.

So far, Joyce said the approach has yielded the kind of results he expected, with wine sales up more than 18 percent since The Carlton reopened in late August.

"We're a restaurant that has been strongly identified with the grape for a long time," said Joyce, who has five wine rooms at the restaurant. "Let's put the product out where our guests can see it."

The dual approach allows customers to both enjoy Apple's latest gadget and explore different wines, while the wine display serves as an approachable trophy case of taste that enables them to linger over the wine itself.

Joyce believes guests now are able to select the wine they want more quickly, allowing time to buy another bottle.

Along with the wine wall and the iPads, The Carlton also will begin operating with the winepicks software application developed by Sewickley-based winepicks Corp.

An iPhone application, winepicks allows users to rate the wines they drink in a comprehensive database, which sorts and provides other wines they may like, a customization that becomes more comprehensive the more it's used.

Jon Rosenson, vice president of strategic initiatives for Expedient Communications, a data center and IT services company, said the approach appeals to his shopping method, in which he'll often research a product online before buying it in person.

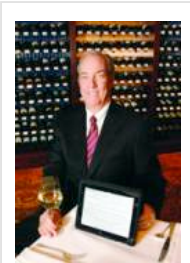
"I think it's fantastic in terms of the integration between the tangible product and the wealth of information you can put on an iPad," he said.

Mike Gonze, owner of Dreadnought Wines, a specialty wine seller in the Strip, sees value in helping customers better understand what they're drinking without the snooty arrogance he recalled from those involved in choosing and selling wine when he started his business more than 20 years ago.

"Anything that makes the experience of purchasing wine less intimidating and more fun, I think you're going to do well with," he said.

The Carlton Restaurant

- **Based:** Downtown
- **Founded:** 1984
- **Employees:** 45



Joe Wojcik
 Kevin Joyce, owner of The Carlton Restaurant, Downtown, is using the iPad to help showcase his expansive wine selection.

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- **Revenue:** \$2.2 million
- **Website:** thecarltonrestaurant.com
- **Challenge:** Make a restaurant's signature collection of 650 wines more accessible to its diners.
- **Solution:** Showcase wines in a wine library displayed in an accessible wall in the dining room and include an interactive wine list on iPads.



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