

à la carte



## WINED, DEALED, DELIVERED

You can start out interested in public health and find yourself growing a niche business as a wine consultant and wine storage expert-turned-guru. In fact you can go from one and a half to eight employees in six years, and kick-start a sibling business while concurrently traveling regularly to meet with an expanding client base ... if you are Marc Lazar.

Owner of Cellar Advisors, a wine consultancy, and Domaine Wine Storage, a 7,000-square-foot refrigerated facility in Richmond Heights, Lazar is fluent in wine speak, easy to talk with, well-traveled and happy to have his business based in St. Louis.

Always curious about wine, Lazar took a job in a retail wine store and quickly "got the bug. I was the fill-in guy, with odd jobs at the store, doing packing and delivering and visiting homes. I call it the logistics side that retailers aren't that good at." He learned, he taught, he became a certified sommelier. And by the time the Washington, D.C., native came to St. Louis bent on attending Washington University, the fates and his advisors urged him to develop his freelance wine consulting business.

The time was right. "Stores are often ill-equipped to handle the needs of the biggest customers, who require inventory and appraisals, and these customers don't always know where to find such information," Lazar said. "Quickly, I was receiving requests for service countrywide."

But a wine storage facility, too? Lazar laughed. "It's not an exotic idea. A large percentage of clients are massive collectors and run out of space at home. Others have

modest wine collections, but they live in an apartment or maybe aren't going to be in that home very long. Or they don't have a cellar, or no one is home during the day to receive deliveries." (Domaine couriers clients' wine from the facility to their homes or arranges pick-ups.) The concept has been so well received that Lazar is opening another facility in Chicago with plans for two more on the East Coast.

Lazar adds and inventories about 14,000 bottles of wine a month, travelling to collectors' cellars to tell them what they have and where it is in the cellar. He creates a virtual map of rack, case number, bottle number, what it's worth, where it was purchased, and when they should drink it. "We take all the info and enter it in a master database so the collector can keep track of it.

"People call for a variety of reasons, not just because they have ... wine to be inventoried. They want advice, whether they're into collecting or about to start. They have inherited wine and want to know what it's worth or how to liquidate it. They are moving with their collection and need logistical help, or they're importing wine and need help regarding customs and taxes."

What's next? Lazar is involved in a program to help collectors write insurance for their wine. "You'd be shocked how underprotected these collections are."

Wine collecting has become easier because "there are more wines and more places to buy them." Simple as that. But when it gets complicated, Lazar is there.

— Diana Losciale

## a WORD with the chef

### MONTER AU BEURRE

Swirling butter into a sauce or dish to finish it

"*Monter au beurre* is a French phrase that translates to 'mount with butter,'" noted Colby Erhart, executive chef at Chez Leon in Clayton. Erhart's fondness for the finishing technique reflects his training at the Culinary Institute of America and enthusiasm for Escoffier-inspired cuisine. "This adds a rich flavor and a brilliant icy shine to soups, bisques and sauces that is an absolute must in French cooking," he explained.

## USE THIS

### TRUFFLE/CHOCOLATE SHAVER

Whether you're shaving black truffles atop a seductive swirl of cream-laced pasta or deep, dark chocolate to garnish a silky puff of mousse, this is the perfect tool to give your Valentine's Day dinner a final flourish of aphrodisiacal flavor.

AVAILABLE AT SUR LA TABLE, 295 PLAZA FRONTENAC, FRONTENAC, 314.993.0566

