

SOUL ASYLUMS / WICKED-HAUNTED HOSPITALS » BOSTON GO-GO GOES BUMP & GRIND IN THE NIGHT

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PARANORMAL 'HOOD

When Boston's spirits speak,
ghost hunter Joe "Jiggy" Webb listens.
By Ariel Shearer. Page 30.

EAT & DRINK

BRIAN POE CHOWS DOWN » FOOD TRUCKIN' » DOOWEE & RICE » HALLOWEEN EATS

Torn between red and white? Say hello to orange wine. Page 48.

ORANGE CRUSH

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LIZ VILARDI, WINE GODDESS OF Kendall Square's newly opened Belly Wine Bar — the latest branch in the Central Bottle and Blue Room family tree — is cracking up, her laughter echoing through the bar. “This is my favorite video of all time,” she says, as comedian Andy Milonakis mocks highbrow wine-tasters. (One tasting note he offers after a few sips: “Matchbox cars.”) “It makes me die every time I watch it.”

“My approach to wine is to be really, really low-key, not snobby,” she adds. After she compares the chardonnay grape to Dolly Parton — “It’s got big hair, and it’s blonde, and it’s *very* curvy” — I believe her. As a result of her no-bullshit Texan approach, Belly’s wine program is rapidly gaining kudos for its ballsy selections, including its prominent lineup of orange wine.

That’s right: orange wine. A trippy category that sometimes hides in plain sight on menus, orange wines are produced when vintners allow white grapes more maceration time than usual — essentially treating white grapes like red ones. With the juice in contact with the grape skins for as long as seven months, the wines develop a hue and tannin level somewhere between the pale gold of a crisp sauvignon blanc and the deep red of a chewy zinfandel by the time they’re stored in casks to age. They’re wines that start like whites and end like reds, and they can leave you at a loss for words.

To get to know the sexy beasts on Belly’s menu — which hail from the region of Italy near the Slovenian border — we spent an afternoon with Vilardi, sniffing, swirling, sipping, and spitting oranges, one by one.



WINE AND DINE

Wine gets tannins — compounds that impart an astringent taste — from grape skins, so the longer the skins stay on, the more tannin the wine. “The tannins are exactly why these need food,” Vilardi notes. Try pairing orange wines with meat, salty dishes, honey, balsamic, and hearty fare like lentils.

1 “DINAVOLINO,” DENAVOLO, 2010

Region: Emilia Romagna. **Grapes:** 25% ortugo, 25% malvasia, 25% marsanne, 25% mystery grape.

“Dinavolino [is an unsulfured wine, but] it smells like rotten eggs, in a funny way. It’ll blow off, but it’s just a funkiness that happens. This guy to me is the earthiest, and it’s not putting out a huge nose. It doesn’t want to give you a lot. Its tannins definitely come on fast. It’s got lots of acidity, and it’s very bright.”

2 “SLATNIK,” RADIKON, 2009

Region: Oslovija. **Grapes:** 80% chardonnay, 20% friulano.

“Super aromatic. This has a little bit of honey, and there is some apricot marmalade going on. Marmalade definitely comes up a lot with these guys. Orange peel, pith, it’s all really prevalent. Tannins are way lower here, and they come in late.”

3 RIBOLLA GIALLA, GRAVNER, 2004

Region: Oslovija. **Grapes:** 100% ribolla gialla.

“I really hate using the word ‘sweet,’ but it really does smell like what you would associate with apricots. It’s very concentrated, viscous... you’re thinking heavy, syrupy thoughts. The wine is the opposite of what you’re expecting, which is what’s so fun

about it. It has almost no tannins. It’s got some spice, but it’s outrageously complex, and it doesn’t give you any of that caramel or honey that you got on the nose... I love this wine. Gravner is the man.”

4 VITOVSKA, VODOPIVEC, 2006

Region: Carso. **Grapes:** 100% vitovska.

“This skin maceration goes almost as long as Gravner — six months. It’s lacy and aromatic in a gingery, spicy kind of way. It’s fresh and clean, and it’s almost minty. Its tannins are moderate. It’s not fruit-forward in any way, and it’s just giving me minerals and... nut skins.”

5 “AGENO,” LA STOPPA, 2007

Region: Emilia Romagna. **Grapes:** 60% malvasia, 40% ortuga and trebbiano.

“This is, to me, the most like mulled cider in the nose. Apples, cooking spices — it’s unbelievable. It just makes me think all over the orange spectrum: orange peel, pith, candied peel, the whole realm. It’s really well integrated. It rivals Gravner for complexity; it’s got so many layers. It’s the most red-wine-like of them all, and it would go great with something like blood sausage or pig trotter with lentils. It can take on meat really well.” **P**