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## The Guzzle Does Sydney

by [Matt Watson](#) — last modified 2009-03-11 23:19

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In late December last year we decided that it was about time we checked out the wine bar scene in downtown Sydney, as there had been a lot of talk recently about how the more relaxed licensing regulations were breathing new life in what some considered to be a stuffy and staid environment.

Unlike cities such as Melbourne, where the wine bar scene is full of entrepreneurial start ups and eclectic college hangouts, wine bars in Sydney have tended to be more formal and imposing, generally reflective of the prohibitive costs of regulation and fit out.

Apparently, however, times have changed – so the Guzzle set out to see exactly how.

**“glass” brasserie & wine bar – 488 George Street, Sydney** [www.glassbrasserie.com.au](http://www.glassbrasserie.com.au)

Our first port of call was the appropriately titled “glass” brasserie & wine bar.

Part of the Sydney CBD Hilton Hotel, “glass” is located smack bang in the middle of the Sydney business district on one of Sydney’s busiest streets.

Hanging like a precipice over the pedestrian traffic below (you access the bar via the first floor of the hotel), it is in the perfect position for busy CBD workers looking for somewhere to go to debrief and unload after yet another high pressure day in the office.

### Wine List

I must admit, one of the most annoying things I find in most traditional drinking establishments in Sydney, when I feel like a long cool a glass of wine rather than a beer, is that the choice of wine available is generally pretty limited. Sure, you’ll get the odd place that will offer an interesting and thoughtful array, but most of the time most are offering only what the local beer rep has to sell.

Fortunately you’ll find no such problem here, as the extensive wine list at “glass” runs for 35+ pages and covers just about every major grape variety and wine region available.

The only down side (if you can call it that) is that while there are over 30+ wines by the glass (including reds, whites, sparklers and stickies), to get access to the vast majority of the wines you will need to buy a whole bottle. And while this is generally not a problem for consumers such as the Guzzlers (“just the one bottle today sir?” questions the barman as WC places the first order), it does limit your choices if you are simply staying for only the odd one or two.

On the positive side, Sommelier Kim Bickley does rotate the list seasonally, so the choices of wine by the glass, although relatively limited (compared to the rest of the list) seldom runs the risk of becoming stale or boring.



## Quality

While both Wayne and myself would have dearly loved to have sampled every wine of the 400+ available, time and physical capacity to remember what was drunk - so that we could write this article - dictated that we would necessarily limit ourselves to only two (glasses).

Our weapons of choice were a 2007 Valminor Albarino from Rias Baixas in Spain and a 2005 Schloss Vollrads Kabinett Riesling from the Rheingau in Germany.

I won't go into details here (we will post the full tasting notes shortly), but suffice to say that we rated both wines as a solid Recommended.

## Value

It's hard to put a value on wines that are subject to the vagaries and costs associated with the hospitality industry (i.e. you not just paying for the wine but the service, location and overall experience...), but generally speaking, with a glass of wine averaging \$15 and bottles from \$50+ I'd say "glass" would sit fairly comfortably within the more extreme half the value for money spectrum.

Having said that, you do get what you pay for - and the selection at "glass" is very good.

## Overall

"glass" is what I'd describe as a traditional Sydney wine bar. Every thing about it is modern, crisp and impressive – from the décor to the immaculately presented wine list (book). Clearly a lot of money has been invested and it shows.

Personally, I really enjoyed the experience and am looking forward to going back. The staff were friendly and really knew their stuff (thanks particularly to Michael Szeto and Julien for showing us around) and the range of wines available was about as comprehensive as they come.

So if you're around the CBD and you looking to unwind in a business suit, up-market, modern-art style atmosphere, then we would certainly recommend "glass" to you.

## Time to Vino – 66 Stanley Street Darlinghurst [www.timetovino.com](http://www.timetovino.com)

This bar was one of the reasons we were interested in checking out the Sydney wine bar scene in the first place. It is reflective of exactly the type of bar that has arisen since the liquor licensing laws were relaxed. It's a bar that has been developed with little funding, big ideas and a lot of hard work.

Located in the heart of one of Sydney's major dining areas Time to Vino is the child of two determined, entrepreneurially minded brothers; Clint and Nathan Hillery.



Nathan is the guy that looks after the general running of the bar, and Clint is the master of the wine.

Everything that a bar like "glass" is, Time to Vino is not.

The atmosphere here is demystifying, relaxed and funky. There's a real rustic, grungy, comfortable feel to the place, just perfect to sit back and relax and watch the world pass by.

### **The List**

As you'd expect the range of wines is no where near as extensive as "glass" – and you wouldn't expect it to be either. But what the list lacks in quantity it makes up for in variety and intelligent thought - with wines as diverse New Zealand Gamay Noir, Italian Primitivo (Zinfandel if your President's last name rhymes with Pyjama) and Yarra Valley Pinot.

The price is attractive too, with most wines sitting fairly comfortably within an \$8 to \$11 price range.

What impressed us most, however, was the food. Yes I know this is a wine website and that WC and myself are not a couple of bloated food critics rummaging around the Sydney restaurant scene looking for a free feed, but food is integral to the enjoyment of wine and these guys do their food very well indeed.

On that point, the Brumont Gros Manseng/Sauvignon Blanc from Gascogne in South-West France was sensational with the Zucchini flowers stuffed with Ricotta, Olive and Lemon.

So, if you are looking for something more casual and relaxed, with great food and an eclectic, thoughtful wine list, you really will struggle to do better than Time to Vino.

I will certainly be going back and have no hesitation in recommending it to you too.

### **So...what ya reckon'**

Overall we were really impressed by our first foray into the wine bar scene in Sydney. Hopefully it will continue to develop into a diverse and exciting culture that offers a bit of something for everyone. Certainly both "glass" and Time to Vino are a huge step in the right direction.

Cheers

MW



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