

Addison

Serious wine meets sun and surf in San Diego BY TIM FISH

Starting from scratch only three years ago, Addison has compiled one of the best wine lists in California, and it did it in, of all places, the beach town of Del Mar. “One of the reasons I came here was it was such a blank canvas,” says wine director Jesse Rodriguez, whose résumé includes *Wine Spectator* Grand Award winner French Laundry in Napa Valley.

Debuting in fall 2006, Addison earned a Best of Award of Excellence in 2007 for its impressive selection of 1,510 wines. This past year, Rodriguez has been relentless in expanding and improving the list, which now includes 3,500 selections and an inventory of nearly 32,000 bottles.

Burgundy and California are the strong suits, with solid collections from Champagne and Austria. The list of red Burgundy spans some 370 selections, more than 80 producers and 22 vintages. Another example of Rodriguez’s passion is his five-year vertical of cult Burgundy J.-F. Coche-Dury Corton-Charlemagne (the 2002 is \$4,385). California Cabernet Sauvignon is well-represented, with nearly 300 selections from more than 100 producers and 26 vintages. The list is long on Diamond Creek, with a 12-year vertical of Gravelly Meadow, and there are plenty of collectibles, such as Colgin and Bryant, with Screaming Eagle 1996 listed at \$2,890.

Addison is the flagship restaurant at the luxurious Grand Del Mar resort, which is tucked in the hills a few miles from the ocean. High-profile San Diego developer Doug Manchester bought and overhauled the old Meadows del Mar golf course and added the 249-room luxury resort, spending \$300 million in the process.

The 80-seat dining room is handsome and extravagant, done on a large scale with vaulted wood beam ceilings, limestone fireplaces imported from Italy, dynamic archways and sumptuous black marble. A 2,500-bottle wine cellar is the showpiece of the main room.

As expected amid such opulence, guests must choose carefully for real values. But Renato Ratti Dolcetto d’Alba Colombè 2005 is \$45 (although that is a significant markup), Seghesio Sonoma County Zinfandel 2005 is \$70, and Henri Abelé Brut Champagne NV is \$80. To add opportunity, Rodriguez maintains an extensive offering by the glass and more than 200 half-bottles, including E. Guigal Condrieu 2004 for \$55 and Paul Hobbs Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2006 for \$60. “They probably make up 50 percent of our sales,” Rodriguez says of the by-the-glass and half-bottle choices.

Such vinous versatility also suits the four-course menu (\$98) of executive chef William Bradley, who takes advantage of California’s seasonal bounty and adapts classic French technique to create a brilliant sort of simplicity. Intensely flavored morel mushrooms are highlighted in a delicate beurre blanc-style sauce, while crevettes rouges



Addison has vaulted to prominence with a list strong in *grand cru* Burgundy and California cults. From left: wine director Jesse Rodriguez, owner Doug Manchester and chef William Bradley.

come lightly crusted with salted peanuts and are served with chive-and-black truffle jus. Dishes are also available à la carte at the bar.

An optional wine-matching program for an additional \$45 or more reflects Rodriguez’s devotion to diversifying his guests’ wine experience. “We change countries with every course,” sommelier Josh Chambers says. Rodriguez and Chambers explain every bottle in detail as they are presented and poured. Considering that the two run the wine program for an 80-seat restaurant, the process is remarkably smooth. Rodriguez also offers wine training to the servers and support staff. The son of a Marine, he is a master of detail and organization, selecting bottles from multiple cellars that surround the dining rooms.

Addison joins long-standing Grand Award holder WineSellar & Brasserie as top wine cellar in San Diego County, proving that this sleepy slice of Southern California may slowly be developing into a world-class food-and-wine destination. Addison, for its part, is certainly raising the stakes.

Addison

Grand Del Mar, 5200 Grand Del Mar Way, San Diego Telephone (858) 314-1900 Web site www.addisondelmar.com Wine selections 3,500 Number of bottles 32,000