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Pourtal brings winetasting 2.0 to Santa Monica



Peter Birmingham shows off the "Three's Company" selection of wines blended with three varieties of grape

Walking down Santa Monica Blvd. towards the new **Pourtal** wine bar, it was hard not to get pulled in by the perennial forcefield of happy, soused Brits at the **King's Head**. But I was glad I pressed on, because sampling wines using a Smartcard is pretty fun, even if it is likely to quickly add up. And since wine director **Peter Birmingham** is one of the most knowledgeable sommeliers in L.A., the selection of wines is naturally stellar.

Buy a card -- for opening party, we were given \$30 card - - then walk around to see the choices, and insert the card in the **Enomatic** machine, putting your glass below the selected wine. A one ounce taste runs from \$1.52 to \$8.47, while there's a selection of 5 oz. glasses from \$6.50 to \$15. Pourtal is working hard to make tasting wine a fun and educational experience, with themed areas that comprise a flight and extensive tasting notes. My card held out for about six tastes, with some real winners in there, including the **Tissot Pousard Sans Souffre**, a good value at \$3.05 an ounce. Another excellent value was the \$2.99 an ounce **Niner cab Bootjack Vineyard** from Paso Robles.



As for the "cosmoculture" **Domaine Viret Emergence** -- I think I'll leave that one to the hippies. There's plenty of snackage available to go with the wine (beer is available too), including cheese plates from **Andrew's Cheese Shop**, flatbreads, artichoke garlic toasts and for the adventurous, chocolate/bleu cheese crostini.

With **Bar Pinxto** just across the street and **Robata Bar** next door, the westernmost block

of Santa Monica Blvd. has come a long way from the days of fish n' chips and warm Guinness. Not that there's anything wrong with that.