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Bar Bites

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Donato Enoteca, Redwood City

Mandy Erickson
Thursday, March 11, 2010

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Chad Ziemendorf / Special to The Chronicle

Donato Enoteca, located near a downtown Redwood City Cineplex, is an ideal pre- or post-movie watering hole.

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Killer app: Take a break from sliders and fries. Hand-pulled braised wild boar (\$9) on grilled ciabatta is like pork on steroids - meaty and slightly gamy, yet tender. Calamari (\$9) is - surprise! - not fried, but sauteed just until tender and served with robust fagioli.

Signature drink: The cocktail menu relies heavily on Campari, whose bitterness balances sweet liqueurs, as in the Patio Refresher (\$9), where it plays against Hpnotiq.

The bartenders at Donato Enoteca are as versed in current cinema as they are wine. Because much of their clientele is moviegoers on their way to or from Century 20 Downtown Redwood City, they talk film while pouring or mixing drinks. And everyone else at the bar knows when it's curtain time, because guests are hurriedly signing their credit card slips and filing out.

The vibe: The bar is sandwiched in the middle of the restaurant, but with a high ceiling and large windows overlooking a plaza, it feels airy. A flat-screen TV rules the bar, commanding the attention of those seated on the stools.

The crowd: Couples and small groups of friends of all ages, grabbing a drink before they catch the latest blockbuster at the Cineplex.

Best seat: In cool weather, the comfy leather couches tucked in a corner by the window; in warm weather, the tables on the plaza.

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The best-seller Anti-Oxidant (\$9) is cosmo-like, with pomegranate vodka, Xrated, cranberry and lime.

Also on tap: About 30 Italian, French and California wines can be purchased by the 5-ounce glass (\$7 to \$12) or 8-ounce carafe (\$11 to \$19). A selection of grappa, housed in ornate glass bottles, is available for those who like firewater.

Bonus: Happy hour runs from 4 to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, when specialty cocktails and appetizers on the bar menu are half price.

Donato Enoteca: 1041 Middlefield Road, Redwood City. (650) 701-1000.
www.donatoenoteca.com. 11:30 a.m.-10 p.m. Sun.-Thurs., until 11 p.m. Fri.-Sat.
Reservations and credit cards accepted.

- Mandy Erickson, 96hours@sfchronicle.com

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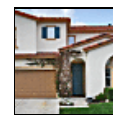
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