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San Diego **CityBeat**



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Another glass?

From summer classes and grape-stomping sessions, wine is in season

by Victoria Davis



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CUCINA urbana

Photo courtesy of Singler Photography

While there's no shame in purchasing an affordable box wine (well, maybe a little shame), summer is arguably one of the better times to make drinking a social affair. Or, at least, a classy one. I wouldn't go so far as to liken Southern Californian spirits to those of, say, Southern Italy, but San Diego does have some wine experiences that'd be worth bragging about to a penpal.

One such experience is stomping on grapes. Owned and operated by Argentine ambassador Alejandro Orfila, [Orfila Vineyards & Winery](#) (13455 San Pasqual Road) in Escondido hosts its annual "Grape Stomp" party on Aug. 24. In addition to live jazz and all the requisite wine tastings, party-goers can hike up their dresses or pants, get calf-deep in a wood barrel and foot-smash some grapes while sipping on a white, apricot-infused Gewurztraminer. There is a catch, however, as Orfila's purple footed fandango only hosts 400 guests at \$80 each, so it's probably best to reserve tickets well in advance.

While [Rashelica Winery & Art Garden](#) (17948 Highway 67) in Ramona has food trucks, live music every weekend and free tours, it is the only place San Diegan's can have their wine with a side of live, Italian opera. Since most of us can't afford a flight to Italy, Rashelica's owners, Herman Salerno and his wife Rosa, have brought the Mediterranean experience to SoCal in the

form of giant, nude sculpture gardens and operatic concerts on summer weekends. In addition to his theatrical guest singers, Herman also stretches his own throat pipes for guests on the vineyard lawn. My personal favorite part of Rashelica is how laid-back wining and dining is here. Guests can hunker down with their glasses anywhere among the gardens, so many people bring their own picnic basket, purchase Rashelica's wine for \$35, and lounge among any of the dream-like sculptures or life-size chess sets.



Rashelica Winery & Art Garden

Photo courtesy of Hidden San Diego / Flickr

But being an oenophile is as much about being educated in wine as it is experiencing it. Luckily, San Diego offers some summer school wine classes for all levels of the vino obsessed. Better still, there are no “snobs” allowed at [Urban Kitchen Group's Master Class Wine Series](#) at CUCINA urbana and CUCINA enoteca. Beginning June 6, advanced sommeliers, wine importers and nationally-known winemakers will congregate first in at CUCINA enoteca Del Mar and later in Bankers Hill for a three-part wine education series. Highlighting “noble” grapes and “thought-provoking bottles” of the Italian and French variety, these classes, through dinner pairings and blind tastings, aim to introduce San Diegans to cool wines that are accessible to both experts and newbies. Tickets are \$60 per class.

San Diego's first-ever wine education company, [Wine Smarties](#), is also offering summer courses in wine. Their “Beyond the Fruit” class, taught by certified wine educator and award-

winning sommelier Lindsay Pomeroy, focuses on helping to improve palates of all levels by diving into how a fruit's growing climate can affect the way a certain wine is made. Taking place at WineSellar & Brasserie (9550 Waples St., Ste. 115) in Sorrento Valley, the class costs \$40. Wine Smarties also offers summer school certification, but those courses tend to be on the pricier side.

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