

maine Dominique Cotes de Nuit Cuvee, a robust Burgundy. All that came to \$150, before tip.

PROOF

Proof's 57-page wine list reminded me of a long-ago dinner at the famous Trois Gros restaurant in Roanne, France. As I gazed at that lengthy carte du vin, unfamiliar names danced before my eyes. Then I took a deep breath and selected a fine Pouilly-Fuisse to accompany our l'escalope de saumon and lotte aux cepes.

I felt equally overwhelmed by the wine list at Proof, the dressy wine bar which opened July 4, 2007 in Penn Quarter. Encompassing 1,000 selections from around the world, prices range from a \$10,500 Chateau Cheval Blanc to down-to-earth vintages from South America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa—tagged at \$50 and under.

Proof's luncheon list is a more manageable dozen wines grouped according to region and grape. Wines-by-the-glass come in 2, 6 and 8.5-ounce servings, allowing guests to sample several. Many bottles are stored sideways in a stunning wine rack in the front of the restaurant.

Designed by GrizForm (Connecticut Ave. NW, which also did Capitol Hill's Sonoma), Proof's decor is a vision of burnished copper-trimmed dining room dividers, polished walnut floors and a beautiful, zinc-covered bar imported from France. Sporting a marble counter, the charcuterie and fromagerie dispense umpteen kinds of sausage and 30 cheeses, divided by goat, cow, and sheep.

At lunch, husband Peter selected a Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc, dry and crisp, perfect for a light summer repast. I'm on a rosé kick. Fortunately, these lovely wines have overcome the stigma caused by those awful white Zinfandels of the 1980s. Proof's "rosé of the day" came from Provence, where they know how to make it. The delicate pink wine complemented my shrimp burger nicely. Snuggled inside toasted brioche, the patty was moist with a crisp crust. Shredded daikon radish and carrots, thinly shaved cucumber and jalapeno added zip. Peter's salad Nicoise was made with what tasted like high-quality canned tuna with properly cooked green beans, olives, hard boiled egg wedges, croutons and summer-ripe tomatoes.

I was pleased to spot wild mushroom quiche on Proof's menu. This once-scorned brunch dish ("Real Men Don't Eat Quiche") is staging a culinary comeback. On executive chef Haidar Karoum's imaginative dinner menu: grilled Spanish octopus with chick-pea-potato salad; veal sweetbreads with Roquefort and smoked bacon; honey-and-spice-glazed Peking duck breast.

Proof is pricey (lunch for two is \$51, with wine). It's not a place for a quick bite, but a destination for leisurely celebrating someone's birthday or promotion. ★

Proof

775 G St. NW
202-737-7663
www.proofdc.com
Open daily for lunch and dinner

Cork

1720 14th St. NW
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Open for dinner only;
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Vinoteca Wine Bar and Bistro

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