

Someone's In The Kitchen

Is This A Food Column Or A Wine Column Today?

By **RICHARD** and **AMANDA PAYATT**
Special to CASA

JESSICA PINTARD NEVER HAD ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS when she knew that she wanted to be in the restaurant business. It sort of crept up on her. She had been a wine representative for Southern Wine and Spirits for several years, when she noticed that Carpinteria, the delightful little town where she lived, didn't have any casual places to have a good glass of wine. There were no cozy meeting places to get together with a friend, or maybe a potential date. There had to be a way of fixing this hole in the little town where she lived. So, she did something about it: She opened Corktree Cellars.

Tucked away in an unassuming storefront on Linden Avenue, in Carpinteria, is a little jewel box of a place. It is exactly what Jessica wanted. It is open, cozy, and filled with an overall sense of comfort and ease; in short, it's just like going over to a friend's house. Open from 11:30 to 9-ish or 10-ish, pretty much any part of those hours one can grab just exactly what one wants to go along with a solid glass of wine. There are the regular entrees, like steak frittes with homemade dipping sauces, or a platter of sausages, or a miso-glazed salmon.

But, there are also panini and sandwiches for the luncheon crowd, small plates of crab cakes or lobster macaroni and cheese, or maybe even a cheese plate, or a charcuterie plate. A quick bite with a friend before going home or a leisurely evenings meal, Jessica will just be happy to have you come by.



Jessica Pintard and Co-Owner Kevin Clark

Blancs, or Que Syrah Syrah. She also makes it abundantly clear that her staff doesn't know everything about wine... so why should you? It is very liberating. The flights of wine are supposed to be experimenting with your own palate. So, live it up. You also get to rate the wines by pushing a penny onto a series of

You see, Corktree isn't really about the food. It is about the wine. For between ten and fifteen dollars, you can taste three, three ounce pours (which totals just under two standard glasses) of some very interestingly chosen wines. Jessica is quite knowledgeable about her wines, but doesn't expect her customers to be that way. As such, she offers eight varietal wine flights, which change every month, with whimsical names like Hailing a Cab for the Cabernet Sauvignons, Drawing a Blanc for the Sauvignon

responses that range from "Not for me," to "Put a bottle on my tab."

And, you can put a bottle of very reasonably priced wine on your tab, because they also have a very thorough wine rack running the length of one whole wall, thus serving as a wine shop as well. You can take it home, or, for a miniscule \$10 corkage fee, have it served to you right there. Jessica is very good about posting the menu and wine flight updates on her website corktreecellars.com. This makes it easy to mull over the wine for your mood on your way over. And the variety of wines is both local and international, so one really can get a feel for what a grape can be.

Corktree Cellars works well because Carpinteria is a little beach town, so Corktree can be a comfortable little beach town place. When it is time for a quick, quiet little bite, a full on dinner, or especially a taste test of a flight of wine with a friend, this is the place to go in Carpinteria.

Corktree Cellars is located at 910 Linden Avenue and is open Tu-Th 11:30am-9pm; Fr-Sa 11:30am-10pm; and Su 10am-9pm. Closed Mondays. Reach them at 684-1400.



Amanda and Richard Payatt combine their considerable writing skills with their incredible knowledge and experience of fine dining to bring you this column.