

# Cognoscenti

## magazine

Because life is short

### The girl and the fig Sonoma, California

Walk into **the girl and the fig** on any Friday night, as visiting **Cognoscenti Magazine** editors recently did, and you'll quickly be caught up in the animation of its sophisticated, wine-sipping clientele. With its wood plank floor, hanging lamps, and smoked glass windows, the décor is delightfully old fashioned. Quirker postmodern touches—like the “Ken” doll on the door to the Men's Room—somehow fit right into the pleasantly cluttered, art-filled space.

When Proprietor Sondra Bernstein first decided she'd sell *only* Rhone Ranger varietals at her restaurant, more than a few folks shook their heads. At the time public appreciation of these exotic wines wasn't particularly widespread—but all that's changing, thanks in part to Sondra's efforts.

With cheese as with wine, the restaurant's success has paralleled that of the local products that it showcases. (*Chèvre* pioneer Laura Chenel's pungent offerings are another case in point.) In the menu, country French cooking's innate heartiness is balanced by lighter culinary touches. Oh yes, you can order pork chops here—accompanied by tasty *and* virtuous apple cider sauce and cauliflower puree.

The house's signature fig salad dish presents a lovely contrast of flavor and texture. Present are both sweetness and pungency, with soft cheese textures nicely set off against chewy fig and crunchy pecan. The port

vinaigrette was just the right kind of dressing according to our palates.

Slightly gritty sea scallops (or was it the chanterelles that accompanied them?) were served with a very good Grenache reduction. Duck *confit* with French green lentils, mustard vinaigrette, and Savoy cabbage was excellent. Dessert came in the rather wholesome form of hazelnut brittle with homemade vanilla ice cream.



*Scallops with chanterelles*

From the slate of Rhone Rangers which we sampled during the meal, the *Frick* Cinsault was the standout. Dry Creek Valley is still better known for its Zinfandels, but Frick's Cinsault is spicy and bursting with rich red berry notes. (He grows Syrah, Viognier, and Merlot, too.)

Fans of this restaurant will be gratified to learn that Sondra's recently opened a brand new venue, **The Fig Café and Wine Bar**, in nearby Glen Ellen...

This article was written by contributing editors to *Cognoscenti Magazine*.

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#### the girl and the fig

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