

Crush Fine Wine: South Coast's center of the wine universe



Crush Fine Wine at 801 Purchase Street, New Bedford, MA. Phone: (508) 997-0600.

If you've drunk wine in the city of New Bedford, you are generally no more than a degree or two removed from Kristian Vasilev. While Kristian is the current proprietor at Crush Fine Wine on Purchase Street, his presence in the greater New Bedford area goes back a decade.

Kristian's path to the South Coast was a scenic one – from his home in Sophia Bulgaria, through Canada, then Boston – he arrived here in 2005 as Corporate Wine Director for the Cardoza's Wine & Spirits chain where he engineered the "...interior design as well as created the wine list at Cork Wine & Tapas."



While the interior is upscale, the prices of wine at Crush range from \$8-\$200.

After his time with Cardoza's and Cork, he helped the owners of the Airport Grille develop their wine list and management training before serving as the Wine Director for Chancellor's Wine & Spirits. He's been around. He is one of the most, if not the most, knowledgeable, accredited, sommeliers in the region. He would never blow his own trumpet. In fact, if you know Kristian, he is probably mortified at reading me saying such a thing.

Kristian is not one for displays of merit. You will have to pry to find out what accomplishments and titles Kristian has earned. Some of those honors include making Food & Wine Magazine's "Top 10 New Wine Lists," winning a champagne blind tasting in 2001 organized by Veuve Clicquot (perhaps the world's most prestigious French champagne house), being named "Best Wine Professional of Boston" in both Boston Magazine and the Improper Bostonian or selecting wine for Queen Elizabeth II.

He refuses to display these ribbons, awards, and certificates – when you enter Crush, it's about the wine. The glorious, glorious wine. Reds, whites, greens, sparkling, and champagne. One thing Kristian is not, is pompous, flamboyant or extravagant. You won't find him wearing a suit on most days. You know "that" sommelier or wine expert that tells you his life story, explains nuances of the soil of the grapes, and

convinces you why your choice in wine is wrong? Yeah, he's not that guy. He's not going to see a person walking into Crush as an opportunity to egoistically shine and display his wine snobbery. He wants you to understand, enjoy, and appreciate wine. In short, he wants you to fall in love with wine.



Crush carries not only red, white, green and sparkling wines, but a limited selection of beers.

Now, keep in mind that Kristian easily could boast. He can wax prosaically- his knowledge is as deep as anyone on earth. Yes, anyone on earth. He could talk for hours about vintages, history, cultures, or the role of soil and climate on flavor profiles. He is a pretty, darn interesting personality with a lot of stories to share. However, Kristian feels that the fluff is a barrier: connecting a human being with wine is his primary goal. Pairing a person's preferences with a variety of wines is paramount, not how many awards the sommelier won.

Wine has been rewarding for Kristian and created his passion for and about it. Wine is part and parcel of human history and been an integral aspect of civilization and culture for millenia. Personally, when I drink a deep, dark Cabernet or Merlot, I feel like I am partaking in ancient tradition. I am sipping something that people have sipped for thousands of years. Wine, if you so choose, can have a complexity in flavor that you simply can't find anywhere else.

But that's all fluff. At the end of the day, what you care about is "Can I get the wine that I want and appreciate? And can I get it at a proper price?" Whether for a social event, a meal, special occasion, sitting with friends at home, or even alone – there is a different wine for different occasions. If you are sitting alone watching the sunset, you likely won't want to spend \$50-\$80 for a bottle, but you will if you are celebrating a wedding anniversary and cooking a meal for your spouse.

Kristian brings his knowledge, experience, knack, and intuition to bear when it comes to not only matching your palate to a selection of wines, but matching it to your specific occasion. Backing Kristian up is Ann Schattle and Jessica Garity – two charming, jovial, and knowledgeable women whose passion for wine is immediately evident in conversation. In fact, if you converse with any two of them together at the same time, their love for wine is downright infectious. These two with their captain, Kristian are simply masters at their craft.



*Crush Fine Wine's
tasting bar in action
at a recent special
event.*

One thing that these three want to make abundantly clear, is that Crush is not a stuffy, expensive shop. I've talked with a number of people who seem to be intimidated by Crush's posh interior with its antique brick, elaborate stone, and gorgeous wood infrastructure. You do yourself a serious disservice:

Kristian just feels that if it's worth doing, it's worth doing right. His interior CAN reflect a price point: you will find high end wines with a high end price, but you will also find a delicious \$8 bottle of wine and everything in between. And if you have that friend that doesn't want to tag along on a visit, because he or she doesn't like wine, don't fret: Crush also has select beers. So bring your friend, and convert them!

I will admit, that I counted myself as one of these who were intimidated. I am one of those that is often drinking wine by myself – whether I am actually alone or at a social; my friends are particularly fond of beer and cocktails. I am also a frugal shopper and don't feel right drinking a bottle of wine that cost more than \$15 while sitting watching TV.

So, I avoided Crush for quite some time. My first visit showed me the error of my ways and was tinged with regret. Why was I going to the packy for wine? No one there knew anything about wine or could help me find the wine I was looking for. I've lost track of the number of times I've been duped. I have been quite specific about a wine with a server at a restaurant or a "wine expert" at a packy – I like reds, and ones heavy with tannins. Sadly, the vast majority of the time, what I get is "Oh, yes I know what you want. I'll get you an 'X'" and instead been sold nothing resembling what I requested. In fact, I've been served wines with imperceptible tannins – downright lied to.

About 4 years ago I randomly picked a wine that turned out to be the most delicious wine I had ever tasted. To me it was the quintessential red. It was so heavy on tannins, that it painted my tongue. Problem was that my roommate at the time brought out the recycling the next morning and I never got a chance to record the brand. I didn't even recall if it was a Merlot, Cabernet or Pinot Noir – my big "three." Since that day I have ordered wine at restaurants and bought from liquor stores and asked a dozen experts. Most weren't even in the ballpark, and a few came close.



*Proprietor
Kristian Vasilev
has brought his
passion for wine
from Bulgaria and
the Ukraine, to
Canada, Boston
and finally his
home here in New
Bedford.*

The first time I went to Crush and told Kristian my 3 year long pursuit in finding this bottle of wine, he immediately turned around, grabbed a bottle of the shelf and gave it to me. Guess what? This was the bottle I had been searching for. It may not have been the same label, but it was virtually identical. Nailed it. I will now go nowhere else to purchase wine.

While the tasting bar is the centerpiece, there are also posh lounge chairs, and a coffee table. Crush has an open, flexible floor plan and one that can be customized. Crush can be rented for a special occasion, tasting, or celebration and adapted to fit your needs. In addition, Kristian, Ann and Jessica will gladly help you pair food with wine or vice versa, over the phone. You don't even have to show up and buy. If you have a wine and want to know what to cook with it, or you want to cook something specific and want to know what wine to use,

give them a call.

So if you are a fellow oenophile, an expert, a “noob” or considering exploring wine, you won’t find a better place to go in greater New Bedford or South Coast. You can peruse the wines, discuss or not discuss wine with Kristian, Ann or Jessica, learn a few things or simply walk in or out. It’s also a great spot to stop on your way to those BYOB spots. It is the center of the wine universe in greater New Bedford and if you enjoy wine, you need it in your life!

Crush Fine Wine

801 Purchase Street, New Bedford, MA

Phone: (508) 997-0600

Mon: 12:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Tue-Fri: 10:00 am – 8:00 pm

Sat: 10:00 am – 7:00 pm

Facebook: facebook.com/pages/Crush-New-Bedford/173158442823953

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