

Fort Worth Business Press

Cef Zambrano, owner, Zambrano Wine Cellar

BY ELIZABETH BASSETT

November 26, 2007

Zambrano admits to being very particular. He had his hand in every element of his new downtown establishment, from choosing coffee cups and forks to more than 200 wines. Before opening his own place, he expanded Del Frisco's Fort Worth wine program, and his tastes are as varied as those of his customers.

How did you end up getting into this field?

When I got to college I had to work, and

I worked in restaurants – first as a dishwasher, then a busboy, then a waiter, and I always worked at nice restaurants. I was always selling nice wines, and one day somebody asked me, 'What do you know about this wine?' And I said, 'Nothing, absolutely nothing.' ... Me and my friends who were waiters started drinking wine, and we started getting interested in it.

Did you try to find employees who were knowledgeable about wine?

I always said I'd like people to work for me who are very service-oriented and friendly and people-oriented. I can teach you about wine, but I can't teach you about service and being friendly to people.

How much did you contribute to the design of your new place?

I didn't actually do it, do the construction, but I had a hand in selecting every single item. I remember looking for this table-top. They gave me a collection of 50 swatches, 50 colors. ... The wood on the amethyst bar top, I wanted mahogany, but it was too red. Oak was out of the question because it was too grainy and steak houses have that. We ended up with the walnut.

Did you decide on the menu?



The food was one of the toughest things for me. I had ideas of what I wanted, but our kitchen is very limited. ... I'm trying to develop a menu that works for wines. ... It's constant development, and I expect to see that going on for months, but I'm used to that. Wines and vintages constantly change and you're looking at new things.

How do you work with patrons who don't usually drink wine?

People are curious about wine, and they want to try it out, but they're a little embarrassed because it's intimidating. They don't want to sound stupid or foolish. ... I love that kind of challenge – choosing the wine for a new wine drinker or for anybody.

Contact Bassett at ebassett@bizpress.net

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