

Neapolitan

DINING OUT
& CLASSIFIED

SECTION D

DATE NIGHT DINING

A TOAST TO WINE DINNERS

If you go

Where: 8930 U.S. 41 N., North Naples

Reservations: (239) 594-8852

More info: seasons52.com

Next wine dinner: Aug. 30
featuring Paul Hobbs wine



PAMELA FISHER/NAPLES DAILY NEWS
Balsamic glazed filet and asparagus tips,
a course at the Hawk and Horse
winemaker dinner at Seasons 52 in July.

While the food at Season 52 underwhelmed, go for the wine dinner experience on Aug. 30

PAMELA FISHER

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About five years ago, we began popping in at wine tastings, bought a wine refrigerator, bought a case here and there of wines we really liked and drank a couple of times a month. My husband is more of a beer guy, Stella Artois in case you were wondering, but he humored me.

We had been to a couple of wine dinners and although both of our parents live in California's Santa Ynez Valley, where the movie "Sideways" was filmed, we've never really made wine dinners a part of our regular wine education. But the July dinner at Seasons 52 was unique: a "winemaker" dinner hosted by a boutique winemaker, Mitch Hawkins of Hawk and Horse Vineyards.

We geared up for tales of foggy mornings and sunny afternoons in Sonoma vineyards, the bucolic joy of life among the vines and yarns about microclimates — the many ingredients making for a magical wine. We were not disappointed.

A biodynamic family-run vineyard by Mitch and Tracey Hawkins, Hawk and Horse produces small lots (a couple of thousand cases usually) of high-quality cabernet sauvignon on a tiny 1,800-acre vineyard. He follows the practices of Rudolph Steiner, who preached and practiced organic farming three generations ago and incorporated the practice into his Waldorf education philosophies.

Biodynamic farming

He turned out to be a bit of a mystic in a Walt Whitman vein — a kindred spirit of Hawkins who talks reverently of the "Lake County diamonds," crystals that erupt mysteriously from the

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COCKTAIL CULTURE

Sam Snead's Tavern at Lely Resort welcomes all

KRISTINE GILL

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You don't have to be a member of Lely Resort or its golf courses to snag a seat and a drink at Sam Snead's Tavern, a bar overlooking one of the greens.

"That's one of our biggest struggles," General Manager Scott Casselberry said. Consider this your personal invite to the tavern.

You might not have to be a member, but you do have a better shot of grabbing a seat out of season than in. At the height of golf season, this place is packed. But on a slow summer afternoon, it was easy to sidle up to the bar and settle in for a refreshing summer cocktail.

Easily the most popular drink on the menu is the Sunset Martini, which Bar Manager Tom Burns describes as a simple yet crisp cocktail.

Sunset Martini

Smirnoff peach vodka Agave Nectar
St. Germain Lemon juice

If you go

Where: 8004 Lely Resort Blvd.

Cost: \$8.95 for the Sunset Martini

Happy hour: 2 to 7 p.m. daily

"It might be the simplest drink on the menu but it's also the best," Burns said. "A drink doesn't need a million ingredients to be good, it just has to be balanced."

It starts with Smirnoff's peach vodka and St. Germain, a liqueur flavored with elderflowers.

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ERICA BRECHTELSBAUER/NAPLES DAILY NEWS

Snead's Tavern Bar Manager Tom Burns shows off a Sunset Martini.



Snead's Tavern Bar Manager Tom Burns shows how to make one of Snead's signature drinks, the Sunset Martini. naplesnews.com