

## Food for thought

# Seattle, sangiovese and steamed dungeness crab



– Mandy Rowe



**I**T'S our fifth day in Seattle and we're still discovering new and exciting things.

We had our first foray into the world of Italian wines thanks to La Buona Tavola, a café and truffle store at Pike Place Market.

It was also the day I got to taste my first martini, America's iconic happy hour cocktail.

We had spent the morning traversing the length and breadth of Pike Place Market with Seattle Food Tours ([www.seattlefoodtours.com](http://www.seattlefoodtours.com)) and were now perched on bar stools at Seatown, a café specialising in snack seafood.

It was the tour's final tasting, and we now had a hiatus in our schedule, a little free time before dinner at BOKA Kitchen and Bar at Hotel 1000 ([www.hotel1000seattle.com](http://www.hotel1000seattle.com)).

A quick tête-à-tête with my spouse had us retracing our steps to La Buona Tavola ([www.TruffleCafe.com](http://www.TruffleCafe.com)), a small café specialising in truffles: "the diamond of the kitchen" according to 18th century gastronome Brillat-Savarin.

It had been one of our stops with Seattle Food Tours and was worthy of closer inspection.

Floor to ceiling shelves laden with home-made pastas, truffle infused honey, truffle oil, aged balsamic vinegar and truffle salt: these

made it a haven for all things fungi.

A mental audit of my suitcase had me wishing I'd been less zealous packing my high heels for our forthcoming Holland America cruise. Because of this, two tiny packets of truffle salt were the only souvenirs that made their way back to my kitchen cupboard in Australia.

The other thing I had noticed at La Buona Tavola was a tiny bar advertising Italian wine tastings. Considering we knew very little about Italian grape varieties, we thought it the perfect opportunity to rectify this.

We promptly ensconced ourselves at the bar and under the erudite guardianship of John — the cellar master — traversed many of Italy's wine regions.

From an orange scented Fior d' Arancio, to the unconventional full-bodied Tre Donne D'Arc, a blend of dolcetto, barbera and pinot noir, we were quietly allured into one of the oldest wine-producing countries of the world.

I sensed this was just the beginning of our foray into Italian wine.

We were nearing the end of our tasting when I remembered an article I had torn out of the *Seattle Times* the previous day. Emblazoned across its page were the words "Oliver's toasts 35th anniversary with free martinis". I had never tasted this iconic 'happy hour' beverage and suddenly felt compelled to join the celebration. Without further adieu we made our way to the Mayflower Park Hotel.

True to its word, Oliver's was dishing out half-size martinis and a cocktail called the Royale, designed especially for the anniversary. According to our very busy bartender it comprised vodka, Chambord — a black raspberry liqueur — and champagne.

Fortunately it didn't take long for a group of local ladies to offer us a stake in their table. Thanks to them I got the low-down on this happy hour icon. Firstly, martinis can be made with either gin or vodka: gin being the more traditional spirit. And secondly, a dirty martini includes a splash of brine from the olive jar.



Our week in Seattle was full of many delectable firsts. Our first sangiovese, our first steamed dungeness crab, our first piroshky and our first Copper River salmon. As for the martini, well? It shall be my last.

Photos by Mandy Rowe

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