

## Cave Bistro & Wine Bar uncorked in North Naples

Although it's labeled a wine bar, The Cave actually has a full bar with unique bourbons, scotches, vodkas and much more.

The Cave Bistro & Wine Bar, which launched Nov. 6, is an extension of the boutique retail store [Naples Wine Collection](#) in the Galleria Shoppes at Vanderbilt on the northwest corner of Airport-Pulling and Vanderbilt Beach roads in North Naples. That means even its spirits are crafty.

"There's a lot of synergy between one and the other, and it kind of carries over," said General Manager Lucas Hampton, who used to run Baleen at LaPlaya Beach & Golf Resort in Naples for years. "We try to educate people when it comes to wine, and moving into the restaurant it has the same concept."



**A broad door connects The Cave Bistro & Wine Bar with the Naples Wine Collection retail store in the Galleria Shoppes at Vanderbilt in North Naples. (Photo: Tim Aten/Naples Daily News)**

Of course, the combination of the restaurant and retail store — connected internally by a broad doorway — exposes guests to a larger selection of wines.

"They complement each other," Hampton said. "The concept is pretty cool because you're not going through a wine list and just reading. You come to the store, you grab the bottle. There's an emotional connection."

In newly developed spaces at the Shoppes at Vanderbilt, the Naples Wine Collection recently relocated from a smaller unit in the center and The Cave was built next door. The bistro, bar and specialty store are owned by Jim and Laura Dixon, who have been involved with the Naples Winter Wine Festival since its beginning and have been trustees for eight years of the [Naples Children & Education Foundation](#), founder of the wine festival.

The Dixons have been collecting wines for more than 40 years. Their cellar has 14,000 bottles of wine from all over the world.

“The whole concept is that you go into the wine store and pick out any bottle you want and it’s not going to be marked up,” said Dixon, adding that reduced corkage fees also are offered.

The Cave’s arched ceiling and lack of windows is designed to give the business a cavelike appearance, of course. The unique concept is especially attracting residents of nearby communities such as Pelican Marsh and Tiburon.

“It’s not stuffy. It’s super laid-back. It’s very casual and the service is friendly and efficient,” Hampton said.



**Scallops with bacon, a cauliflower puree and an orange reduction at The Cave Bistro & Wine Bar in the Galleria Shoppes at Vanderbilt in North Naples. (Photo: The Cave)**

The Cave features a menu of small plate appetizers to accompany a glass of wine or spirits.

Executive Chef Brandon DeMarco is a Johnson and Wales graduate who most recently was executive chef at Big Blue Brewing brewery and gastropub in Cape Coral. The Staten Island native helped launch

the former Teatro restaurant in Bonita Springs as sous chef and worked at The Grape Wine Bar and Bistro that formerly operated in Coconut Point.

Similar to The Grape, The Cave has a tiny kitchen which the chef has to work around.

“We don’t have a hood here. We don’t have grills. We don’t have fryers,” Hampton said. “So you have to be creative.”



**Fideos includes caramelized pasta, seafood, chorizo and saffron at The Cave Bistro & Wine Bar in the Galleria Shoppes at Vanderbilt in North Naples. (Photo: The Cave)**

The creativity in the kitchen is already apparent and being tested by full houses at The Cave.

“The reception so far has been terrific,” Hampton said. “Food flies out of the kitchen. Very casual. People enjoy it.”

The most popular menu items so far are flatbreads, chicken meatballs with Marsala and mushroom sauce topped off with Parmesan, and scallops with a cauliflower puree and an orange reduction, Hampton said.



**Flatbread selections at The Cave Bistro & Wine Bar include duck confit and goat cheese, left, and roasted heirloom tomato. (Photo: The Cave)**

“I don’t have one dish over \$20,” Hampton said. “I think I have a cheese and meat platter which is \$24. Everything else is under \$20. So, it’s reasonable.”

Flatbread selections are roasted heirloom tomato (\$14) and duck confit and goat cheese (\$17). Small plates feature coconut Thai mussels (\$8), mixed olives (\$8) and mojo edamame (\$6).

Hot dishes range from chicken meatballs (\$9) to Fideos (\$17), which is caramelized pasta, seafood, chorizo and saffron. Other hot items include a grilled cheese sandwich (\$15) with aged cheddar and tomato bacon jam; heritage-breed pork belly (\$14) with farro, charred corn and pickled shallot; and bulgogi Korean beef (\$15) with spiced carrots, kimchi, mushrooms and steamed buns.



**Harissa with salt cod, lemon, roe and toast at The Cave Bistro & Wine Bar in the Galleria Shoppes at Vanderbilt in North Naples. (Photo: The Cave)**

Cold plates range from harissa (\$8) with salt cod, lemon, roe and toast to a charcuterie (\$16). Choices also include mango radicchio salad (\$13) with prosciutto, toasted seeds, lemon and basil; and tuna crudo (\$14) with sesame sponge, coffee kabayaki, ginger and radish.

Sweet choices are Key lime pie (\$10) and turtle cheesecake (\$10). Hot beverages include French-pressed coffee (\$3), espresso (\$3.50) and cappuccino (\$4).

“The idea is that everything is easy to share,” Hampton said. “It’s about sharing wine, sharing food and being with friends.”

**Vanderbilt Beach roads. (Photo: Tim Aten/Naples Daily News)**

The Cave seats 60, which includes 12 at the bar, 20 outside and room for eight on sofas clustered on either side of the room. The patio will eventually be completed with an awning, fans and heaters.

A special wine club and wine locker program also will be introduced soon at The Cave and Naples Wine Collection, Dixon said.

“We will be working with Bob Bath, a master sommelier who has been with us for several years at our Naples Winter Wine Festival chef/vintner dinner held on Friday nights that Laura and I have hosted with other trustees in fabulous homes in Naples,” he said.

The Cave Bistro & Wine Bar, 2343 Vanderbilt Beach Road, suite 604, is open 4 to 10 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays. Although closed on Sundays now, the venue plans to start opening every day soon. For more information call 239-513-0095 or go to [napleswinecollection.com](http://napleswinecollection.com).