

# Drinking at Braeburn

*In a tight economy, beverage manager Katherine Beto offers a diverse, value-driven wine list*

By Alia Akkam

Last summer, before talk of the economy started dominating conversations, Katherine Beto was hard at work putting together the wine list for then soon-to-open restaurant, **Braeburn**, in New York's West Village. Coincidentally, the emphasis on wines she planned to serve at the seasonal-driven restaurant, would be affordable, highlighting global regions and small producers that aren't typically in the spotlight. Given consumers' desire to seek out value when drinking wine at restaurants these days, Beto's approach is all the more relevant.

"My goal, especially, was to create a wine list with lots of value, present a wide range of choices and keep it easy to navigate," Beto explains. "All of that became increasingly important when the economy took a dive. There are so many really delicious and high quality wines out there that can be sold on a wine list between \$30 and \$45. The entire wine program doesn't need to be based on these value wines, but our guests are really appreciating that our list is peppered with them."

Only one sheet long, front and back, Beto's well-edited list, 120 bottles strong, makes it easy for guests to whittle down their choices. These might include a \$40 bottle of 2007 Chardonnay from Greece's Domaine Skouras, a \$42 bottle of 2007 Anna Amie Pinot Gris from the Willamette Valley, a \$54 bottle of Movia 2006 Ribolla from Slovenia or a \$55 bottle of 2007 Tramin Pinot Nero from Alto Adige. In particular, Beto points out the 2006 Takler, a Kadarka from Hungary, as a wine gaining popularity at the restaurant. It is an affordable alternative to someone craving a Pinot Noir or a lighter style of red wine. "It's only \$40 on

our list so it's an amazing value—and a great wine," she says.

Working at several esteemed New York City restaurants in vastly different positions, coupled with her international upbringing, (her dad was in the military, so she grew up traveling all over the world) Beto's insights into the restaurant industry are quite sharp. After graduating from The Culinary Institute of America, she worked as a line cook, eventually becoming pastry chef Sam Mason's sous chef at Wd-50 for two years. She then indulged her developing interest in wine with a wine class, where she made contact with an employee at Thomas Keller's Per Se and was hired there as food runner before working her way up to assistant sommelier. Most recently she worked on the beverage program at The Harrison in Tribeca. "It wasn't until I really started getting into wine that I really learned about the different varietals," she says.

Getting customers turned on to these different varietals is instrumental to the success of Beto's beverage program, and she makes it rather accessible for them, offering options like a 6-ounce pour and a 9-ounce



Braeburn in NYC's West Village  
117 Perry St



Beverage manager  
Katherine Beto

carafe. A 2004 Castello di Magione from Umbria, for example, is just \$6 for the pour, \$9 for the carafe and \$24 for the bottle. Not only are the prices attractive, but Beto says it's a great way for her customers to experiment with more than just one type of wine during dinner. They are also more likely to try a wine they've never heard of before when the cost to try it is such a bargain.

For those who don't want to drink wine, there are some surprises on Beto's list. Instead of Champagne and Prosecco, guests may also order one of the food-friendly sparkling ciders Beto has assembled ("It's a fun way to make things a little more interesting without spending a lot of money") as well as signature cocktails like the one with Champagne and Calvados.

Perhaps most vital to the success of Beto's beverage program is the staff. "It was very important to taste with the staff and educate them. It's great because they now get really excited to sell the wines we talk about it in our meetings," Beto notes. I would love to think that our regular guests find our wine program attractive because it's interesting and affordable, and because the service is informed, friendly and not intimidating." ■