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## Chateau's wine list on magazine's A-list



David Joles, Star Tribune

Jessica Mulinix of Prior Lake said she likes the Chateau Lamothe so much that she picked it to host her wedding dinner in August.

Burnsville's Chateau Lamothe beat many of its urban counterparts in a magazine poll ranking the best wine lists in the Twin Cities area.

By **VADIM LAVRUSIK**, Star Tribune

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One of Burnsville's best-kept secrets is out.

The Family-owned Chateau Lamothe restaurant shocked many city dwellers and readers of

Minneapolis-St. Paul Magazine when it grabbed the No. 2 spot for best wine bar and No. 3 for best wine list in the magazine's 2009 Best Restaurants of the Twin Cities readers' poll. The awards have traditionally been dominated by city restaurants.

The Chateau, a triple threat with a restaurant, wine bar and event center, appeared on the list for the first time after only four years in business and beat out famous city restaurants like Manny's, which got No. 4 in the wine list category.

So how did a south-of-the-river restaurant make the list?

Dave Hoel, co-owner and wine guru, said it's all about the wine, naturally.

The restaurant, named after a French white wine (which, coincidentally, shares the chef's maiden name), offers patrons some 40 wines -- most of them available by the glass, Hoel said.

"We have wines that cover the whole globe, are affordable and go well with the food," Hoel said.

But there's more to the restaurant than its wine list, he said. From the beginning, the restaurant has been family operated, giving its diners a unique environment with homey decorations, including walls lined with pictures that trace some of the family history.

"We want it to feel like they're coming to my house

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for dinner," co-owner and chef Doris LaMott Hoel said. "That was the only way I wanted to do it if we were going to open a family restaurant."

It took a long time to get the restaurant started, and it took a lot of pushing and persistence from her husband to get LaMott Hoel on board, she said.

She spent years in catering and working as a corporate chef and enjoyed providing food for events.

"I never wanted a restaurant. I wanted to cater events," she said. But if a restaurant were to come to fruition, she wanted it to be a family project and get her "kids" on board.

So she did. Alyson Hoel, 24, her daughter, is the assistant manager and helps with advertising and promotions. Her son, Chris Hoel, 27, maintains the technology side of things and tends bar part time.

Chris said he was exposed to the business early on, helping his mom with an event when he was only 12 years old, and was excited to help start a family restaurant.

"I think having a family business gives you a sense of pride, especially when you see the results," he said.

## Already on community A-list

Being chosen by readers for the wine bar and wine lists means a lot not only to the family, but, they hope, to the community, said LaMott Hoel, who lives in Eagan. The kids attended high school in Burnsville.

"People don't have to go downtown and fight for parking to enjoy good food and atmosphere," she said. "It was a pleasant surprise to make the lists."

Customer Angela Koloski of Lakeville wasn't surprised. Koloski's husband proposed to her at the Chateau and they went on to have their wedding reception there.

"It's our little place," Koloski said, gazing at the table where her husband proposed to her.

Koloski, who grew up with a dad as a chef, said it's hard to find good food when she goes out. "I came here and said 'My dad's gotta try this food.'"

If the food wasn't enough to keep bringing her back, she said the owners' friendliness was, reminiscing about when "Chef Doris" came out snapping pictures at her husband's proposal.

Adam Platt, Minneapolis-St. Paul Magazine's restaurant editor, said the restaurant's suburban location limits its audience, making it all the more impressive that it made the list.

The ballots, he said, were sent to subscribers in the October issue; readers could also vote online.

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The magazine did not accept copies of the ballots and the website had controls to make sure people couldn't vote more than once.

Even some wine experts were surprised by the ranking. Bill Coy, who runs Vintage U, which organizes wine classes, tastings and events, had never heard of the restaurant until it made the list, and he keeps up on his wine.

"I am surprised because of the population density in comparison to the other places on the list," Coy said.

But what surprised him more was the restaurant's offer of so many wines by the glass. He said you typically don't see that at most places.

"I am gonna have to go check it out," Coy said.

For now, though, he still considers the wine list at Heartland Restaurant in St. Paul as the best in the cities.

Vadim Lavrusik is a University of Minnesota student on assignment for the Star Tribune.

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