

SeaLeg's backstage pass to Merkin's Vineyard

There are many different elements that attract a person to a restaurant, bar, or speak easy. What makes us call it our favorite place? A home, away from home? Is it the waiter who gives you undivided attention as he serves you another glass of the sweetest wine? And the funny joke he cracks, just to make you feel more at ease as you wait for your date that is already fifteen minutes late? Or is it the beautiful crystal chandeliers that glitter right above you and remind you of the days you used to visit your grandmother's house as a child? The love and care that goes into these places comes straight from the heart of the enthusiastic business owners who endlessly strives to make you happy. These little touches make a world of difference and keep you coming back time after time. SeaLegs is my new favorite home away from home, my new after-work stop, romantic date night, or girl's night out! And now, I love the place even more because it has introduced some edgy flair you won't find in many other places.

Last week, I made a spontaneous trip to SeaLegs Wine Bar in Huntington Beach after browsing facebook one evening. I saw a post about two things I love: wine and Heavy Metal music. Could it be true? Legendary Tool front man, Maynard James Keenan, is a winemaker? As a fan of his, I was excited to see what this rough and tough singer could bring to the table. As I did my research, I found out that Maynard's wine is very exclusive. Only a handful of wineries carry it, and SeaLegs is one of them. Located at 20122 Beach Blvd in downtown Huntington Beach, this rustic and classically cozy hideaway is a great setting for anything from a group outing to an intimate night. World renowned designer Kenneth Ussenko is the man behind the mystique of SeaLegs Winery, with its rich, dark cherry wood table tops and romantically lit dining rooms.

Created at Merkin's Vineyard, one of the wines I had the privilege of tasting is called Chupacabra Blanca. It combines the flavors of a CA Vermintino and NM Malvasia. For the lay person, that means bright and refreshing (Vermintino) combined with smooth and sweet (Malvasia). One sip and my senses immediately began to dance- It's no wonder Chupacabra Blanca is the brainchild of a rock star. Maynard can now add "winemaker" to his resume, right next to "lead singer of Tool and A Perfect Circle."

How ironic that the same man behind such moody and dark music can create a wine that really makes your taste buds sing!

"We are excited to carry his wine," Sea Legs owner Alicia Whitney says. "His passion for wine making speaks to our generation. Wine making is an art, and you can taste it in every glass."

Lisa, co-owner of SeaLegs had this to add,

"From the first taste of the Chupacabra Blanca I was sold! His wines are amazing! We absolutely love being one of the only places in Orange County that feature wines in his portfolio and we

look forward to him coming back to host a "Meet the Vinter" event!"

How did Alicia get a backstage pass to Merkin's Vineyard? I sat down with her to learn how SeaLegs and Maynard crossed paths.



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She told me that one of her servers is a rep for Maynard's Winery. It's no wonder Alicia would have something so exclusive in her establishment. Starting out at Hurricane's in Huntington Beach as a server, she worked her way up to throwing well known events like "Swank Wednesdays." If you were out on the town at the time, you know this was one of the hottest clubs to attend.

Her reputation in OC caught the attention of Red Rock Casino in Las Vegas. Here, she revolutionized the concept of a country western bar. Her venue, "Revolver," was named the Number One Country Bar by Las Vegas Times. She eventually returned to her loving family in OC, and opened SeaLegs with Lisa Nonemaker, a fellow Huntington Beach native. These two young entrepreneurs' feature many unique wines, creating a diverse repertoire of spirits. Maynard is excited to have his wine as one of the newest additions to the SeaLegs collection, and believes this quaint yet edgy spot will be his top selling account in Southern California.

It is exciting that a charming local place like SeaLegs has revolutionized the standard of a speak easy by trying something unconventional.

Manayrd's wine turned out to be a big hit at SeaLegs. As I was finishing my delicious plate of Pig & Fig Flat bread that Alicia ordered for me while she went to entertain clients, I noticed a mother and daughter sitting next to me, sipping on some white wine and sharing a gaudulous portion of carrot cake! I introduced myself and asked them what they liked about SeaLegs. The mother said "the carrot cake (giggles)!" And the daughter said, "The ambiance. You see more women visiting Sea legs. The ratio is always more women than men because the atmosphere has little feminine touches, yet still rustic and red like

a bar (for men)." Amid the beauty and elegance that draws the women to SeaLegs, men can feel just as comfortable, with a cold glass of their favorite beer to unwind after a long day. So ladies, bring your special man to SeaLegs! And men, take note of this heart-winning date destination.

When the night ended, I got to take home a bottle of Chupacabra Blanca. Not only can you drink your favorite wine at SeaLegs, but you can also take it home at a price that is just as delicious! It doesn't get any better than that. What's next for SeaLegs? Lisa told me the inside scoop, "Alicia and I have SO many upcoming events and collaborations up our sleeves! We are extremely passionate about tasting new wines and we love musicians/artists that have sort of made a shift in their lives and are now producing wine." It is an exciting timer indeed!



Come find out for yourself, and get bitten by the Chupacabra!

By Raquel Figlo