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*Your essential entertainment
& lifestyle guide*

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FRENCH CONNECTION

Kristin Scott Thomas: actress extraordinaire



In the Cellar



LOCAL WINE EXPERTS

If you have a passion for Italian wine, head for Negoziu Classica where you'll find an enthusiasm that mirrors yours. *Noah May*

Sitting discreetly on the corner where Portobello Road intersects Westbourne Grove, Negoziu Classica could be mistaken for yet another generic Italian café but, in reality, that couldn't be further from the truth. Opened in late 2004 by the Italian owners of Avignonesi wine estate in Tuscany, Negoziu Classica is a haven for those who live for the epicurean delights of Italy.

The idea is to wander in, sit down at one of the ten or so small tables that fill the stylish, cosy bar area and select from the impressive selection of top-quality, well-priced Italian wines that line the walls. You have two options – wines are offered at fair take-away retail prices, ranging from £6.99 to around £100, or, for a corkage charge of £6.50, you can sit back and lose yourself in hours of Bacchic delight by the glow of the open fire. In addition to the wines to buy

in bottle, there are 24 red and white wines by the glass, ranging in price from £3.75 and £17.95.

Although Negoziu Classica's first focus is on wine, the food it serves to complement its wines is also superb. This is simple yet delicious, rustic, seasonal food of the very finest quality, imported directly from Italy, served fresh. Highlights include Sicilian-cured tuna,

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beef carpaccio from Piedmont and deeply savoury, nutty, almost crunchy, aged Parmesan. Combining delectable food and wine with first-rate service, Negoziu Classica is an irresistible destination for any wine lover in west London.



From 11 to 15 November, Negoziu Classica is celebrating truffle-hunting season with special nightly tasting menus based around the white truffle of northern Italy. Each night, the menu will change, as a different wine maker brings a special vintage from their cellar to compliment each course. The cost is £120 per person, including wines. Call 020 7034 0005 or email classica@onetel.net. Negoziu Classica, 283 Westbourne Grove, W11 2QA (020 7034 0005; negozioclassica.co.uk)

Domaine Jean-Sipp, Gewurztraminer Vendange Tardive 2003: Very rich, opulent style. Expressive, floral and tropical fruit flavours dominate. This offering, from top producer Jean Sipp, is made in the late-harvest style and exhibits lovely aromatic characteristics and massive concentration.

You'll be surprised by its lengthy, complex finish. Will improve over the next five years.

£23.95, Jeroboams, 96 Holland Park Avenue, W11 3RB (020 7727 9359; jeroboams.co.uk)



Noah May works in the wine trade