



## Best wine bars & restaurants in Nice

The gateway to the French Riviera is much more than a stopover town, as wine-focused bars and bistros breathe new life into Old Nice. Long-time resident Lane Nieset pinpoints 10 destinations worth visiting, from classic neighbourhood institutions to buzzy new bars opening up in some of the city's prime real estate.

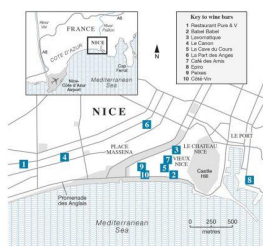


Nice, France Credit: Paul Rysz / Unsplash

In the South of France, things don't change often – or quickly. That's part of the Côte d'Azur's charm. And while you can take a seat at any terrace in Nice and find perfectly pleasant vin de table, the lists have historically been lacking in terms of diversity and bottles hailing outside of **Provence**.

Over the past few years however, the city has seen a shift as restaurateurs and sommeliers have returned, following stints in **Paris** and other serious wine cities, bringing with them fresh ideas that the Niçois have happily sipped up.

You don't have to stray too far from the centre of town to find a good bottle, either. Some of the city's best-kept secrets are hidden in plain sight. Use the sea as your guide and work your way from the water through the cobbled alleyways of Vieux-Nice and winding backstreets behind the port to discover the best wine caves in Nice at these 10 must-visit bars, restaurants and retail shops.



Credit: Decanter / Maggie Nelson

[See larger map here](#)

Restaurant Pure & V Michelin for natural wine enthusiasts



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Vanessa Massé, the first woman to be awarded sommelier of the year by the Guide Michelin, converted an old grocery store a few blocks back from the beach into a Scandinavian-inspired bistro that, since opening its six tables in 2018, has earned a star for its French twist on new Nordic cuisine (think beef tartare with pickled mustard seed and salted plums, and tomato with pickled elderflower and hay oil).

Head chef Christian Kanstrup Pedersen sources mostly organic ingredients from within a 100km radius, and Massé's entirely natural wine list features 70 different vigneron, 80% of which are from France—particularly Jura, Auvergne, Ardèche and the Loire.

If you're looking to try one of Massé's selections but can't splurge on Michelin this trip (or aren't in town for one of her masterclasses), go for something more low-key at the hip new **Hôtel Amour Nice** nearby, where Massé curated the short-but-sweet natural wine list served in the winter garden patio.



Babel Babel

### **Babel Babel** A Mediterranean moment

The team behind one of Nice's first true craft cocktail bars, **El Mercado**, took over a former fishing cabana near the end of the Promenade des Anglais and transformed it into a scene from the Greek islands. Sky-blue shutters open up to views of the water on one side, with a terrace spilling out into the bustling boardwalk, while a quieter patio space out back is an alternative for those looking to escape the often-crowded seafront.

While the cocktails were initially the main draw (think za'atar Negronis and Mediterranean Mai Tais), the mostly natural wine list has beautifully evolved to include producers from around the Mediterranean Sea, from the border of Spain in France up to Lyon; Italy, up to the alps; as well as Slovenia, Greece, and Lebanon.

Since the team is young, 'we're still building our cellar,' says co-founder Olivier Daniel. Ask for some of the harder-to-source bottles of Matassa or Alain Castex, and pair it with a smattering of shareable seasonal plates that also nod to the Mediterranean (aubergine confite, hummus and warm pita) and post up in a seat on the upstairs balcony for the best view in the house.

### **Lavomatique** Market-fresh fare, wallet-friendly wines

It would be easy to walk right past this spot in the Old Town and not even realise it's a restaurant. Tucked away on one of the labyrinth-like streets leading out from Place Rossetti, the former laundromat still has its same cerulean façade and namesake sign, but the interior is now dominated by a L-shape bar and open kitchen.

Working behind the counter are the Loubert brothers, Grégoire and Hugo, who helped propel nearby Le Bistro du Fromager into a local institution.



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Unlike their former spot, Lavomatique takes a cue from Paris' bustling neo-bistros, where the melody of conversation buzzes over the music, and where small plates of market-fresh fare are served tapas-style alongside a simple but well-curated list of affordable wines (which are mostly natural).



Le Canon

### **Le Canon** Reimagined take on regional favourites

Nice native Sébastien Perinetti's tiny bistro isn't trying too hard in terms of design—which can't be said for other establishments in the French Riviera. But the simple, dark banquettes and cherry-red, 1970s-inspired Formica tables add a warmth to the lauded eatery.

The emphasis here is truly on the seasonal, local ingredients and the carefully curated cellar of French and Italian natural wine (which includes bottles from [Château le Puy Marie-Cécile](#) in **Bordeaux** and Domaine Léon Barral in Faugères) that many say is the best in Nice—let alone the region.

There's nothing fancy or fussy about the plating, but the home-style fare serves up modern takes on Mediterranean and French cuisine, which is crafted from seafood sourced daily from one fisherman in particular; pork from the nearby town of Grasse; and produce from surrounding farmers. Even if you don't have time to stay and eat, it's worth stopping in and buying a few bottles to take home.

### **La Cave du Cours** Authentic Italian aperitivi, French by-the-glass wines

**Tel:** +33 04 92 14 56 03

It seems that anything restaurateur Armand Crespo creates is an instant hit in Vieux-Nice. Following long-standing favourites (that are continuously booked-out) Bistrot d'Antoine, Comptoir du Marché, Peixes and Le Bar des Oiseaux, Crespo's latest venture is a true bar à vin, housed inside an arched, cave-like space behind the Cours Saleya.

Open nightly from Thursday to Saturday, the tiny bar and cellar is lined with wine bottles that start around 16€ and go up to over 150€, but the majority are less than 30€ (and wines by the glass average 5€). There's no official menu—take your pick from what you see on the shelves—and each glass or bottle ordered comes alongside a selection of complimentary homemade pâté, goat cheese, and coppa—served in true *aperitivi* style.

The cellar has a strong focus on biodynamic wines (mostly from France), and the team sprinting through the small, mural-covered space will help guide you to the perfect Provençal rosé or Burgundy Aligoté. Go early; the communal table in the back fills up fast, and people tend to lean against any counter space or barrel they can find.



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## **La Part des Anges** Nice's natural wine institution

Olivier Labarde opened La Part des Anges over 20 years ago, and it was one of the first wine shops and caves à manger (a combination wine shop with bar snacks) of its kind in the city. Browse through the selection of more than 300 different bottles of natural wine from independent winemakers that line the shop's shelves and tables. Or, take a seat for lunch at one of the family-style tables in the back, where you can dine on the dish du jour and choose from a weekly rotating selection of 10 wines by the glass.

Later in the afternoon, La Part des Anges takes on more of a wine bar feel as the pre-dinner crowd spills in for apéro and charcuterie and cheese plates. While you're at the table, be sure to ask about some of the rarer bottles that may have recently arrived.

## **Café des Amis** Corsican spirit (and the wines to match)

The Cours Saleya isn't somewhere locals typically stop for a drink, but that recently changed with the opening of Café des Amis, from the same owner as Corsican restaurant le Maquis (also in the Old Town). Out is the typical tourist-centric Niçois fare served at the other eateries lining the city's main market. Instead, the *cave à vin* focuses on shareable plates like charcuterie, wood-fired pizzas, and homemade gnocchi.

There's a small selection of affordable wines by the glass, but this is the kind of place where you should order a bottle, and take your time choosing from one of the Italian, French, and Corsican wines inside—most of which are organic and family-owned—before taking a seat on the back terrace or playing a round of pétanque (boules) at the indoor court.



Epiro

## **Epiro** Modern spin on Italian staples

**Tel:** +33 04 83 39 51 89

Italian duo Alessandra Viscardi and Marco Mattana first opened their osteria in Rome in 2014 before bringing the concept to a quiet street near the port in Nice in 2019. One of the few—and perhaps only—eateries worth trekking to the opposite side of the harbour, away from the Old Town, Epiro feels like a modern neighbourhood bistro.

The teal-tiled bar overlooks the exposed kitchen and a handful of tables are placed on the sidewalk out front. The menu adds a slightly spruced-up spin to Italian classics (which includes plenty of fresh pasta), while the wine list—which averages about 100 different bottles at a time, and changes seasonally with the menu—centres around sustainable Italian producers.

'We truly believe that every wine we have on our list should have meaning and a reason for being there, just the way we pay attention to produce in the kitchen,' they say.



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## **Peixes** Classic Portuguese with French flair

Located on one of the busy side streets leading down into the Old Town, Peixes (Portuguese for 'fish') is another concept from local culinary kingpin Armand Crespo that nods to a different type of Mediterranean influence than other spots around town.

A string of tables line the white-tiled wall of the narrow space, but the best seats are up at the bar. Watch the cooks prep the seafood-heavy small plates of fresh ceviche and tartare in a scene that would feel right at home in Lisbon.

While the menu skews towards Mediterranean, the wine list is decidedly French, sprinkled with selections of 4€ and 5€ wines by the glass, and bottles of **Beaujolais**, **Burgundy**, Sancerre, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, and rosé from nearby Provence. But of course it wouldn't be Portuguese without vinho verde on the list, and you'll find one by biodynamic heavy hitter, Aphros.

## **Côté-Vin** A small cellar with a huge French wine selection

**Tel:** +33 04 93 84 63 60

On the edge of the Old Town, a block from the sea, this tiny wine cellar sits hidden amongst souvenir shops and stores selling Provençal staples like soap, lavender and olive oil. When you walk in, boxes will often be sitting haphazardly as the team unpacks the latest bottles of predominantly French wine.

Despite its shoebox size, the wine shop stocks upward of 850 different wines from lauded producers and sought-after vintages to lesser known labels. Since not all of the bottles are out on the shelves, caviste Jean Longeville will happily help find the one you're looking for.