

## A Midnight Rendezvous at the Vampire Lounge

The potent wine and other elixirs are attracting nocturnal creatures to the posh den in Beverly Hills.



Bartender Shannon Crook pours wine on a Friday evening at the Vampire Lounge and Vampire Winery in Beverly Hills. (Barbara Davidson / Los Angeles Times / November 12, 2011)

By Margaret Wappler, Los Angeles Times  
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There are many types of vampires out there, and not all of them writhe to Peter Murphy in barely lighted clubs or serve as crushes for tween girls. Some are posh and well-heeled and carry black American Express cards.

"If you're a 500-year-old vampire, this is where you'd hang out, not the dive bars with the goth kids," says sommelier and manager Igor Fedenkov, referring to the Vampire Lounge, a cozy Beverly Hills wine-tasting room with décor that's more sunshine than "Twilight." The walls inside are painted buttery gold; the upstairs lounge has cutesy throw pillows on the couches. And mirrors are everywhere. It's almost as if the happiest lair on Earth had been designed to taunt your average reflection-dodging, light-avoiding Nosferatu.

Still, evil lurks in bottles of potent wines, ready to bleed out all your best intentions for tomorrow, if you let it. The Chateau du Vampire Midnight Rendezvous, in particular, is a stealthy blend of Syrah, Grenache and the more obscure Cournoise and Mourvèdre grapes.

The lounge, which opened in April, is the long-gestating project of Michael Machat, a trademark and copyright lawyer by day, and his wife, Lisa Dominique, a musician and writer. Meeting in Dominique's native England, the two stoked their courtship with pilgrimages to Transylvania starting in the early '90s. The Romanian birthplace of Vlad the Impaler and other storied vamps provided the stamping grounds for the early incarnation of Machat's Vampire Vineyards, now produced in Southern and Northern California wine country.

Machat long ago snatched up the vampire.com URL, but it took him a while to open a real-life showroom for his elixirs, which include wine and a blond ale called Witches Brew, plus coffee, chocolate and an energy shot for the sluggish mortal and vampire alike.

"Beverly Hills isn't really known for its nightlife," admits Machat, a longtime resident. "But that's what we liked about starting something here. We get a lot of locals grateful for somewhere else to drink besides the hotel lounges."

In the last eight months, Machat's den has become a neighborhood fixture for nearby businesses such as Sony Music. The club is also involved in philanthropic work with clean water and dropout prevention initiatives.

But for all the local inroads the lounge has made, it's also a destination, a focal point for all nocturnal creatures from near or far, like the British couple that got married there on Halloween. "Most people just find us somehow, somehow," Machat said. "Everybody's got a little bit of vampire in them."

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#### Vampire Lounge

Where: 9856 Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills

When: Noon-10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, noon-12:30 a.m. Friday and Saturday and 4-10 p.m. Sunday

Price: No cover

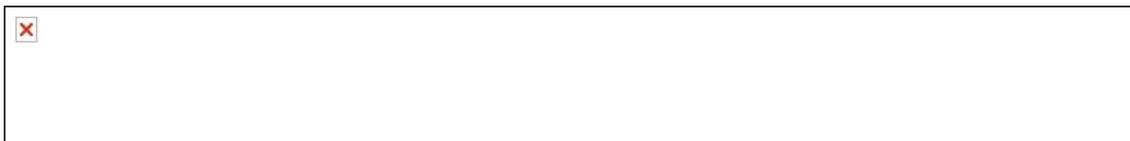
Info: <http://www.vampire.com>

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