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Over 10,000 copies of *VilniusNOW!* are distributed per issue.



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Reg. Nr. 300074861

SK Vilnius is a part of the International Publishing House
SK Group Inc.



From your editor:

Wine culture in Vilnius and the 5 Litvak drinking rules

When I first started coming to Lithuania about a decade ago, wine was sometimes known as *rašalas* (ink) because it was really just an unctuous alcoholised grape juice extract. Better wines came from places like Georgia and Moldova and once in a blue moon you'd run across an overpriced bottle from France or Italy. Specialty wine shops were unheard of.

Today I look around and see good vintners all around town. And we've even begun to see the emergence of wine bars. Bravo!

My personal thanks to Julija Bonaventura for grinding down her heels while preparing a short guide to Vilnius's better wine bars and bistros (see page 22).

Vilnius's native Jewish population was, for the most part, wiped out during WW2. However, there is a very important institution, the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, working to preserve and promote the city's Litvak (Lithuanian-Jewish) heritage.

While you enjoy an evening out on the town, apply the following 5 drinking rules which have come down to us from Litvak folklore. If you do, you will only be happy with your friends, you will never get drunk, ill, have a hangover, or suffer any other ill effect.

1. Never touch alcohol in daylight – only at night (defined in the traditional Jewish way of three stars being visible, or equivalent darkness on a starless night).
2. Never mix drinks. No whiskey before dinner followed by wine at dinner and then some sweet digestif afterward. Stick to whatever it is you started with that night.
3. Never drink on an empty stomach; always drink while nibbling snacks, even after a meal.
4. Never drink alone, and never drink with someone you don't feel good being around (even if it's a spouse or close family member). If you are in a bar and meet a perfect stranger you feel good with – by all means, have a drink.
5. Each time you refill your glasses, always knock glasses with your mates and say "L'chaim!" in whatever language!

(With thanks to Dovid Katz of the VYL.)

[sveikata! L'chaim! To your health!

Darius J Ross