

WHO'S NEXT

in Wine



First Glass Service

RAVENSCROFT STEMWARE

By Chris Rubin

Used to be you only had a couple of choices if you wanted top-notch stemware: Riedel for the best, Spiegelau for a close runner up. But now another European company has come on the scene, offering a third choice- Ravenscroft Crystal.

Ravenscroft, which manufactures both stemware and decanters at its facility in Poland, first arrived on the US market in February, 2002, beginning with the decanters; the line of stemware was introduced in April, 2003. One of the key differences between Ravenscroft and its competitors is that all Ravenscroft products are hand made.

Additionally, they are lead-free. And best of all, they are priced very reasonably. Their hand-made products cost roughly the same as the machine-made lines produced by their competitors.

For Ravenscroft, the lead free issue is an important one. "It was recently discovered," says Robyn Silvestri, Vice-President of Ravenscroft Crystal, "that lead in glasses and decanters presents an unacceptable exposure to hazardous toxins. Long-term storage in leaded decanters can result in lead leaching into the contents." While lead was long an essential part of any glass labeled "crystal," Silvestri says that's no longer the case. "Crystal is a term used in the trade to denote highly refractive glass. Thanks to advanced production technologies," she explains, "lead is no longer needed in order to make glassware brilliant."

"The first purpose of a wine glass is to be invisible."

Emile Peynaud

Distiller decanters are meant to be used with spirits, and they come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Lead-free, they are safe to use for the long term, with no danger of leaching. Likewise, the line of distiller glasses has been designed for spirits, with specific glasses for grappa, cognac, single malts and martinis.

Sommelier decanters, intended for fine wines both young and old, are also offered in an eclectic array of shapes, from familiar to novel. The half dozen designs of the Amplifier line of stemware and the two dozen or so of the Sommelier line were created for specific varietals and types of wine, meant to enhance the enjoyment by, well, amplifying certain qualities. Silvestri strongly recommends her stemware and decanters for restaurants.

Establishments using her products offer wines "elegantly presented, raising the perceived value of the whole dining experience." No doubt, the same logic applies at home.

Commercial accounts can order directly from the company (212-463-9834, fax 212-463-7589 or via www.RavenscroftCrystal.com), while consumers will find the products through cellar Masters (800/300-9463), which carries the full line, or retailers including Morry's Wine Shop (562/433-0405), which stocks a good selection.

Our wide range of decanters is perfect for a restaurant with a wine by the carafe program (increasingly popular). The Tear Drop Wine Saver for example allows restaurants to offer customers 1/2 bottles of higher priced wines that they may not ordinarily order due to price. Served in a Cristoff Single or the Sommelier Service, wines are elegantly presented raising the perceived value of the whole dining experience.