

## Another Day Without Wine: C'est café !

- CAFFÈ MACCHIATO



I found out today that [my favourite café](#) doesn't have a liquor license -- doesn't even plan on getting one for a while. Although I'm obviously a wine blogger, I don't mean for this to sound dramatic. I didn't even bat an eye when I heard the news. This blog and its readers may temporarily disown me but I don't care. I'm drinking coffee that has no qualifier.

The espresso is so good at Caffè ArtJava that my mind doesn't much wander to red wine these days. If you have gone to [ArtJava](#) for a macchiato you might think the same thing.

While I admire their latte art and I enjoy a real fine brew, I can't claim to be a real connoisseur of coffee. For instance, I am only beginning to realize the depth of coffee science and the heights of barista expertise. We're talking [World Barista Championships](#).



To me, what's so alluring about a gourmet coffeeshop like ArtJava is a culture and an attitude that is, well I don't know, fun, for lack of a better word (I did say that this was coffee with no qualifier, right?). Sure it helps that you enjoy coffee but there's just a real great atmosphere inside, largely because the friendly baristas clearly love their job, which is an intriguing blend of craft and art (the entire staff shares this attitude and the lunch plates are very good too I might add). But craft and art -- that brings me back to the wine angle again...

Some people say there's art in making wine, but it's nothing like the art of presentation that baristas put into their coffees. "You drink it in with your eyes" I once heard someone say. That's a memorable way of putting it. And it's something the world of wine appreciation does not openly embrace, though there may be times when assessing the colour of wine, decanting a bottle, or admiring a wine label can be its own reward.

I guess the point that I'm trying to make is that ArtJava's customers are rewarded in returning. And so I do.

And when my favourite café finally gets licensed to serve wine, so much the better. Last summer, when I ordered a glass of Chianti at the original ArtJava location, I requested that they chill it in their fridge for ten minutes. They could've told me no, or to try it first as it is, or that their customers seem like to like it at the temperature it's already at. Instead, they happily obliged. Craft and art and great service.

### TASTY MORSELS

At the end of last week's gushing [restaurant appreciation of ArtJava](#) -- gushing especially because the post gushed out of me without actually taking the time to review the elements unique to the new location -- I made a promise. I did at least take the time to say that I would delve deeper into the unique "surround-sound chill-out room" tucked away in the back of the downtown café. Well, the story behind it is better than I could've guessed.

The room is bank vault. The ambient little setting you sip your lattes in today is a result of necessity more than design. Because the bank vault was built with massively thick walls, it is a structural element of the building. The mezzanine above it which houses offices would basically collapse if the vault was torn out. Talk about a unique element.

The bank that installed it, the National Bank, or la Banque Nationale du Canada, is now directly across the street. In a weird twist, National Bank employees have been said to store the coffee supplies for their office kitchen in their new vault, which is space reclaimed from a long-defunct A. L. Van Houtte.