

# Restaurants Take To Tablet Wine Lists

SmartCellar technology advances the restaurant industry one iPad at a time

The printed wine menu, which has long been a key element in the fine dining experience, has gone online. The Plainview, New York-based technology company Incentient has developed SmartCellar—a software system that allows restaurant patrons to view wines on iPad tablets instead of traditional paper lists, searching by name, region, varietal and price.

Incentient debuted SmartCellar technology in May 2010 at Tony May's New York City restaurant SD26. "We decided to use SmartCellar at SD26 because it's an environmentally correct and practical thing for our restaurant and for the industry," May says. SmartCellar is now up and running in restaurants in dozens of cities worldwide, including New York, San Francisco, London and Toronto. As for the company's total number of current clients, Incentient's chairman and CEO Pat Martucci explains, "It's difficult to give an exact figure because we're tripling each quarter. As of this month, we're in 11 countries." And it's not only Incentient that has experienced business growth: Restaurants that use the technology are also benefiting. "Our clients have reported an average increase in wine sales of around 19 percent," Martucci says.

SmartCellar operates wirelessly on a secure intranet installed on a server that's located inside the restaurant, and the venue's administrators set up password-protected accounts. Incentient owns, installs and warrants all equipment and leases iPads

to individual restaurants. "We charge a monthly software user fee, which varies depending on how many iPads the restaurant requires. The average restaurant needs 15 iPads, with a monthly cost of between \$750 and \$1,200," Martucci explains.

Shortly after SmartCellar made its debut in New York City, San Francisco's Barbacco became the first West Coast restaurant to use the iPad menus in June 2010. Barbacco co-owner Umberto Gibin recalls that he wasn't immediately convinced. "From a business standpoint, I wondered how this would increase sales or speed up service," he says. But when Gibin realized how much information the iPads offered about the wines, he became a believer. "It's been very good for us," he says. "Customers can have a lot of fun with it and learn a lot about our wines in the process."

Tim Wilson, director of beverage at Wolfgang Puck's Las Vegas steak house Cut, where the iPad menus debuted in January 2011, was attracted to how easy it is to make menu updates with SmartCellar. "It takes a lot of time and work to revise menus on a computer, print them out, make the necessary price changes in your inventory and so on. But with this system, you just type in the change, and it's up," Wilson says.

SmartCellar menus can also include beers, spirits, specialty cocktails and food items. "Although we still use paper menus for our food list, we put food items that change daily or weekly, like our soup of the day, on the iPads so that we don't have to constantly print new menus and waste all that paper," Gibin says. The SmartCellar iPads are customized to each individual establishment and include specific logos, color schemes and styles. Restaurateurs can also customize the amount of information provided on the device—in essence deciding how much they want their staff to inform customers and how much they want the iPad to perform that task. "I still expect my staff to know our menu well, but it would take forever for our waiters to describe each wine to our customers," Gibin says. "With the iPads doing part of the work, service can run more efficiently."

Other companies like Minnesota-based VinoTech Solutions, which launched its vinopad software in November 2010, are offering electronic menu options for restaurants across the country as well. "I truly think that the entire industry will eventually be using the iPad menus," SD26's May says. "I predict that the large printed menu books will become relics of the past."

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SmartCellar's iPad menus are customized to each restaurant, allowing the on-premise operator to decide how much information to upload onto the tablets.