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Guests have a grape time on wine bar's anniversary

BY STEVE KOWALSKI • ECCENTRIC STAFF WRITER • JULY 5, 2009

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ROYAL OAK — A foot-stomping good time is nothing unusual for a bar.

But it is when the participants' feet are uncovered, and the confined area on which they're jumping is covered — with grapes.

Vinoteca, a [wine bar](#) in downtown Royal Oak, celebrated its fourth anniversary June 25 by remembering the origins of wine making.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of refrigerated grapes covered the bottom of a barrel. Ten volunteers took turns crushing them with their feet for 10 seconds at a time, cheered on enthusiastically by the crowd.

"It was a lot of fun, very cold at first, like a bucket of ice," said Pleasant Ridge resident Sarah Beste, 30, one of the grape stompers.

All of the participants happened to be women, which was probably not a coincidence, according to owner Kristin Jonna.

"The men like to watch the women," she said.

Beste's boyfriend, Eric Litwin, 38 and also of Pleasant Ridge, was among the impressed onlookers.

"When I saw all the ladies do it, I thought, 'I can't offer any competition to that,'" he said.

Jonna said she thought the grape crushing activity would be an interesting twist to an event that included wine and beer tastings, cooking demonstrations and prizes. Party goers also nibbled on cold cuts and condiments, including grapes — the ones spared from stomping.

Jonna said the experience reminded her of when she worked for a winery in [Napa Valley](#), testing barrels and sorting grapes on tables during the wine making process.

"We try to make wine more approachable, not snobby, have fun with it," Jonna said. "Being silly, stomping grapes, seemed like the right thing to do."

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