

THE WASHINGTON PANEL

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Role Model

*A Vintner of Many Talents,
Carolyn Wentz Is Second to None
When It Comes to Running
a Family Wine Empire*

PHOTO: MAREY WILSON

COOL CONCEPTS

Doug Tomlinson, founder and CEO of Vino Volo, the airport wine bar whose name is derived from the Italian for "wine flight."



The Traveler's Wine Bar

AT PARTICIPATING AIRPORTS, ALL OF VINO VOLO'S FLIGHTS ARRIVE . . . ON TIME

story and photo by John Curley

If you're of a certain age, you remember when flying was a graceful thing. It had the feel of occasion to it; it was something special. You dressed the part, and going through the airport was a glorious, soaring experience. Friends and family waved longingly at the gate as you embarked on your fabulous adventure.

Now? Not so much. Once you've trudged through security and reassembled yourself, you hunch up to the gate to discover your flight's been delayed. What to do?

Airlines have realized that if there are more comforts available to you *before* the flight, you'll be happier *on* the flight. So there are good restaurants doing great numbers at the airport: Ivar's in Sea-Tac, Gallagher's in Newark, Perry's at SFO—you could do worse.

Now there's another player popping up in more and more airport locations around the country, one that offers a wine experience that's educational and diverse. Vino Volo, derived from the Italian for "wine flight," is giving harried travelers a comfortable place to sample intriguing wines and light fare, delivered by knowledgeable, passionate associates.

"We are serving an unmet need," says Doug Tomlinson, founder and CEO of Vino Volo, in his San Francisco offices. "The American consumer has been wanting to learn more about wine in a fun setting, a setting they can trust . . . and that's what we provide."

Visitors to Vino Volo can sample well-curated selections from the local region or from across the globe. At SFO, for example, the California Kings flight offers a Merlot, a Cabernet Sauvignon and a Zinfandel. The Italian Stallion flight is adventuresome: a Nebbiolo, a Sangiovese and a Corvina blend. Pair these with, say, some smoked salmon rolls or a chickpea and chorizo chili, and you've got a flight delay you can learn to love. All the wines are available in flights, by the glass or by the bottle.

The formula is working. Vino Volo has 18 stores and will open ten more in the next year, including its first non-airport location, in Bethesda, MD. Investors are pleased, as well, as Mistral Equity Partners recently decided to back Vino Volo with \$10 million in growth funding. Still, Tomlinson says "we grow the business one drink at a time, and one loyal customer at a time." ■