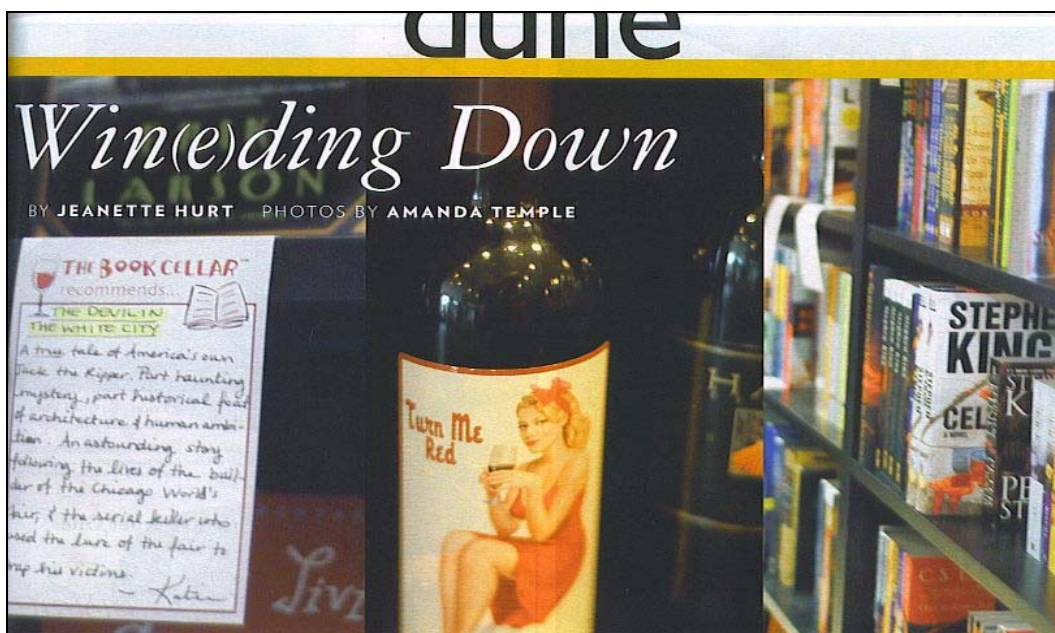


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Suzi Takacs of Chicago knew that if she opened an independent bookstore, it would have to stand out against the mighty Borders and Barnes & Nobles of the world. So she melded her passion for books with her other great love, wine. The result: the cozy Book Cellar, located in Chicago's hip Lincoln Square neighborhood.

"Lots of people had done books and coffee, but no one had done books and wine, and there seemed to be a natural union between the two," says Takacs, relaxing after one of her big events. "It combines my two favorite things."

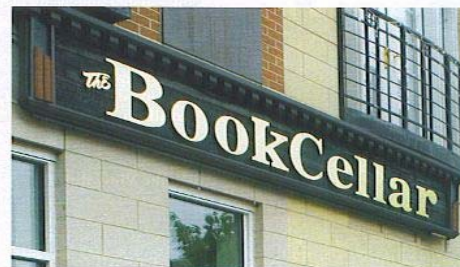
Like many bookstores, the Book Cellar boasts nooks and crannies with chairs and tables, where people can crack open the latest Michael Connelly thriller or page through a magazine. But instead of sitting down with a cappuccino, visitors can sip a glass of the unusual Turn Me Red – an Austrian wine made with zweigelt grapes – or a chilled Vina Marian, a crisp Spanish blend. Across from the metallic tables and the plush seating arrangements, Takacs and her bartistas pour about 20 varieties of wine. By the glass, they cost from \$6 to \$8.50, by the bottle, from \$24 to \$36. On Fridays, \$20 gets patrons two glasses plus a cheese plate.

Nearby, the shelves are made for browsing if you like literary fiction, children's books or non-fiction – the store's specialties. There's also a large collection of books by Chicago-area writers, many of whom take part in the authors' night every third Wednesday of the month. "They read from a published work or a work in progress, or they just tell a story," she says.

The store also has a book group, which discusses their literary finds over a shared bottle of wine – something they wouldn't be able to do at a chain or any of the other book stores in the area.

Besides serving up a glass for regulars, occasionally Takacs hosts larger vino-based book events. For the summer book signing of Jim Lynch's coming-of-age novel, *The Highest Tide*, which is set in the Puget Sound region, there was a tasting of wines from the Pacific Northwest, sponsored by Binny's Wine Store. "It's very cool when we can tie a book in with wine," Takacs says. She's also going to be involved in a neighborhood wine stroll (like a pub crawl, but with wine instead) planned for later this fall.

**Chicago**  
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Who needs coffee? A glass of red and a good book are the preferred combination at this Lincoln Square business.