

WSJ TEST KITCHEN: JUICERS

Just in time for detox season, we put several juicers to the test with apples, carrots, watermelons and even sweet potatoes. In addition to style and durability, we gave points to machines with mouths large enough to fit whole apples and that produced dry pulp (a sign of juicing efficiency).

BEST IN SHOW

Breville Juice Fountain Plus
\$150 // breville.com



PLUS: Cleanup in general was easy-peasy. We had no trouble lifting out the blade, which stuck on some of the other winners. This juicer was also among the

quieter machines we tested.
MINUS: While it was faultless when it came to harder fruits and veggies, we sometimes had to run the watermelon pulp through twice to maximize the juice output.

THE SMOOTH OPERATOR

Oklife Juice Extractor
\$170 // oklifefstore.com



PLUS: Refuse just slides off the mesh filter, which often allowed us to skip the pesky scrubbing step.

MINUS: While we liked the speed-controlling knob, which can be jacked up to tackle more stubborn substances, we didn't entirely see the point of the LCD screen.

THE LOOKER

De Longhi Juice Extractor
\$200 // shopdelonghi.com



PLUS: This innovative, and extremely attractive, juicer collects pulp within the base of the machine, rather than in an attached receptacle—a vertical arrangement

that not only looks nice, but also saves precious counter space.
MINUS: Despite the suction on its bottom, it occasionally crept a few inches across the counter and required a steady hand to keep it in place.

THE SWEET DEAL

Hamilton Beach Big Mouth Juice Extractor
\$70 // hamiltonbeach.com



PLUS: The Big Mouth is deceptively powerful for its size and weight: It can gobble up whole apples while still squeezing onto the most crowded of

countertops. Assembling and disassembling this little machine is a cinch, too.
MINUS: The Big Mouth was the only winning juicer made of plastic and not containing at least some stainless steel—but a little sturdiness was all we sacrificed for the price.

ON WINE: LETTIE TEAGUE



The Outrage of the Upsell

A FRIEND OF MINE just bought a new car (teak-brown metallic Audi A4). And instead of trying to jack up the price with additions like auto-dimming mirrors and low-gravity tires, the dealer—contrary to all car-salesmen clichés—made no attempt at an “upsell.” My friend simply paid the agreed-upon amount and drove his car off the lot. I only wish that a sommelier I met recently at a high-profile restaurant in San Francisco had proved as principled as that New Jersey car dealer.

The restaurant, considered one of the best in the city, has a first-rate reputation for its wine and food. After browsing through the rather sizeable wine list, I found what I thought would be a good match for our food (roasted bass for the friend I was dining with, pork for me). I chose the 2008 Foillard Côte du Py Morgon, a cru Beaujolais from a good producer, and a fairly good buy at \$68.

The sommelier approached our table and I told her the wine that I was considering. The sommelier—who knew I was a wine writer—asked if I was fixed on that particular bottle. I told her that I was open to hearing her thoughts. I like to hear a sommelier's suggestions; he or she knows the wine list best, after all. Had I had overlooked a hidden prize or perhaps a really great deal?

The sommelier thumbed back a few pages. There were a few wines that she liked to offer “special” people, she said and pointed to one—the 1995 Domaine Jean-Jacques Confuron, Les Vignottes, for \$160. It was a Burgundy from a very good producer, from a successful year—but it was also \$100 more than my original selection. I sputtered a bit, muttering something to the effect that I “wasn't really that special,” but I was taken aback. I'd chosen a very nice wine and yet had been made to look like a tightwad in front of my friend. I held my position and the sommelier left with an order for Beaujolais and me with the realization that I'd been the almost-victim of a \$100 upsell.

When I recounted the story to friends and a few wine professionals, many reported they'd had similar experiences at equally good restaurants. My friend Suzann was successfully upsold at another fashionable San Francisco spot. After she and her husband had each had a glass of wine, the waiter suggested that they try “something really special” (there's that word again). The waiter didn't offer further details, but the special wine turned out to be \$25 a glass—twice as much as their two previous glasses. “And it wasn't even that good,” Suzann said.

My ex-husband, Alan, was almost upsold by a sommelier at a high-profile Italian restaurant in New York while dining with friends. When he indicated that he was deciding between two \$40 bottles, a Vermentino and a Müller-Thurgau, the sommelier countered with an \$80 wine. Alan's response was direct if somewhat inelegant: “My friends aren't worth that much.”



I was particularly surprised when some sommeliers I know said that they, too, had been on the receiving end of an aggressive upsell—I figured they were granted some sort of professional immunity. But Bobby Stuckey, the owner and wine director of Frasca in Boulder, Colo., said the sommelier of “a very nice” New York restaurant had subjected him and his wife, Danette, to a similar sales squeeze.

“We told the sommelier that we were looking at some wines in the \$80-to-\$100 range, and he kept pushing \$180-to-\$200 wines,” Mr. Stuckey

said. Mr. Stuckey said this sort of experience is often the result of a restaurant not focusing enough on the “craft” of tending to the front of the house. “We spend so much time focusing on celebrity chefs and not enough on service,” he said. It can also happen when a manager isn't on the floor with his staff. “If the manager was around they could stop that sort of behavior,” Mr. Stuckey said (assuming the management isn't engineering the upsell).

Aldo Sohm, wine director of Le Bernardin in New York, is on the floor a great deal of the time, yet he re-

frinds, the more anachronistic such tactics seemed—a throwback to the bad old days when sommeliers regularly terrified obsequious diners, taking advantage of their ignorance and fear. How was it that today's wine drinkers, more knowledgeable and confident than ever before, are still somehow forced to play along with an aggressive sommelier? And even more importantly, is there a way to outwit such professionals, short of announcing one's monetary limit outright? After all, no one has to say to a waiter “I'm not spending more than \$25 on a main course” to keep from being upsold from chicken to steak.

Mr. Stuckey advises pointing out some wines in your preferred price range (perhaps out of sight of your guests) to let the sommelier know “where you want to be on the wine list.” If that fails, don't be afraid to ignore your sommelier's suggestion if you're still being nudged toward a pricier bottle.

And the next time a sommelier uses the word “special” when describing a bottle, grab hold of your wallet—or better yet, go to a restaurant where they'll allow you to BYOB. After all, you can't be upsold on a wine that you bring yourself.

► Read the On Wine blog at blogs.wsj.com/wine. Email Lettie at wine@wsj.com.

The more I thought about my upsell experience and those of my friends, the more anachronistic such tactics seemed—a throwback to the bad old days when sommeliers regularly terrified obsequious diners.

“Clearly the guy didn't care about us—he just wanted to get the check average up.” In the end, Mr. Stuckey took one of the sommelier's suggestions and ended up not with something “special,” but with a disappointing, overpriced wine that was on its way over the hill. Mr. Stuckey even sent the sommelier a glass just to see what he thought. Unsurprisingly, the sommelier said he thought it was great.

called getting a call from a customer who complained that one of the restaurant's sommeliers had upsold him on a wine by \$20. Mr. Sohm was appalled and invited the customer to return to the restaurant for a bottle of wine on the house. “When you do something like that you break the customer's trust,” he said.

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ENOFILE: WHEN YOU CAN BYOB

The surest way to avoid an aggressive upsell is to bring your own wine. Here are five to try.

2009 Maximin Grünhauser C Von Schubert Riesling QBA, \$24

This legendary Mosel producer turns out top Rieslings year after year. A well balanced, food-friendly white, this wine is marked by crisp acidity and a slightly earthy finish.

2009 Domaine Huet Clos du Bourg Vouvray Sec Loire, \$32

Domaine Huet produces great wines that consumers can actually find—and afford. Some would say it's too early to drink this very dry and decidedly minerally wine—but since it's so good, I say: Why wait?

2007 Lagone Ala Vecchia Toscana, \$15

This Cabernet-Merlot-Cabernet Franc blend from Tuscany is one of the best bargain reds I've tasted in a very long time. Marked by aromas of red fruit and vanilla, it's a soft, almost plummy wine that's easy to drink.

Chartogne Taillet Cuvée Ste. Anne Champagne NV, \$38

If I'm bringing my own wine to a restaurant, I'll almost always bring a bottle of Champagne. This bottling, from a small, family-owned Champagne house in the village of Merly, is rich and elegant.

2008 Williams Selyem Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir, \$60

On restaurant wine lists, prices for the best California Pinot Noirs can run well north of \$100. So when I can BYOB, I often bring a Pinot Noir from a top producer. This wine is marked by bright acidity and notes of cherry and spice.