

# King of the Hill

SCHNEIDER'S OF CAPITOL HILL IS D.C.'S OLDEST WINE SHOP

PHOTO: MARK FINKENSTADT



Jon and Rick Genderson stand among their many bottles of wine at Schneider's, their store on Capitol Hill.

Located in the shadow of the Supreme Court building, just a few blocks from the nation's Capitol, the aptly named Schneider's of Capitol Hill caters to a diverse—and often famous—clientele.

Brothers Jon and Rick Genderson are the third-generation owners of Washington, D.C.'s oldest wine shop, whose clients include senators, congressmen, Supreme Court justices, ambassadors, diplomats, dignitaries and television personalities, as well as everyday consumers from the surrounding neighborhoods and beyond.

The original Schneider's was founded in 1949 by Abe Genderson and his father-in-law, Max Schneider. In 1978, the third generation, Jon Genderson, joined his father on a "temporary" basis that has lasted 35 years. Jon's brother, Rick, joined the family business in 1981. Together, along with Rick's son, Josh, the fourth generation of Genderson to work in the store, they continue to build on their reputation for customer service as well as their vast inventory of wine.

And the store has a lot to offer in terms of wines that you usually can't or don't find in other shops. One of the reasons is because Schneider's can act as a direct importer. According to Jon, "Many of the wines we have here we can sole-source

and offer significant value. Washington, D.C. is the only jurisdiction in the country with a direct import permit system. If a wholesaler doesn't carry a particular wine, the District will allow a wine shop to directly import a wine from a domestic source. We also hold a federal import license that allows us to import wines directly from producers and negociants from all over the world."

In addition to popular and serious labels, the Gendersons are always on the lookout for emerging trends in the wine world. According to Rick, "Things have changed drastically in the last five years. Spain, for example, is big. Spanish wines have exploded on to the American wine scene. Another country that has made a huge comeback is Italy." Italy? Jon says that lot of customers go to Italy for vacation and when they get back they come into the store looking for that special bottle that transports them back to their memory. "Also there has been a big comeback in Italian cooking, so we have customers constantly matching wines with food."

But what do they drink on a daily basis? "That's easy," says Jon, "Burgundy. Definitely Burgundy." And Rick? "I drink everything—I love all of God's children." I could not have said it better myself. — *Scott Greenberg* ■■