

Jerry Lasco flying high as he readies to open third Tasting Room

By DALE ROBERTSON Houston Chronicle
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Jerry Lasco opened his Tasting Room wine bar in Uptown Park in 2003. After the successful launch of a

At the outset, Jerry Lasco was thinking small. His original Tasting Room was little more than a cubbyhole, with 900 square feet and 80 wines neatly arranged on a single wall.

"Not overly ambitious," he admits.

A furloughed Continental pilot, Lasco feared stepping too far out on the ledge. He thought he knew what he was doing when he threw open the doors to his wine shop/tasting bar in the new Uptown Park development in September of 2003, but he wasn't sure. Although he could fly a big jet plane, he'd never tried to get a business off the ground.

Barely two weeks after Continental transferred him from Newark to Houston, the horrors of 9/11 happened and, with the airlines in free fall afterwards, it wasn't long before he found himself needing a Plan B.

"I'd spent 10 years flying and the other airlines w

He'd been reared in a v and he attended a cook Food and wine was alr

Lasco the Continental p taxiing down the runaw fingers left over.

After first getting his fee borrowing "a little bit of despite a difficult econo location on Alabama ha

His Max's Wine Dive re come on line in San An

Although Continental tr business opened.

WHAT I'M DRINKING

Who: Jerry Lasco, The Tasting Room owner

Melka CJ Cabernet Sauvignon:
My favorite Napa cab at the moment, it's very well crafted with deep, rich fruit and a nice touch of wood. Made by star winemaker Philippe Melka.

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City Centre.

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either, since the

"You can't get sidetracked," Lasco said.

Famed Los Angeles/Las Vegas restaurateur Piero Selvaggio paid The Tasting Room the ultimate compliment. Its buzz of convivial activity, not to mention all the wine bottles on the tables, convinced him Houston's Galleria area was a great spot for his third Valentino's, which became a reality in the Hotel Derek.

Off-premise sales were supposed to be The Tasting Room's focal point. Instead, it became a gathering place that happens to sell lots of bottles to take home. Lasco's online "branch," The Black Door, offers special by-the-case deals, among other enticements, for members, who can sign up for free.

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