

DOLCE VITA: The bar at Dolce has become a favorite of wine lovers, who can select their vino from among 2,000 bottles.

## How sweet it is

Since its opening in April, Dolce has become a favorite of young Hollywood.

By HEIDI SIEGMUND CUDA Special to The Times

S you laze about in an Italian leather booth, fondling a black leather tablecloth, the soothing sounds of French crooner Serge Gainesbourg lure you into a sweet stupor. The lighting is tweaked to amber perfection, making everyone in the black-hot room look camera friendly.

It's Dolce on a Wednesday night, and even though you've been there for hours, you can't muster the strength to leave. And why would you? The sharp new restaurant and bar on Melrose Avenue is the perfect package — rife with celebrities and civilians, vino and Dino, and weensy plates of food so yummy you'd swear the gnocchi is winking at you.

Ever since its April 24 opening, Dolce's been a hit — in part because owner Lonnie Moore knows a thing or two about the

art of the deal. When the former television executive decided to turn his talents to nightclubbing, he dived in with gusto.

Moore, a New York expatriate, spent two years developing Belly, a sweet tapas bar on Santa Monica Boulelvard that opened in 2001 and became a staple of L.A. nightlife, adding the word tapas — Spanish for appetizer — into our lexicon. With partner Mike "Boogle" Malin, an actor who rode 15 minutes of fame on "Big Brother 2," they settled in as two of young Hollywood's most likable players.

With the debut of their bar and restaurant, they've also proved to be two of Hollywood smartest players. For Dolce, Moore and Malin teamed up with Gaucho Grill owner Adolfo Suaya, who had the lease on the location — the former spot of Le Chardonnay — and invited them to create something.

One of the smartest things its owners did was find investors among the young Hollywood jetset. Dolce's backers include Ashton Kutcher — uh, you might have heard of him — as well as Danny Masterson and Wilmer Valderrama — all from "That '70s Show." Comedian Jamie Kennedy and actor Adam Rodriguez from "C.S.I. Miami" also are involved.

Most any night, you'll find the actors on the back patio, checking out the hot-

ties and naughty starlets. But unlike many celeb-studded restaurants, which become so exclusive they burn out quicker than you can say, "Gotta match?," at Dolce all you need is a reservation.

HE sexy ristorante and enoteca — Italiano for house of
wine — stimulates the senses.
In the background, diners
hear the timeless sounds of
Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra and Mario
Lanza. The leather tablecloths add just
the right blend of over-the-top luxury.
Two thousand bottles of wines are stacked in a see-through cooler beside a bar
that spews flames all evening.

## Dolce, Enoteca e Ristorante

Where: 8284 Melrose Ave., Los Angeles

When: Daily, 6 p.m.-2 a.m.; dinner served till midnight. Reservations required.

Cost: No cover; 21 and older; valet parking

Info: (323) 852-7174.