

**MELISSA PRINCIPE  
WINE DIRECTOR  
ENO, FAIRMONT CHICAGO**

“I like to tell the story behind the wine,” says **Melissa Principe, Wine Director for ENO at the Fairmont Chicago**, “I find that the younger generation of people coming out really enjoy and look for that story.” Growing up in a large, colorful Italian family with seven older brothers on Chicago’s south side might offer any oenology student a good foundation for combining a sense of history and pursuing a passion for wine—but for Principe it was a part of everyday family life. “With an Italian family, there was always wine around, it’s part of the culture,” says Principe.

Principe attended Triton College in River Grove, IL, graduating in 1991 with an A.S. in Commercial and Therapeutic Recreation. Principe went on to attend Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, IL, graduating in 1994 with a B.S. in Commercial Recreation. After graduation Principe became a licensed clinical massage therapist who also taught clinical massage to others.

But it was wine, and wine-related topics, which continued to hold her interest. Principe’s resume boasts some well-known, wine-centric employers with highly reputable names in the Chicagoland area: Sam’s Wine & Spirits, Argo Tea Café and Randolph Wine Cellars & The Tasting Room. Principe served as a Wine Consultant for Sam’s Wine & Spirits and then went on to work as a private consultant, later accepting the position of Store Manager at Argo Tea Café.

Principe opened the company’s flagship store on State and Randolph and then executed multiple, successful store openings for the high-volume establishment. After Argo Tea Café, she accepted the position as General Manager and Wine Director for Randolph Wine Cellar & The Tasting Room. The wine list included 110 wines by the glass and 300 to 400 wines by the bottle—and she herself chose these offerings, which were painstakingly re-structured a minimum of four times per year.

Principe joined ENO at the Fairmont Chicago on May 5, 2008. As Wine Director, Principe oversees a wine list offering 300 to 500 labels, 50 wines by the glass and depending on the season, 20 to 25 unique wine flights.

ENO is an upscale, approachable and lively lounge that offers an easily-paired selection of wine, cheese and chocolate with a strong focus on no-pressure education and friendly interaction with guests. Teacher by nature, Principe thrives with the ENO concept of putting the education behind the experience. Principe holds level one, level two and advanced sommelier certifications from the International Sommelier Guild.

White Sox fan and sports junkie, Principe plays on two softball leagues, is a tri-athlete and enjoys running in her spare time. Currently residing on Chicago’s north side, Principe recently traveled to New York City and earned her Level Three Diploma in Wine & Spirits from the Wine & Spirits Education Trust.

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