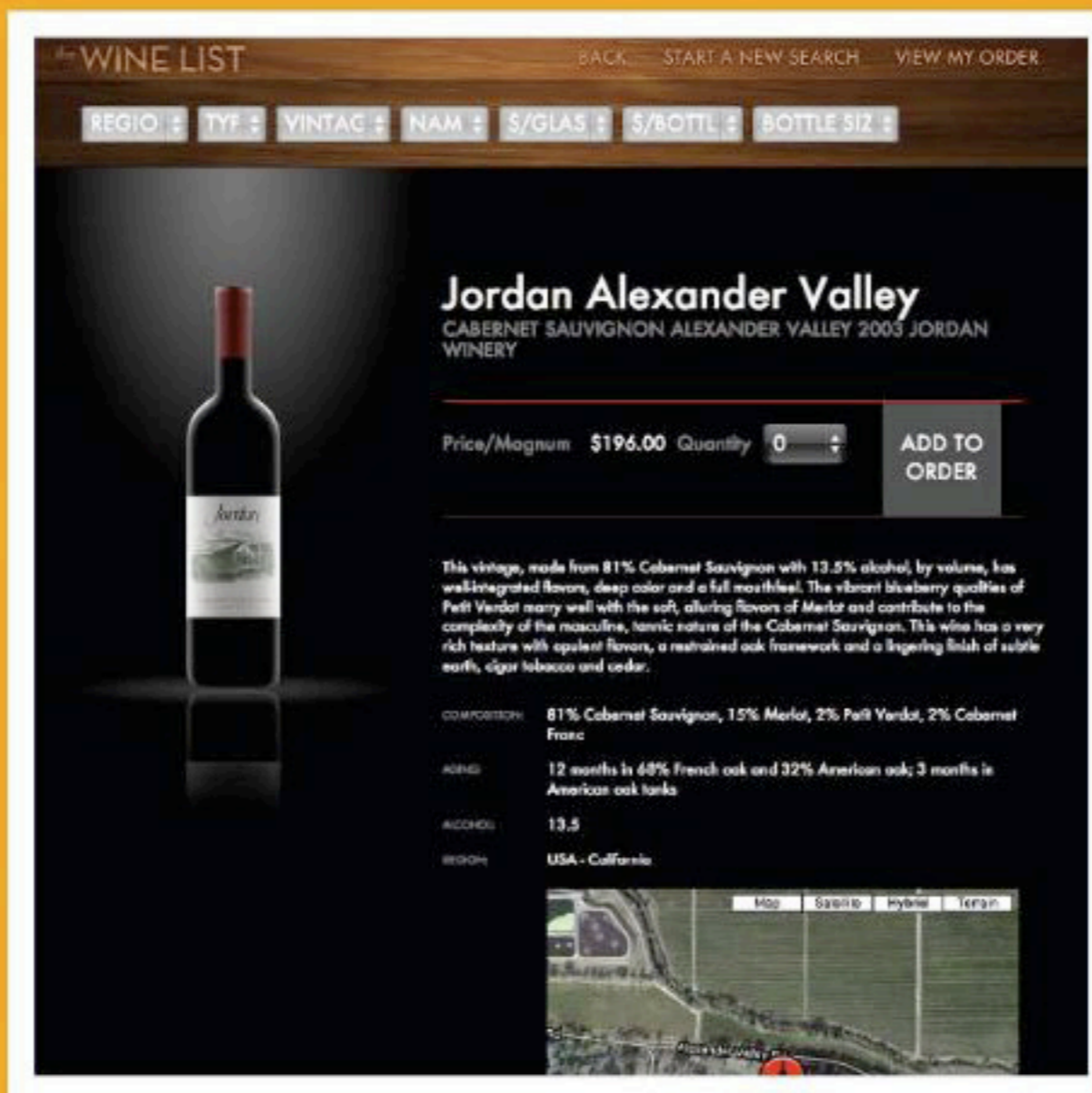


HIGH-TECH CUISINE

High tech meets haute cuisine at **Aria** (200 N. Columbus Dr., 312.444.9494, ariachicago.com), the contemporary Asian spot in the Fairmont Hotel. The menu at the restaurant, inspired by local, seasonal ingredients, is now presented as an iPad app, offering guests an easy-to-use guide that delves further into descriptions of unusual ingredients, where they come from, details about dish preparation and food and wine pairings.

"It helps promote conversation, it's educational and it's fun," says executive chef Brad Parsons. "People today are very interested about where their food comes from because of the carbon footprint, and also because they know that if their food is grown locally, it is picked at the height of its ripeness and nutritional value." Parsons predicts that someday soon diners will be able to use an iPad menu to order their meals, but that doesn't mean that servers will be extinct. "We can never eliminate the waitstaff because restaurants are all about service. Otherwise, you might as well have diners push buttons on vending machines."

At **Chicago Cut Steakhouse** (300 N. LaSalle St., 312.329.1800, chicagocutsteakhouse.com) it took a



team of six people three months to create an iPad app for the wine list—not surprising, seeing that the restaurant offers more than 700 different choices. "Traditionally, a list that size comes in a big book and takes the person ordering the wine out of the conversation for the time it takes to select a wine," explains managing partner David Flom. "The iPad list can be shared visually with others at

the table and might stimulate and educate our guests."

Guests can select their preferred varietal, vintage, region and price. A photo of a bottle will appear, and guests can tap into further details including varietal information and background on the vineyard where it was produced. This silent wine steward doesn't replace the human sommelier, however. Flom, who was in charge of the wine program at Rosebud Steakhouse and Rosebud Prime for many years, and managing partner Matthew Moore, who was wine director at Smith & Wollensky, are also available to offer their expertise when the touch

screen raises more questions than answers.

—NM

