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## A drop in the ocean



No fancy premises ... Peter Gerendasi (left) and his brother-in-law Ian Aaron.

Photo: *Quentin Jones*

Helen Greenwood

April 15, 2008

THE paint is peeling, the olive-green carpet dates to the mid-'70s, and the security wire is bent and blackened. There is nothing modern or smart about Independent Discount Liquor.

Peter Gerendasi and his business partner, brother-in-law Ian Aaron, have no reason to change the way the wholesale warehouse looks. You want to buy one of a dozen different beers, choose from

an amazing range of spirits or get kosher wine at a great price? You'll have to put up with a little wear and tear.

Gerendasi has been working in his family's liquor business since 1970, when he was 20. "My father needed help," he says.

Gerendasi snr, a refugee from Hungary, arrived in Sydney in 1950 when his son was six months old. Five years later, he bought a licensed deli on Bondi Beach, got to know a bit about the wine business and, three years later, bought a wholesale licence and premises in Goulburn Street from the Andronicus coffee family.

Gerendasi snr began by importing and distributing French brandy, Yugoslav slivovitz, Scottish whisky and kosher wines from Israel and the US.

For Jews, kosher wine is required for a circumcision, bar mitzvah, weddings, the Sabbath and all festivals including this weekend's start of Passover.

Usually a sweet drop, the wine often bore the Carmel label from Israel although there was Australian kosher wine produced by the Wynns family, which was bought out by McWilliam's. They made it until the early 1970s.

The Gerendasi family moved to the current premises in 1975. For a decade from 1981 they made kosher wine with De Bortoli in Victoria.

Today's kosher wine is a much more sophisticated drop. Yarden, an Israeli winery, produces award-winning wines that include a pinot noir and a muscat. There are Italian organically grown wines, New Zealand chardonnays, French Laurent-Perrier champagne, appellation controlee Beaujolais Village and Margaret River sauvignon blancs.

Kosher wines are only 20 per cent of Gerendasi's stock. There is also a small selection of Australian wine and a huge number of beers. But the most intriguing set of shelves are the spirits.

I count 20 tequilas, going up to the \$180 mark. There are dozens of vodkas, including an oaked example from Poland; brandies; scotches; calvados; armagnac; absinth; a Hungarian digestif, Unicum; a maraschino called Lucardo; and a digestif from the Czech Republic called Becherovka.

My eyes light on unusual bottles like Porfidio Cuban rum, Martin Miller and Tanquery No. 10 gins and Lillet vermouth, none of them cheap. Now where's a mixologist when you need one?

## **Independent Discount Liquor**

**9 Brisbane Street, Surry Hills, 9264 8980**

Mon-Thu 8.30am-5pm, Fri 8.30am-3.30pm

### **Best buys**

Yarden Muscat 2005, \$19.95, 500ml Tres Generaciones tequila, \$74.95, 750ml

Noy Armenian 10-year-old brandy, \$69.95, 750 ml

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