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For a Fine Wine, Hit the Hotel Minibar

What's the best way to judge a New York hotel? The size of its rooms? The thread count of the sheets or the lobby décor? Or perhaps by the selection of wines in the minibar?

New York has hundreds of places to find a great bottle



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of wine, but sometimes visitors want to drink a glass or two in the middle of the night without leaving their room.

Or as David Cohen, general man-

ager of Hotel Plaza Athénée New York, said: "We found that our clients—no matter who they are—might have the urge for a glass of Champagne at 2 a.m."

The minibar Champagne of choice at Plaza Athénée is Veuve Clicquot Brut (\$65) and the red and whites choices include two wines from California: Sonoma-Cutrer Chardonnay (\$40) and Mondavi Private Select Cabernet (\$55), both in half bottles.

The selections change periodically, according Mr. Cohen, who switched from a Pinot Noir to a Cabernet after guests indicated the latter was their preferred grape.

And next month he will invite guests who stay regularly at the Upper East Side hotel to attend a minibar wine tasting as well. "We respect guest feedback," he said.

A few blocks away at the Lowell, guests can help themselves to a half-bottle of Pol Roger Brut nonvintage Champagne (\$76) from their minibars or opt for an even smaller (187 ml) bottle of Pommery Pop Rose (\$32).

Other half-bottle options include the Ca'bolani Pinot Grigio from Italy (\$38), Hugel



A minibar at the Lowell, above, where guests also are offered fruits and cheeses at check-in and with turndown service, left.

Max Roger Sancerre; a rich white, Ramey Russian River Chardonnay; a light red, La Sirène de Giscours; a rich red, Bethel Heights Pinot Noir Estate Black Label; a moderately priced Champagne, Philippe Gonet Signature Blanc de Blancs; and a more expensive one, Krug Grand Cuvée nonvintage.

At the Soho Grand Hotel, guests can opt for a half-bottle of André Dezat Sancerre (\$35), Sinskey Pinot Noir (\$38) or El Coto Rioja rosé from Spain (\$26). They also pay \$5 more for a bottle of Billecart-Salmon Brut nonvintage Champagne (\$55) than if they stay at the NoMad.

Many visitors may compare room rates and some might factor in amenities such as a pool or a gym, but I've never heard of anyone choosing a hotel because of the quality or price of the wines in the minibar.

And yet it's an important perk—particularly when you're thirsty at 2 a.m.

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Pinot Blanc from Alsace, France, (\$48) and B.R. Cohn Cabernet Sauvignon (\$48) from California. "I'm always looking for the best quality and the best value," explained Eric Dupaix, the hotel's director of operations.

Mr. Dupaix was proud of offering wines that were a bit more obscure (Alsace Pinot Blanc) along with those that weren't (Pinot Grigio from Italy).

Guests at the NoMad in Chelsea will find only half-bottles of French wines in their minibars. They were chosen to fit the "old Paris" mood of rooms, said Thomas Pastuszak, wine director for the hotel and its restaurant. Mr. Pastuszak chose wines from what he called "the

three most classic French wine regions"—Champagne, Burgundy and Bordeaux.

Mr. Pastuszak's Champagne of choice is Billecart-Salmon Brut nonvintage (\$50) and the Burgundy and Bordeaux bottles, both priced at \$35, are the 2014 Daniel Dampit Chablis and the 2011 Les Allées Cantemerle, a Haut-Medoc red.

Finding good wines in half-bottles is always a challenge, said Mr. Pastuszak, although Bordeaux producers are more likely to offer their wines in the half-bottle size.

I contacted a few more hotels and found yet more options. At the Park Hyatt New York, wines for the minibars are chosen to fit into six "slots": a crisp white, Jean

