

MASTER SOMMELIER  
JACK MASON KEEPS  
IN TOUCH WITH HIS  
INVENTORY—AND HIS  
CLIENTELE—THANKS  
TO **BINWISE**



*Jack Mason, MS, uses BinWise for beverage management at Marta in NYC.*

# The Master's Touch

by David Gadd / photo by Timothy Murray

## THE JOURNEY TO BECOME A MASTER

Sommelier is the wine geek's equivalent of completing the Olympic decathlon. Jack Mason knows the ordeal—last year, at just 27 years old, he was one of just seven people (of 63 candidates from the U.S. and Canada) to pass the final exam and receive the coveted MS title.

It was a six year journey for the young somm, who has a passion for food and wine that led him from a high-school restaurant job to the Culinary Institute of America at Hyde Park, then to the Cornell School of Hotel Administration and finally to the Court of Master Sommeliers and its infamously difficult exam.

Along the way, Mason had stints as a sommelier at Pappas Bros. Steakhouse in Houston with its Grand Award-winning list and at Altamarea Group in New York City, where he became a somm at flagship restaurant Marea. It was there that Mason first encountered BinWise, the beverage management system co-founded by former sommelier Tony Cha—a system that is revolutionizing the behind-the-scenes and sometimes less-than-glamorous world of being a workaday somm (Mason calls it “the part no one sees”).

Mason is now Wine Director at Marta, the pizza-centric Italian restaurant from Danny Meyer's Union Square Hospitality Group, which he helped open in September of 2014. It was a given that BinWise would be the system of choice at Marta—almost all of the other restaurants in Danny Meyer empire were already using it. “It was something I was excited about having for the Marta wine program,” says the Master Sommelier. “It's super user-friendly . . . It's very intuitive and easy to use, and it doesn't take long at all to learn.”

What Mason appreciates about BinWise is its versatility in a real-world restaurant situation. “I enjoy getting a really accurate and quick view of where we're at with inventory,” he says. “It helps with purchasing, and with forecasting *how* to purchase for the rest of the month.” Mason finds that BinWise provides a useful “snapshot of sale performance and theoretical cost percentage,” noting that BinWise also helps him understand whether an item is priced correctly and discover whether staff is over-pouring wines by the glass. Remote access and the ability to see inventory levels outside of the restaurant is another plus for Mason.

One surprising feature of the Marta wine program is that a quarter of Mason's 250 selections are Champagnes. “This was something I wanted to champion,” says the Master Somm, but first he had to convince Danny Meyer, who was a little skeptical about French bubbly with Marta's thin-crust, Roman-style pizzas. In the end, Mason prevailed: “I'm passionate about Champagne, and I also think it does go really well with pizza.”

Aside from Champagne, the wine list is all-Italian, as is sister restaurant Maialino. “We have the big boys—Piemonte and Tuscany,” says Mason, “but I like to focus on some higher-altitude stuff, such as Alto Piemonte and Valtellina. Of course, Sicilian wines are amazing and go great with pizza.”

Mason's inventive wine program—supported by BinWise—is one of the reasons Marta has developed a following among other somms, who frequent the place on their evenings off. “One of my goals in getting to be a wine director,” says the MS, “was to be in a place where my friends can come and hang out, where other somms want to come and have a drink. Part of that was making things affordable and accessible. Thankfully, my goal has come to fruition.” SJ