

RAW BAR AT SEA CHANGE | BY STEVE MARSH

Holly Becker, the raw bar chef at Sea Change, cautioned us about the raw clams ("They're really clammy"), even though chef Erik Anderson serves the littlenecks with lemon oil and crushed walnut. My date's reticence was best assuaged by our fourth drink—a clear, light 2008 Grüner Veltliner that acted like a lens intensifying the pairing of salty clam and bitter walnut, muffling inhibitions about trying strange raw foods.

After the early theater rush, Sea Change's raw bar becomes one of the most interesting alcohol experiences in Minneapolis. Some nights you'll get Becker all to yourself, and she's a refreshing change from just another bartender. "I didn't like it at first," Becker says about being on stage. "The faces you make when you shuck oysters!" But now she's comfortable enough to explain her theories, such as how oysters are bitter when they're pregnant. As I listened, I briefly considered how my rosemary and mushroom martini made with Anderson's chanterelle-infused vodka was aiding my attempt to short-circuit my Darwinian disgust mechanism.

My favorite Becker-ian theory came in the middle of our last course, as we washed down our off-the-menu seared scallops with burnt orange powder, strawberries, and balsamic with an effervescent cava. "I love drinking with raw foods because you're not drinking because your mouth is hot," she said. "You're drinking because of the flavors."

*Guthrie Theater, 818 S. 2nd St., Mpls.,
612-225-6499, seachangempls.com*

→ The seats around the raw bar may be the best in the house.

