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Doggies & drinks

Mutt mingle and wine tasting

by Laurel Miller ([buzz@boulderweekly.com](mailto:buzz@boulderweekly.com))

Look, Norm! Look! It's your sister! Oh, it's a family reunion!" Norm's sister, Bits, waddles over and gives her brother a huge, sloppy kiss, with more than just a hint of tongue. Norm, for his part, would rather eat the last crumbs from his appetizer.

No, it's not cocktails in Appalachia. It's the monthly Mutt Mingle and Wine Tasting at Muttropolis, the upscale pet store located at the Twenty Ninth Street Mall. Norm and Bits are French Bulldogs, and they're dressed to the nines, along with three other

"Frenchies," including 12-week-old Talulah, clad in a pink flowered dress; the portly Bollion, attired as a groom (top hat included); and his deaf bride, Brie. I'm there with my borrowed pup, a 7-month-old King Charles Spaniel named Bello, who is wearing the hell out of a petal-pink Juicy Couture sweater and pink rhinestone collar. Bello's mom shops at Muttropolis a lot, and he's comfortable enough with his manhood—despite recently being neutered—to wear girly clothes. Pink is really his color.

Every third Thursday of the month, Muttropolis, a California-based



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chain that has expanded to a handful of stores in three states, hosts the Mutt Mingle as a way for people and the dogs that own them to get together and have some fun, as well as sample food and drink from area restaurants and gain a little wine savvy. Bringing a dog isn't required, but it's certainly more fun. Says Norm's parent and Frenchie breeder Kathi Liebe, "I come all the way from Loveland for the Mingles. The dogs have such a great time. They get to meet up with their friends, and the store always has such great deals." Deals or no, five percent of the proceeds from every Muttropolis event go to the Boulder County Humane Society. In addition to the Mingles, there are breed-specific meet-ups, and holiday parties.

Explains store manager Inger Hiller, "Our goal is to partner with the surrounding restaurants and area organizations."

At last week's Mingle, Barefoot Wine was featured. A winery rep is present to answer questions and conduct tastings, and humans can snack on cheese, crackers and cookies, while the dogs enjoy an array of gourmet pet treats sold in-house. I do a bit of tasting in between inspecting jar after jar of bulk dog treats (including dried rabbit ears—the dehydrated cartilage is the actual ear in its entirety); Lemon Cheesecake Dog Shampoo; leashes emblazoned with "One of us is a Bitch;" skull, Satan and flaming heart-studded collars; and Video Catnip (a feline DVD with montages of birds and cheeky chipmunks to keep Fluffy entertained while you're at work). The Zinfandel is bold and assertive, kind of like a Rottweiler, while the Shiraz is a bit more mellow and insipid, much like a Cocker Spaniel. Last month, the mall's Purple Martini restaurant catered the event, offering an array of hors d'oeuvres from its menu, as well as specially created cocktails like the Muttini and Cosmuttpolitan. Rhumbi Island Grill and Peet's Coffee have been featured at other Muttropolis events.

While the dogs tumble and play, rumpling their trendy threads, the mommies chat and gather armfuls of finery for their offspring: faux leopard fur coats, flower-bedecked tulle tutus, "Furagamo" and "Vera Wag" fuzzy shoe toys. A pungent doggy odor is in the air, but the mostly middle-aged, female attendees don't seem to mind. New Wave from the 1980s bops over the speakers, and a dogless, somewhat bewildered looking man wanders the store, wine glass in hand. I ask him if he owns a dog. No, he admits, he was just walking by. "I saw all these dogs inside, and what looked like a canine costume party, so I came in."

And that's the nice thing about the Mutt Mingle; you don't need to have a pet to attend. At Muttropolis, everyone's gone to the dogs.

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