

WINE

Teach yourself to tipple like a pro.

In his narrative *The Accidental Connoisseur: An Irreverent Journey through the Wine World*, Lawrence Osborne pens, "Taste is not learned out of books. It grows slowly and inexorably."

A great place to begin your own irreverent journey to becoming a connoisseur is **Southpark** (901 SW Salmon St., 326-1300), Portland's first downtown wine bar. It's home to goateed wine sage Will Prouty, who waxes poetic about bottles from homegrown Pinot Noir to offbeat Manzanilla sherry. "It's a big, rich layered world of wine. If you are open or curious to having a different experience, then that's what I want to provide you with," he says.

Pouring from a wine list that includes more than 30 indulgences by the glass and carafe, Prouty and Southpark's vast and varied menu also offer about 120 selections from a dozen countries and nearly 50 different varietals, with a new focus on Oregon.

In addition, Prouty composes a seasonal Oregon wine adventure manual, "Will's Wine Guide," complete with anecdotes, musings and maps for a spontaneous road trip to wine country: "For me, wine is about curiosity and exploration and possibilities—what's great about wine is that it's one of those places where nature and human artistry connect."

As your palate becomes more astute, try **Ten01** (1001 NW Couch St., 226-3463). With dual sommeliers Erica Landon and Savanna Ray, there's always a wine maven on hand to discuss decanting, pairings, regions and varietals. The pair's wine book is a work of art. Landon and Ray offer impromptu blind tastings, seminars and seasonal flights.

At swanky bistro and wine bar **Vino Paradiso** (417 NW 10th Ave., 295-9536), it's happy hour every day from 4 to 6 pm, with half-price bottles of wine available with any food purchase. An eclectic and dynamic list of over 30 glass pours, from Grüner Veltliner to Cencibel, encourage sipping through exotic regions. Creative nights in the urbane bistro include winemaker dinners, thematic feasts (like a "bring your own Barolo" dinner), free monthly tastings and menus designed around four to five wines.

Foster & Dobbs (2518 NE 15th Ave., 284-1157) embraces the adage that small is beautiful, celebrating artisan cheese, charcuterie, chocolate and wine. "We always pair wine with a class," said proprietor Luan Schooler.

For wines au naturel, venture to the **Square Deal Wine Company** (2321 NW Thurman St., 226-9463). This boutique shop specializes in small-production, organic and biodynamic wines. Each storied bottle, displayed in winding walkways of wooden crates, hails from someone the owners know. Farmhouse dinners, raclette feasts and wine classes (like "Extreme Winemaking") fill a cozy space in a back room. Be sure to check out the six-pack of the week, too.

KERRY NEWBERRY.

Will Prouty at Southpark