

## Portland, the Rose City, is blooming with sophisticated, cozy wine bars

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### Southpark Seafood Grill & Wine Bar, 901 S.W. Salmon St.

*Downtown, South Park District. Wine bar open 11:30 a.m., no reservations, Saturday and Sunday, and 11:30 a.m. Monday-Friday; until 1 a.m. Friday and Saturday and midnight Sunday-Thursday. Phone: 503-326-1300 [www.southparkseafood.com](http://www.southparkseafood.com)*



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Customers soak up the atmosphere at Southpark Seafood Grill & Wine Bar. Southpark pioneered the wine-bar trend in Portland when it opened a bar six years ago next door to its bistro. Murals depict a Mediterranean cafe scene with people eating, drinking and dancing.

**The scene:** South Park pioneered the wine-bar trend in Portland when it opened a bar six years ago next door to its full-service bistro.

Business travelers and pre- and post-symphony and theatergoers fill stools around a horseshoe-shaped stainless-steel bar. Tables are tucked away in candlelit alcoves curtained off from the main restaurant.

Murals depict a Mediterranean bar scene with people eating, drinking and dancing, but Southpark is low-key and quiet, ideal for a romantic evening or for unwinding alone without feeling rushed or hassled.

**The wine:** The list features 140 wines from a dozen countries to complement a menu with Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, Italian and North African influences.

Wines are organized by taste (lush, intense, fruit-driven reds; crisp, fresh dry whites etc.) and about 30 are sold by the half-glass (\$3-\$5), glass (\$6-\$9) and carafe.

For the most fun and the best bargain, put together a medley of appetizers and your own flight: A 1.5-ounce taste of any wine sold by the glass, except sparkling wines, is \$2.75, regardless of the bottle price.

**The food:** The "small plates" — 22 tapas-style nibbles (\$4-\$15) — are inventive and tasty.

Two could share the antipasti platter of olives, cheeses, apples, grapes, meats and roasted red peppers. Try the Moroccan spice crab cakes with mint, cilantro and lime or the warm dates stuffed with almonds and wrapped in slivers of cured Spanish ham.

**The neighborhood:** South Park is in the cultural heart of Portland. Nearby is the symphony hall, the Portland Center for Performing Arts, the art museum and the South Park Blocks, an 8.5-acre urban park adjacent to Portland State University.