

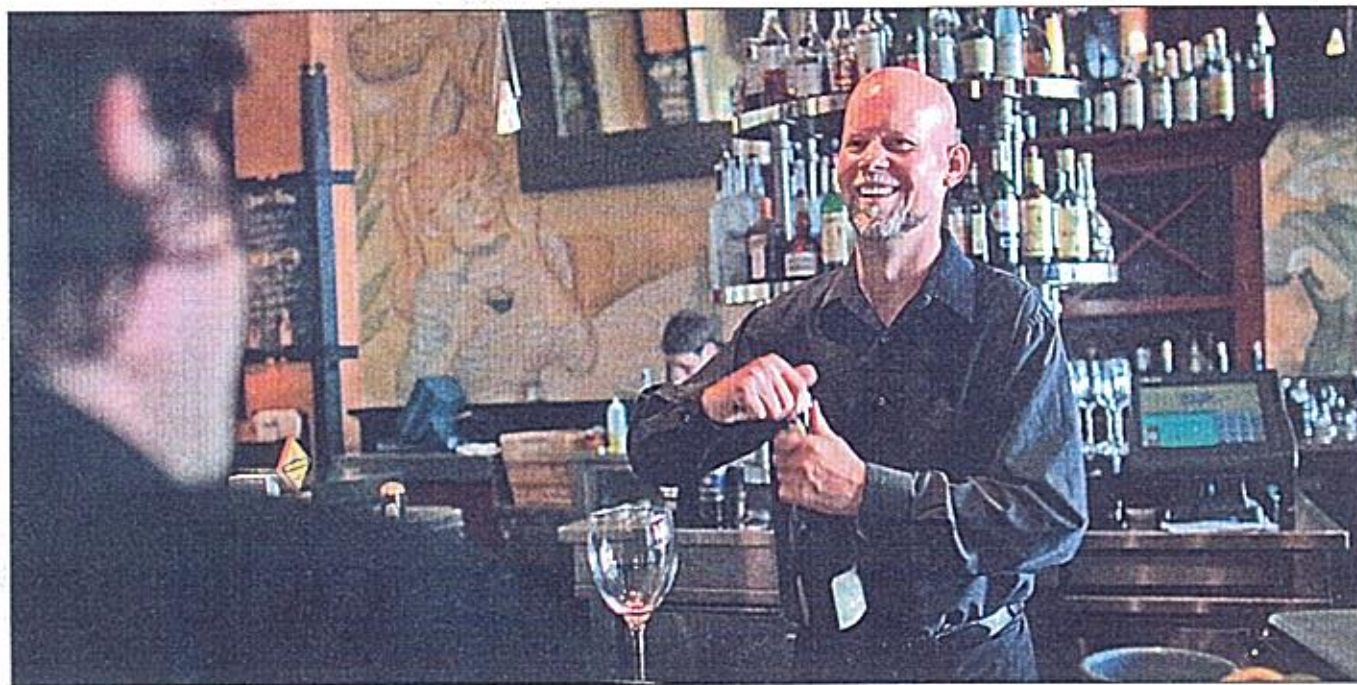
DOWNTOWN

MONTHLY

PORTLAND INCLUDING THE PEARL, NOB HILL & OLD TOWN-CHINATOWN

FRESH SHEET

Goateed food force keeps Southpark fresh



At Southpark Seafood Grill & Wine Bar, wine director Will Prouty holds court with an everyman, non-elitist approach to wine.

SOUTHPARK GRILL

FIND IT: 901 S.W. Salmon St.; 503-326-1300;

www.southpark.ypguides.net

PRICES: Lunch, dinner and wine bar fare includes Mediterranean-focused soups, salads and small plates from \$6 to \$11.50; pastas, \$14 to \$16; entrees \$18 to \$28; desserts, \$7 to \$12. Kids menu, \$3 to \$6.

VEGETARIAN QUOTIENT: Small plates (vegetables with goat cheese folded in a crepe, a cheese-and-fruit plate) and pasta (butternut squash ravioli is a menu regular). Seafood is plentiful for pescotarians.

EXTRAS: Outdoor seating, wraparound bar, an informed wine-bar staff.

PARKING: Validated after 5 p.m. in the adjacent Southpark garage.

TRANSIT: TriMet buses 15, 18, 51, 63. For other MAX light rail, Portland Streetcar and bus options, use the Trip Planner at www.trimet.org.

STEVEN GIBBONS

Settle in at Southpark Seafood Grill & Wine Bar's wraparound bar as Portland's arts season amps up, and anticipate some taste travel with the lanky guy on the other side.

Will Prouty, who has crafted the wine list since 1998 when the urban seafood restaurant opened in Portland's Cultural District, likes to pour a world of vintages. It might be a rough-edged tempranillo from Southern Oregon or a semi-dry French rose from Cotes du Thongue.

Prouty describes his picks by such flavor profiles as "crisp and clean" rather than by varietals: "I'm a ditch digger at heart, an everyman. Wine doesn't have to be elitist."

Southpark sells about 45 wines by the glass, half-glass or flight so you can taste a variety rather than work through a single bottle. Another 100 come by the bottle only. Prouty — recognize him by his gregarious nature, smooth pate and well-trimmed goatee — is big on Oregon vintages and bullish on wines with character. "I am much more excited by problematic vintages," he says, "than chasing the vintage of the century."

Prouty comprises part of the epicurean leadership at this wine destination and restaurant that trades on fresh seafood, mostly from the Northwest.

Chef Broc Willis is Southpark's other rangy, goateed food force.

Willis grew up near San Antonio, Texas, where he ate his grandmother's pickled beets and granddad's catfish from the property's pond. Such tastes inspired his appreciation of fresh, simple foods.

His culinary approach continues to honor homegrown ingredients and put them on the plate as quickly as possible. In late August, he fed foodies willing to pay \$150 to \$200 each at New York's Beard House for heirloom tomato martinis, Oregon lamb and pickled Walla Walla onions. That dinner, though served on the other coast, reflects his Southpark kitchen. "We try to stay true to the Northwest, to the season," says Willis.

Southpark's lighter menu highlights tapas dishes such as fritto misto of calamari (\$9.50), Marcona almond-stuffed dates wrapped in serrano Spanish ham (\$6.50), raw Pacific oysters (\$10.50 per half dozen) and a bowl of sausage-accented mussels (see recipe).

Heartier portions, though available at the bar, might appeal in the more formal bi-level dining room before or after a date at the nearby Schnitz. Choose among a symphony of entrees including paella Valenciana with shellfish, chicken and chorizo (\$21.50), or a glittering piece of wild king salmon sided by a polenta chive cake and wild mushrooms (\$25).

Pacific Mussels

(Serves 1 to 2)

- 1-2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon chili flakes
- 1/2 cup Italian sausage
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 2 teaspoons sambuca (Italian liqueur)
- 12 mussels
- 1 cup tomato sauce
- 1 pinch orange zest
- 1 pinch chopped Italian parsley
- Salt and pepper, to taste



Heat the olive oil and add the chili flakes, sausage and garlic. Deglaze with sambuca. Add the mussels, tomato sauce and the orange zest and continue cooking. Add the parsley; season with salt and pepper. The mussels are ready after they have opened. Serve with crusty bread and enjoy.

— From Broc Willis,
Southpark Seafood Grill & Wine Bar

The daily Farmer's Connection showcases seafood with local growers' crops of the moment. This season, find a sturdy ono paired with handsome heirloom tomatoes and garden-fresh peppers.

In line with Southpark's philosophy, farmers are celebrated on the restaurant's blackboards as well as menus. Find accolades to Singing Pig, Flamingo Ridge and the Wednesday Portland Farmers Market, where the chef grabs fresh and flirty foods from across the street, on the South Park Blocks — and finds a place for them on your plate.