



Best Wine Bar

BOKA Kitchen and Bar Seattle

Jason Harris, director of food and beverage

Being independent is key to the success of BOKA Kitchen and Bar in Seattle. As a single-unit operation, BOKA menus the wines it thinks fit its location and clientele perfectly.

“For us, it starts with being able to get the wines we want to get,” says director of food and beverage, Jason Harris.

Harris’ goal has been to build a list that entices new wine drinkers while delivering to the oenophiles. He’s done this with a mix of wines that guests can only find at BOKA.

His inspiration “comes from many years of trying different wines and always remembering that as consumers’ tastes and spending habits change, the wine list must change as well,” he explains.

“With many new varietals becoming known and different regions gaining popularity, the wine ‘game’ stays very fresh.” BOKA’s wine list features many hard-to-find wines from smaller vineyards and unusual varietals. Having a diverse wine list suits BOKA and is an anomaly in Seattle where Keen walking shoes and North Face jackets are de rigueur; BOKA has the hipness you’d expect to find in Miami, New York or Las Vegas. Panels of changing colors of glass adorn the back of the restaurant; while modern furniture is set under wood beams, leaving BOKA hovering between the new and the old.

It’s not just the restaurant’s style that makes BOKA stand out in Seattle; its wine list does, too. BOKA’s 125-bottle wine list, priced from \$40 to \$80, has strong leanings toward the west—Washington, Oregon and California—but there are

plenty of Old World wines and nods towards countries like New Zealand and Chile.

However, it’s important to not just focus on Northwest wines, explains Harris. “We don’t want to alienate people and it’s important to match up the wines you have with your cuisine.”

Harris does this by offering a progressive list organized from lighter to fuller bodied and being open to any tastes. “Someone that loves a dry chardonnay, can-and should-enjoy that with whatever they are eating,” he points out. “When choosing a wine, I believe that you should be looking to fill a taste profile; all foods taste different to someone’s palate-wine is the same way.”

It’s also essential that the wine list change regularly, he says, and for that he often turns to his customers. “We use our guests with great wine knowledge to our advantage; they in some ways help guide us to what they want to see on the list.”

To make it easy for wine novices, the serving staff has a good base knowledge and is trained to make the wine list user-friendly. The progressive list allows them to really use the wine list as a tool to help diners determine what they want. “Having the crew understand the philosophy of a progressive list is the biggest part of training them, which then directly affects sales.”

Independent, unusual and unintimidating are three standout features of a wine list that doesn’t leave anyone wondering why diners return to BOKA for a fantastic wine experience.

—Amanda Baltazar