



PORTLAND & OREGON DINING

Fine dining guide, restaurant reviews, food and drinks from Portland and throughout Oregon

Happy hour heaven

by Grant Butler, *The Oregonian*

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The OregonianUrban Farmer

Bargain bites and super sips at the swankiest spots around town

As the name implies, happy hours are all about having a good time. And during hard times, when we try to stretch every one of our dining-out dollars, we need all the happy hours we can get.

Apparently so do Portland restaurants. As the economy soured during the past year, restaurateurs have turned to early evening bar specials to keep customers coming through the doors. Menu prices have been slashed while hours have been extended. And drinks, which used to be full price at most places to make up for the food discounts, now are often a good deal as well.

What's particularly cool about Portland's happy hour scene right now is how chefs are breaking away from traditional bar snacks to offer more complex fare. Sure, you'll still find plenty of chicken wings out there (they continue to be the cost-cutting darling of happy hours), but you'll also find bargain bites made from lobster, organic beef and wild salmon.

So if you're feeling grouchy, hit one of these dozen spots from throughout the metro area. A cocktail and an inexpensive nibble are sure to put a smile on your face.

H50 Bistro & Bar

50 S.W. Morrison St.; 503-484-1415

This new arrival in downtown's revamped Hotel Fifty offers a sleek setting for happy hour sipping. A free-standing gas fireplace dominates the room, creating a romantic glow for benches with plush pillows and white coffee tables that resemble Adonis-like faces. Small plates such as duck confit on top of a square of cheesy pan pardu, or tagliatelle doused with Parmigiano-Reggiano cream and truffles, are big enough for sharing, and with \$3 shaved off the regular price for each dish (making them \$3 and \$4, respectively), you'll have to order aggressively to ring up much of a bill.

Deals: The juicy venison burger gets added richness from yellow curry aioli and comes with a mountain of crisp fries -- a bargain at \$9 during happy hour.

Sip & save? Take \$1 off draft and bottled beer, along with well drinks (including specialty cocktails). Wine specials are by the bottle but might be as low as a \$10 bottle of pinot noir featured recently.

Nice touch: The specialty cocktails come with a bite of food created by the kitchen to compliment the drink's flavor, like a chile-spiked vodka number accompanied by duck on endive leaves, or a kicked-up white sangria that arrives with deviled quail eggs.

Let's get real: There are no deals on desserts, though most are priced at only \$5 to begin with.

The fine print: Available 3-6 p.m. and 10 p.m.-close Monday-Saturday, all day Sunday.



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Salty's on the Columbia's coconut prawns.