

Bar Avignon

2138 SE Division St., 517-0808, baravignon.com.
Dinner daily. No reservations. \$\$ Moderate.

Bar Avignon's date-night ambience, packed wine racks and long, L-shaped bar suggest a pop-in, pop-out place that treats food as one more excuse to order another drink. But with concoctions like the Division Street Cooler, which tastes like a California lawn soaked in vodka (in the very, very best way), who needs food? On the other hand (which, if you're doing things right, should be holding a glass of something else by now), with dishes as well-executed as the pan-seared pork chop, cooked to tender perfection and served with sweet summer squash and chimichurri, who needs drinks? It's a wonderful conundrum of Western profligacy with a very simple solution: You need both. Cheese and meat boards offer a fun match game for five bucks per selection. The solicitous wait staff can guide you to a piquant union of prosciutto, pecorino and peaches, or, if alliteration isn't your bag, you can devise your own combo. Go for the drinks and stay for the food. Or go for the food and stay for the drinks. It doesn't matter, so long as you go. CHRIS STAMM.

ORDER THIS: Pan-seared pork chop.

BEST DEAL: At 10 bucks, the Niçoise salad is an affordable and well-balanced meal all its own.

I'LL PASS: The Calabrese is decent, but it doesn't justify the cost-to-quantity ratio.

Kir

22 NE 7th Ave., 232-3063, kirwinebar.com.
Dinner Tuesday-Saturday. No reservations.
\$\$ Inexpensive-moderate.

This shabby-chic space feels like an old friend's living room. In a flyspeck kitchen, chef-owner Amalie Roberts, the former wine director at Clyde Common, works her Mediterranean magic, assembling generous plates (a cornucopia of Manchego and cured meats, fragrant bowls of steamed mussels) for \$10 or less. Sit at the Art Deco slab of bar and let bartender Russell Smith guide you. The chalkboard emphasizes affordable Old World vintages, particularly rosés. Or sip a cava-elderflower liqueur kir royale. Stunning late-summer surprises included a new pickle plate and large slabs of smoked trout beside a sunny salad of cherry tomatoes and haricots verts. Save room for the homey desserts, like the delicate plum hazelnut cake. Then find yourself becoming a regular here. LAURA MCCANDLISH.

ORDER THIS: Mussels steamed with corona beans and chorizo.

BEST DEAL: Charcuterie and cheese plate.

I'LL PASS: Mixed olives, toasted pistachios (the least alluring of the snacks).

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