

50 Best bars

From sports bars to singles scenes, posh lounges to pubs, wine cafés to watering holes, here are some of the Valley’s best places to belly up.

Beer Bars

Four Peaks Brewing Company

If all Four Peaks had going for it was its extensive line of award-winning local beer, it still would be worthy of this list. But they go above and beyond, drawing even non-drinkers to the table with their delicious pub grub as well. But first, the beers: They brew eight “mainstays,” including their most famous, Kilt Lifter Scottish-style ale, as well as the English-style 8th Street Ale and an Arizona Peach. Seasonally, you might find Orange Blossom Ale (spring), Pumpkin Porter (October-November) or Alt Ball and Chain (summer). True beer geeks come just for the weekly cask-conditioned ales.

Food-wise, they’re all over the map, with pizzas, burgers, salads, Thai hummus, *spanakopita*, Bavarian pretzels and Mexican dishes – and they do everything dandy. *Carne adovada* is especially awesome. The Tempe pub is part of the actual brewing facility and is indoor-outdoor, for a beer garden feel.

Info: 1340 E. Eighth St., Tempe, 480-303-9967; 15730 N. Pima Road, Scottsdale, 480-991-1795, fourpeaks.com

Papago Brewing

Variety is the buzzword here, with 30 constantly changing brews on tap and hundreds in bottles. Looking for a Leap of Faith, Shark Attack or a Nefarious Ten Pin? You’re covered. The tap selections span the globe, from the British Isles and Belgium to right here at home, and they even have a beer engine for cask-conditioned ales. The bartenders know their stuff, too, so don’t be intimidated about trying something new. Just ask; they’ll give you a sample if they’re not too swamped (which is, unfortunately, a lot of the time).

Yes, the place reeks of yeast even though their beers aren’t brewed on-site, and the atmosphere recalls a beer lover’s basement. But even if you’re not a beer drinker, we guarantee you’ll find something you like. Try the raspberry Lambic, Ace Pear cider or mead (honey wine).

Info: 7107 E. McDowell Road, Scottsdale; 480-425-7439, papagobrewing.com

The Roosevelt

Matt Pool of Matt’s Big Breakfast is also behind this beacon for beer lovers in the hipper-than-hip arts district just south of Roosevelt Street. It’s set up in a charming, tiny historic house with creaky wood floors but also nods to modern times with a special cooler built to keep beer cold. You can see it in the back room; check out the glass wall with kegs behind it.

Pool, a stickler for serving only the best, carries more than a dozen beers on tap, a few dozen in bottles and cans, and about 25 intriguing bottles of wine.

Even if you don’t drink, go for the mind-blowing bar menu, which boasts some of our favorite late-night snacks in town, including grilled cheese and creamy tomato soup, “ham and eggs” with Southern-style deviled eggs, smoked oysters in a sardine tin can, and kettle chips with addictive pan-roasted sweet onion and Maytag blue cheese dips.

Info: 816 N. Third St., Phoenix; 602-254-2561, roosevelt-row.org

SanTan Brewing

Anthony Canecchia worked for Four Peaks from 1996 to 2003, racking up numerous brewing awards before opening this place with Aaron Sanchez. The 1954 building used to be Valley National Bank. Safe deposit boxes serve as a bench in the waiting area, and the vault is by the bathrooms, but now it's only used to store grain, not greenbacks, so don't try anything funny.

Along with the rich history, they pour seven SanTan brews on tap – they only serve their own creations, save for some guest ciders – and have a full bar. A large sidewalk patio and a menu created specifically for beer pairings make this a favorite hangout in the area.

Its establishment in 2007 – along with Canecchia's devotion to bringing the area back – was a key turning point in making downtown Chandler a destination.

And as for the brewery's growing popularity? Well, you know you've found success when lawyers for Arizona State University issue a cease-and-desist letter for naming the house ale "Sun Devil Ale." At press time, SanTan owners had issued a public call to create a new name for the ale.

Info: 8 S. San Marcos Place, Chandler; 480-917-8700, santanbrewing.com

Yard House

You can't miss the notion that this is a beer mecca from the moment you walk in and see taps lining the length of the central bar – on both sides. They boast the world's largest selection of draft beer; at the Westgate location, it's 130. You can get them by the six-pack, goblet, pint or half yard. Five miles of gleaming steel pipes running along the ceiling deliver cold suds from the keg room to waiting patrons – and there can be quite a rambunctious crowd on nights with games and events at University of Phoenix Stadium.

It's not just a beer joint, though: The list of specialty drinks, martinis and wines ensures that no one in your party will go thirsty, so it's ideal for group outings. The menu goes on and on, too, with a zany cornucopia of seafood, steaks, ribs, burgers, pizza, salads and entrées.

Info: 9401 W. Westgate Blvd., Glendale, 623-872-3900; other locations: Phoenix (480-563-9273), Scottsdale (480-675-9273), yardhouse.com

Iconic Bars

Buffalo Chip Saloon

Other bars have mechanical bull riding. This one has real bull riding. You heard us: real cowboys on real bulls, getting bucked off into the dirt. Hard. Of course, you can't be a greenhorn. Every Friday night, real pros sign a booklet of waivers and go into the ring to compete for cash and prizes.

Also on Fridays, try the "wagon camp" barbecue buffet or the fish fry (with cod, catfish, lake perch and walleye) out back, in view of the bull riders.

Inside, check out the crazy-quilt Western décor, from the buffalo trophy head and steer horns on the walls to the old boot collection hanging from the ceiling. Patrons' snapshots line the underside of the bar overhang.

Want to kick up those Tony Lamas? There's live music and dancing every night of the week, with free dance lessons on Thursdays. And calling all Cheese Heads: It's *the* place to be to cheer on Wisconsin's Green Bay Packers.

Info: 6811 E. Cave Creek Road, Cave Creek; 480-488-9118, buffalochipsaloon.com

Coach House

If you thought there wasn't an unpretentious place left in Scottsdale, think again. This hole-in-the-wall hangout, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2009, is possibly the only place left where you'll be out of place ordering a Cosmo, or anything else that contains more than two ingredients.

So what, you say? Aren't there are plenty of neighborhood bars like that around the Valley? Yes, but this one has more personality. It's the kind of place where you feel like a regular when you've been there just five minutes.

Best time of day to go? Just about anytime. They open at 6 a.m., and day drinkers are not pariahs here. Best time of the year to go, even though they're open 365 days, is around the holidays for its famous (or infamous) indoor/outdoor mega-watt light display, which probably can be seen from space. Before drinking too much, view the lights through 3-D glasses. Whoa.

Info: 7011 E. Indian School Road, Scottsdale; 480-990-3433, coachhousescottsdale.com

Durant's

Yes, it's a legendary fine-dining establishment in central Phoenix that opened in 1950. But its bar holds its own – just look up to see the line of local “best of” awards that already have been bestowed. The décor – red velvet-flocked wallpaper, red tufted booths and wild carpeting – is so old that it's no longer dated, it's retro. The bow-tied bartenders are pros, both efficient and empathetic. The ostensible reason people come is for the martinis, which are, to the naked eye, mixed the same way they are everywhere else.

But there's something special here. Maybe it's the fact that you know big deals have gone down here – history was made, major events celebrated. You're sitting on the same barstool that could have held up a political bigwig or captain of industry. Jack Durant is gone, but he left a legacy – not an easy feat in this transient town.

Info: 2611 N. Central Ave., Phoenix; 602-264-5967,
durantsaz.com

George & Dragon Pub

British soccer hooligans, old punk rockers and garden-variety hipsters mingle easily in this bastion of all things British. If you want to catch Manchester United on the telly, this is your place. While you root, fill your belly with bangers and mash, steak and kidney pie, fish and chips or Cornish pasties. Wash it down with a bottle of Fuller's or Sam Smith, brought across the pond, or one of their two-dozen draught beers. Not a soccer fan? They show local sports on their many screens, too. Or you can play pool, darts, poker or trivia, or head to the patio for a smoke. The booths have seen better days, and the place has little polish, but that's all part of the charm.

Info: 4240 N. Central Ave., Phoenix; 602-241-0018,
georgeanddragonpub.net

Greasewood Flat

Imagine a beer garden, complete with rows and rows of picnic tables, but on the set of a Western movie. Cue up a band playing Waylon Jennings' and Willie Nelson's “Luckenbach, Texas.” Add in fire barrels, horseshoes, wagon wheels, a couple of roosters, some donkeys and a dance floor where all ages sway and jump to the beat.

Greasewood Flat is an experience for tourists, locals and bikers alike who come for the sheer novelty. People pile their empties into plastic trash cans and listen for their number to be called so they can eat bacon green chili cheeseburgers and chilidogs out of paper baskets. Don't get fancy with your drink, either: Lines snake out the door of the claustrophobic “bar” (more like a counter where you order and then high-tail it back outside), and you bark out your order on demand as soon as you belly up.

Info: 27375 N. Alma School Pkwy., Scottsdale; 480-585-9430, greasewoodflat.net

Irish Pubs

Fibber Magees

The facade says suburban strip mall, but walk through the doors and you'll swear you've been transported to the Emerald Isle. This classic pub is chock full of dusty antiques, a wall of books and wobbly tables with brandy barrels for bases. A lively crowd keeps the energy up all the time, but Pub Quiz nights on Tuesdays are particularly fun. Fibber and its sister pub, Skeptical Chymist (page 96), hold highly competitive (and darn difficult) trivia rounds, with quarterly finals where the best teams from both pubs meet at one pub or the other.

Drinks are everything you'd expect: pints of Guinness and Harp, black-and-tans, a selection of Irish whiskies and Scotches. Food is hearty – the corned beef and cabbage boxty is a favorite, with the filling encased in a savory green onion-studded potato pancake, and the Belfast burger bursts with juiciness.

Info: 1989 W. Elliot Road, Ste. 19, Chandler; 480-722-9434, fibbermageespub.com

Rosie McCaffrey's

Rosie's been riveting the crowds since 2001, when she and husband Seamus McCaffrey opened this location. They started with the first Irish pub in Arizona, the Dubliner, in 1984, and established Seamus McCaffrey's in 1991 (more on that to the right). The Dubliner was the only place at the time that served Guinness, and McCaffrey is still insistent on pouring a perfect pint, which involves a two-step method, allowing time in between each pour for the nitrous in the beer to settle; a lot of

bars, he says, don't do it right.

This Camelback Corridor spot attracts jovial regulars and visitors and expats from the British Isles, partly due to the pints and partly for its ambience: McCaffrey models his places after real Irish pubs. And early on Sunday mornings, he airs Glasgow Celtic soccer games so homesick Europeans can watch in real time.

Info: 906 E. Camelback Road, Phoenix; 602-241-1916, rosiemccaffreys.com

Seamus McCaffrey's

This is one of those rare Phoenix establishments with real character, from the low copper ceiling (one of the three remaining original pressed copper ceilings in Phoenix) and brick walls to the collection of police department badges and Irish road signs. The long, narrow space with the long, classic bar is rollicking, with live Irish music Thursday through Saturday nights. Andrew Mirtich and Frank Murray, who worked for Seamus McCaffrey at the Dubliner (read more under Rosie McCaffrey's), now run this location as well as The Turf, though McCaffrey is still a business partner here. It attracts the masses after work, concerts and games, and good luck even getting near the place on St. Patrick's Day.

Stop in for the largest selection of scotches in the state (more than 120) and a late-night bite: The kitchen stays open to sate other restaurant and hospitality workers after their shifts.

Info: 18 W. Monroe St., Phoenix; 602-253-6081, seamusmccaffreys.com

Skeptical Chymist

The décor here alone is a must-see: It's done up to resemble an antique apothecary shop, thus the name, which comes from a book written by Irishman Robert Boyle, the "father of modern chemistry." As at its sister location, Fibber Magees, Tuesday Pub Quiz nights are packed. It's worth going just to hear the inventive team names: Four Housecats of the Apocalypse, Bloody Hell, and Ted Kennedy Eight Weeks Sober, to name a few. (Each week, the best name wins a prize.)

But there's no bad time to hit the Chymist, which has the antidote to the Boring Bar Blues. It's upbeat and convivial, the food is above-par (mmm, curry fries), they host live music Wednesdays through Saturdays, they show soccer games, and they're the official bar of the Seattle Seahawks. Best of all, they sell a drink called the Irish Car Bomb – Guinness, Bushmills and Baileys. Love it.

Info: 15688 N. Pima Road, Ste. C6, Scottsdale; 480-609-8677, skepticalchymist.com

The Turf Irish Pub & Restaurant

Opened in 2009 by Andrew Mirtich and Frank Murray (the team that co-owns Seamus McCaffrey's), this is 180 degrees from your typical pub – and we like the twist. Instead of trying to replicate old Irish ambience, they went contemporary. Designer touches include chocolate brown leather club chairs, pendant lighting and funky booth upholstery. A groovy green glow emanates from behind the bar, and tabletops are smartly accented with amber votive candleholders.

It attracts the downtown after-work crowd and Arizona State University students and faculty (the campus is a Blarney stone's throw away), who cluster inside, watch sports at the bar or congregate on the patio. The most popular dish is the corned beef quesadillas, and in addition to Irish mainstays, the menu is updated with salads and wraps. A dozen beers on tap, a small but decent wine list and the second-largest selection of Scotches in Arizona (in deference to Seamus) round out the offerings.

Info: 705 N. First St., Phoenix; 602-296-5043, theturfpub.com

Resort Bars

Mbar

The "M" stands for Morocco, which is the predominant theme in the décor here as well as the resort's adjacent restaurant, Prado. Prado supplies the tapas on the bar menu (such as grilled prawns, wood-roasted beets and day boat scallops), so don't come here just for drinks. But if you don't heed our advice, you're still in for an experience. The gleaming Mbar, oozing Old World charm, attracts the well heeled.

If you aren't in that echelon, go for happy hour from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, when house wines, house cocktails, beers and select tapas are \$5. It's worth full-price on weekend nights, though, to sink into a lounge seat and listen to live music, imagining you're being serenaded in some exotic locale.

Info: InterContinental Montelucia Resort & Spa, 4949 E. Lincoln Drive, Paradise Valley; 480-627-3200, pradolife.com

Edge

We admit it; we're suckers for great views. There are some doozies in town, but this ranks right up there, making first-timers let out a slow "wooooww" as they take in Camelback and Mummy mountains. It's also one of those places that just makes you *feel* cool. Basked in hues of lime green and violet, perched on the edge of the building on a wood deck overlooking the lighted pool, you can melt right into the cushy modern lounge seating. Sunsets, Valley lights and starlit nights are what it's all about.

It's not all style and no substance, though: Serious thought has gone into the drinks, made with fresh herbs and spices; some are prepared tableside as part of the "mobile mixology" program. And Beau McMillan's menu from the restaurant Elements is available at Edge every evening. But beware: There's only room for 30, so arrive early or risk being edge-d out.

Info: Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort & Spa, 5700 E. McDonald Drive, Paradise Valley; 480-948-2100, sanctuaryoncamelback.com

Lobby Bar

Serene desert scenery sets the stage outside of the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa, and American Indian culture and hospitality inside make for a unique bar atmosphere at this local treasure. Walking in, the domed ceiling grabs your attention, painted with vignettes of Pima and Maricopa Indian life. A two-story cascading rock indoor waterfall provides a soothing gurgle as gentle flute music drifts through the relaxed space. A wall of windows overlooks the patio, complete with fire pits, and the resort's pool area. Beyond, the Sierra Estrellas and South Mountain provide an unforgettable backdrop. The resort's name is not hyperbole: Wild horses do roam the property, and if you're lucky, you might see a few. Whether you indulge with a Rosarita margarita and some chicken quesadilla "cigars" or buffalo sliders, or just groove to the sounds of the flute-infused rock classics by the award-winning weekend band, Blue Stone Project, you'll find yourself entering a sacred place.

Info: Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa, 5594 W. Wild Horse Pass Blvd., Chandler; 602-225-0100, wildhorsepassresort.com

Red Bar

When you see not one, but two Bentleys on your way out of the Mondrian Scottsdale, you get an idea of the kind of place it is. A bevy of celebs and athletes have been spotted here. Wear your sexiest outfit, because you don't want to be outshined by the ambience. It's no wonder the Red Bar is the main image on the hotel's Website – it's a jaw-dropping, hotter-than-hot space where red light glows through red Lucite chairs, and red upholstered lounge seating lines the perimeter of both the interior and the patio.

People-watching is the premier activity, though, and it gets going later, so don't be surprised if it's dead before 10 p.m. It's also the place where people with Bentleys buy drinks and bottle service, so bring the credit card with the higher limit.

Info: Mondrian Scottsdale, 7353 E. Indian School Road, Scottsdale; 480-444-0549, mondrianscottsdale.com

Stone Rose Lounge

You say you want a patio? More than half of this bar sits under the stars, except for the four-sided, wall-less bar on a raised pavilion in the center and an adjacent indoor bar. The pavilion is surrounded by a glowing blue rock pond and encircled by pods of lounge seating and fire pits. Low-key techno music bumps up the ambience from simple to swanky. The Gerber Group nightlife entrepreneurs (that's Mr. Cindy Crawford and Co.) created this outdoor oasis in the courtyard of the Fairmont Scottsdale. It's a stunning choice for a sunset drink but also brings in a later crowd, especially on special nights (it hosts fashion shows, themed parties and event after-parties). Drinks – like the crowd – can be showy, with a tony list of martinis, single-malt scotch, pricey Champagne and fine tequilas (a few of which run upward of \$100 per shot). There's a cigar menu, too.

Info: Fairmont Scottsdale, 7575 E. Princess Drive, Scottsdale; 480-419-3190, gerberbars.com

Restaurant Bars

Caffe Boa

So it doesn't have the eye-popping ambience of the other bars in this category, but it made the cut for several reasons: It's almost always hopping; their Best of Award of Excellence from *Wine Spectator* magazine and unusual variety of wines outshines most; the quality of food is many steps above what you get elsewhere; and

bartenders know their stuff but aren't know-it-alls – they're friendly, well-trained and willing to help find you that perfect glass.

Even true oenophiles will find something here they haven't had, like a blend of Riesling, Yellow Muscat and Auxerrois from Slovenia. Or try a trio of new sips, with one of their reasonably priced flights. Pair it with house-made charcuterie and artisan cheese, or order one of Chef Payton Curry's delectable appetizers.

Info: 398 S. Mill Ave., Tempe, 480-968-9112; 2857 N. Power Road, Mesa, 480-981-2000, cafeboa.com

Frank & Albert's

The name comes from legendary architect Frank Lloyd Wright and his student Albert Chase McArthur, who collaborated to build the Arizona Biltmore. The restaurant opened there last October with a classic design based on their principles. Warm reds and golds, wood floors and geometric patterns prevail. Sleek booths and lounge furniture beckon weary travelers and locals alike. Natural, recessed and indirect lighting makes it even more relaxed, and a wall of windows looks onto courtyard gardens.

The bar menu features a lively mix of seasonal cocktails and updated standards that reference our desert tastes – witness the Prickly Peartini – and the resort's FLW heritage, as in the drink called "Falling Water." Bar bites hug the obvious but with twists: Chilidogs, chicken "lollipops" and pizza all boast local ingredients and a chef's hand. Go from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. daily for happy hour, when select wines, beers, cocktails and food items are \$5.

Info: Arizona Biltmore, 2400 E. Missouri Ave., Phoenix; 602-381-7632, frankandalberts.com

Hanny's

From 1947 to 1986, this space operated as a distinguished men's clothier, also called Hanny's. Now it's one of the more interesting places to drink in this town, both architecturally and design-wise, thanks to a three-year restoration by Karl Kopp, who brought us AZ88 in Scottsdale. Mingle with the after-work crowd here early; hipsters and fashionistas strut in later, and pre- and post-theater crowds flock here on the weekends due to its proximity to Herberger Theater Center, Phoenix Symphony Hall and Orpheum Theatre.

Drinks are divine and lean toward the classics: martinis, Pimm's Cups, and 1940s-inspired cocktails with absinthe and chartreuse. They also make *caipirinhas*, Brazil's national cocktail, and mojitos and offer brief but inspired wine and beer lists. The menu is basic – pizza, sandwiches, salads, munchies – but the kitchen is open until 1 a.m. nightly. Other highlights include a vintage Berkel charcuterie slicer at the bar and funhouse-style bathrooms.

Info: 40 N. First St., Phoenix; 602-252-2285, hannys.net

House of Tricks

This completely *al fresco* bar was built on what was an overgrown "no man's land" between the restaurant's two bungalows, says owner Robin Trick. When they cleared the thorny bushes that were taking over, they realized it was the perfect place for a bar. We agree. The bar top itself was even built to snuggle around ash and chinaberry trees, so you feel in tune with nature rather than cooped up inside a dark space. You're still drinking, but somehow it feels better to sip a seasonal cocktail under the stars. (A canvas canopy shields it somewhat, but you get the idea.) Fireplaces keep you toasty on cool nights; misters make it pleasant in the summer.

If the ambience isn't enough, come for the not-your-usual-suspects wine list and the food: House-made pecan-smoked salmon is a standout, but anything Chef Kelly Fletcher whips up will make your mouth water.

Info: 114 E. Seventh St., Tempe; 480-968-1114, houseoftricks.com

J&G Steakhouse

When Jean-Georges Vongerichten opened an outpost here at The Phoenician, some were skeptical. Another steakhouse? Another absentee celebrity chef? And in the spot the venerable Mary Elaine's occupied? Travesty after travesty. But Mary Elaine's was the product of a bygone era, and J&G spiffed up the space and brought it into this century with aplomb.

With its modern lines, contemporary colors (chocolate brown to conjure the idea of meat; deep plum to evoke wine), sparkling onyx bar and gorgeous city views, it will have you at "hello." The menu is the same as the restaurant side, so don't expect happy hour deals here. One sort-of exception: "Burger and Brew with a View" gets you a burger with fries and a beer for \$19. Otherwise, even the apps are \$10-\$20, but the splurge is worth it.

Info: The Phoenician, 6000 E. Camelback Road, Scottsdale; 480-214-8000, jgsteakhousescottsdale.com

Singles Bars

Blue Martini

Eye-popping bustiers on ready-to-please waitresses pump up men's confidence, among other things. Red and blue inset lighting makes everyone look pretty. A high-decibel sound level makes it feel happening even when there's no live band, and a cigar patio gives it a Rat Pack-y vibe. At a place called Blue Martini, you'd expect a decent drinks list, and they deliver. A long list with cute names and concepts like Almond Joy, Key Lime Pie and Fly Me to the Moon make for a difficult decision. But if you're concerned about fitting into those jeans tomorrow, they also offer the Skinny Bitch (under 250 calories). By the way, since we're all trying to look good, don't expect messy wings and greasy fries – food is upscale, from the fruit and cheese plate to the luscious sliced beef tenderloin entrée.

Info: 5455 E. High St., Ste. 101, Phoenix; 480-638-2583, bluemartinilounge.com

Olive & Ivy

Dig the inside/outside layout on the Scottsdale Waterfront, complete with sprawling patio, which boasts fire pits, fountains and greenery. This is the arena for the throngs who spill out of Olive & Ivy's bar, sizing up everyone else within their range of vision. Deejays spin while heads turn. All ages congregate here, though it skews to those who, let's say, don't tend to get carded.

Don't even think about trying to get a spot at the bar after about 6 p.m. on a Friday, unless you have fast reflexes and strong elbows. (If you strike out, you can always cruise the other Waterfront bars, such as Wildfish Seafood Grill.) Oh yes, there's stuff to eat and drink, too – they offer a Cali-Mediterranean type menu and a whopper of a wine list (45 by the glass). Be forewarned: Even a Bud Light will set you back \$4.50, and prices go up from there.

Info: 7135 E. Camelback Road, Ste. 195, Scottsdale; 480-751-2200, foxrc.com

Saddle Ranch Chop House

If you think successfully riding a mechanical bull is a great way to attract the opposite sex, this is your place. Urban cowboys and cowgirls take their turns, so don't be shocked to hear cries of "Yee-haw!" on a regular basis, even from men wearing sport coats. The décor is stereotypical Western all the way, with horseshoes, chaps, branding irons and other implements gracing the walls. Drinks get names like the Bull Fighter and Gold Rush.

Meet your sweetie over S'mores on outdoor fire pits, or offer a bite of your mammoth portion of dry-aged beef that comes on a plate bigger than the tabletops at glitzier bars. The fact that the building dates to the 1950s and was once an actual barn does lessen the cheesiness of it all – but just by a bit.

Info: 4321 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale; 480-429-2263, srrestaurants.com

Sapporo

People do come here to eat – there's a real sushi bar and everything – but the main attraction is the cougar scene. The 40-year-old-plus women cake on the makeup and don their best bling – the Swarovski family need not fear their futures as long as there are single women in Scottsdale – and the 20-something boy toys with untucked shirts and sculpted abs get their hair gelled just right for this outing. The bar gets so packed it's nearly impossible for the servers to get through, but that doesn't stop anyone from trying to snag a spot and strike a pose. And even in a land where plastic (and we don't mean credit cards) is pervasive, the blatant displays here are almost perverse, but it simply adds to the charm of the place and makes for a fun night out if only to people watch.

Info: 14344 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale; 480-607-1114, sappororestaurants.com

Va Bene

Far from the club hub of Scottsdale lies a small but active singles scene in an obscure strip mall in Ahwatukee, which is so backwater they don't even have valet parking... yet. Folks from their 30s and up gather around the specially engineered square bar in the center that has no posts, so views are free and clear to all sides. As you can imagine, this facilitates companionship. So does a rocking band; the tiny dance floor is premium real estate as the night wears on.

Bartenders mix a mean martini, and if you get there before the kitchen closes, try the food – they have some of the best apps in the business. Gamberoni con Prosciutto (prosciutto- and basil-wrapped shrimp with roasted red pepper cream sauce) or an antipasto plate are perfect for sharing with a new friend.

Info: 4647 E. Chandler Blvd., Phoenix; 480-706-4070, vabeneaz.com

Sports Bars

American Junkie

What other sports bar boasts Stooges, Sex Pistols and Reverend Horton Heat posters along with beanbag toss games and all the screens you could possibly need for games during the day and videos at night? None, we say. This locally owned newcomer to the Scottsdale scene is where jocks and rockers can coexist and no one will feel out of place. A large, round bar in the center under an atrium with clerestory windows is the focal point, but no matter where you are – at the secondary bar on the side, on the patio, on the oversized couch or at a dining table – you’re part of the action.

The drinks selection runs the gamut, too, from PBR on draft to seasonal cocktails to bottle service. Hungry? Try the three-cheese mac-and-cheese for \$6. Love the “Junkie Wheel” – you can take a spin and win prizes such as T-shirts or gift certificates.

Info: 4363 N. 75th St., Scottsdale; 480-990-3000, americanjunkieaz.com

Half Moon Sports Grill

All decked out in sports gear and nowhere to root? Rabid fans and low-key observers alike enjoy Half Moon. The atmosphere is clean and classy, but the crowds don’t hold back when there’s a great play (or bad one). Multiple screens can be seen from every vantage point on both levels and on the smoking patio, so even if you aren’t a sports fan, the cheers, jeers and replays will make you feel like one.

Excellent burgers (try the Southwest burger with real Anaheim chilies), crunchy seasoned fries and decent wings make dinner a winner here, too. Amazing specials during happy hours, weekends and game days make this a place for all sports and all seasons. All the major pro and college sports are shown, and so are UFC fights. Private rooms (reserve at no charge) are perfect for groups.

Info: 2121 E. Highland Ave., Phoenix, 602-977-2700; 288 E. Greenway Pkwy., Phoenix, 602-993-6600, halfmoonsportsgrill.com

Jilly’s American Grill

You have to love a sports bar that lets you control the action, thanks to in-wall remotes behind each booth. If your team is on, you’re in business here – no having to cajole waitresses or argue with other patrons. Even if you’re in the bar section or on the smoking patio, there are more than 60 screens in the place, so chances are you’ll find something to cheer for. Food runs the regular sports grub gamut: burgers, wraps, sandwiches, salads and full entrées. The Memphis pork sandwich and Granny Smith apple salad both are tasty, and the plump, juicy, crispy “Best Damn Wings” live up to their name.

Want to celebrate a big win (or maybe drown your sorrows after a big loss)? All drinks are 2-for-1 from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. daily. The place really gets rolling later, though, with one of the few nightlife scenes in the Ahwatukee/Chandler area.

Info: 825 N. 54th St., Chandler; 480-763-6909, jillyschandler.com

Majerle’s Sports Grill

Whether you’re on your way to or from a game, you’re an after-work Downtown office jockey flying solo at the bar, or you’re out with a group of friends just happy to be in the shadow of US Airways Center on game night, Majerle’s is a place for camaraderie. Former Phoenix Suns player and assistant coach “Thunder” Dan Majerle opened the cozy place in 1992, which is near-historic status for anything in Downtown Phoenix.

While you’re there, try a “gorilla’s dozen” (13) chicken wings with thick, sturdy carrots and celery – none of those limp veggie wimps – and items featured on the Food Network, such as Slam Dunk Shrimp and the Asian Chicken Salad. They score extra points for friendly service and a happy hour that lasts until 8 p.m., too.

Info: 24 N. Second St., Phoenix, 602-253-0118; 3095 W. Chandler Blvd., Chandler, 480-899-7999; 13375 W. McDowell Road, Goodyear, 623-207-6999, majerles.com

R. T. O’Sullivan’s

It's actually an Irish bar with corned beef on the menu and a real Irish guy (Ray O'Sullivan) at the helm, but it's a respectable sports bar as well. The newest of their three locations is tidy and cheery, with a comfortable, neighborhood-bar feel and more than 60 television screens. The three-tiered setting separates the bar from the dining area and a lower level with pool tables, video games and an indoor-outdoor bar. Smoking is allowed on the climate-controlled patio.

Beer drinkers will love the 20 varieties on tap (yes, that includes Guinness, Smithwick's and Magners Irish Cider) and about 30 in bottles, with \$2.50 Harp bottles all day, every day. But frou-frou drinkers aren't left on the sidelines, thanks to a lengthy list of creative cocktails like the Pineapple Upside Down Cake, Cookies 'N' Cream, and every kind of martini and shot you could dream up.

Info: 5830 W. Bell Road, Glendale, 602-938-5300; 6646 Superstition Springs Blvd., Mesa, 480-396-9933; 1010 W. Southern Ave., Mesa, 480-844-1290, rtosullivans.com

Wine Bars

Bomberos Café and Wine Bar

This intimate Sunnyslope hideaway is notable for its all-South American wine list, a risky proposition in a market devoted to its California cabs and chards. But it has paid off for Uruguayan-born owner Oscar Mastrantuono and his wife, Kristi.

Because the building was a former fire station, they named the place after the Spanish word for "fireman." The trifecta of exposed brick, roll-up garage doors and lounge seating gives it all the right moves. The spacious, lush back patio with mature trees and fountains adds bonus points. Excellent bruschettas – try the *atún*, or tuna – and a fine by-the-glass list raise this past the level of neighborhood hangout to a destination venue, especially on Saturday nights when South American bands perform.

By the way, that by-the-glass list boasts 32 wines you rarely, if ever, see elsewhere – from the likes of Brazil and Uruguay, as well as the more commonly seen Argentina and Chile.

Info: 8801 N. Central Ave., Ste. 104, Phoenix; 602-687-8466, bomberoswinebar.com

Cheuvront Restaurant & Wine Bar

Nothing cheesy about this slick, modern, Downtown space – except, of course, the cheese. Owner Ken Cheuvront (also a Democratic state senator representing central Phoenix) searches high and low, and attends cheese competitions, to pick more than 40 artisan selections for his menu. He even pairs cheese flights with wine flights. Don't know your Manchego from your Mimolette? Don't fear: The staff, praise be, is highly trained and can help if you give them some direction.

Oh yes, the wines are well chosen, too, with a few dozen international and domestics by the glass and a bottle list that proves someone knows their regions, especially when it comes to France. A full menu (including fantastic filet mignon and marvelous mac-and-cheese), a full bar, fabulous happy hour, films in French and a jam-packed schedule of wine tastings, cheese tastings and wine dinners make Cheuvront everything you could want under one roof.

Info: 1326 N. Central Ave., Phoenix; 602-307-0022, cheuvronts.com

Crush at Christopher's

If you plan to hit the Biltmore for some power shopping and don't make time to stop here for a mid-afternoon break, you will seriously envy those relaxed-looking patrons sunken into the lounge furniture on the 40-seat wrap-around patio watching you lug your bags. They look spoiled and serene as they hold slim stems and sip from a sensuous rotating list that leans toward European and South American wines (co-owner and sommelier Paola Embry is from Chile).

Inside, it's even more stylish. Chocolate brown seating with pops of citrus green, orange and gold accent the 25-seat space. And since it's part of the renowned restaurant Christopher's, expect some serious snacks: duck confit and fig pizza, truffle fries or a petit steak *au poivre*, for instance. Bring a friend and share a half-liter of select wine and a cheese plate for \$16, or expand your palate with a flight.

Info: Biltmore Fashion Park, 2502 E. Camelback Road, Ste. 102, Phoenix; 602-522-2344, christophersaz.com

D’Vine Bistro & Wine Bar

Why can’t there be more wine bars like this for wine-starved suburbanites? They have about 40 wines by the glass, including stalwarts and surprises. They have wine tastings on Wednesdays – Tuesdays in Mesa – for \$5, so you can try new vintages without a commitment (if you order \$10 or more for dinner, the tasting is free). Flights feature higher-end wines at a reasonable price.

The menu is one of the best of any wine bar anywhere, and it’s tailor-made for noshing, thanks to small plates, mini pizzas and killer salads (love the “black & bleu,” with spiced beef tenderloin and bleu cheese crumbles). Special wine pairing dinners let the chefs and sommeliers shine. Regular musicians perform every Sunday, Monday and Wednesday at the Mesa location and Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Chandler location; check the Website for special performances and other events.

There’s room for more places like this outside the city, but unfortunately, few places do so much so well. No wonder they draw the crowds.

Info: 3990 S. Alma School Road, Chandler, 480-782-5550; 2837-101 N. Power Road, Mesa, 480-654-4171, dvinewine101.com

Postino Winecafé

The godfather of all things great in wine bars in Phoenix, Postino is what others are modeled after. The original location in Arcadia sits in a former post office (thus the moniker) and continues to please with its leafy patio and butter-and-sage palette. But its newer sister location on Central Avenue in the former Katz’s Deli is cozier. It’s still a see-and-be-seen place but a bit more mature. Maybe it’s the heated/cooled dog-friendly back patio (expanded in late 2009) or the indoor/outdoor bar.

Thankfully, this incarnation continues to serve atypical, excellent wines (including one “on tap”) and unfussy but crave-worthy munchies. The popular, shareable bruschetta is still relevant here, thanks to winning combos such as tomato jam and fresh sheep’s milk cheese; the paninis also pop.

Play hooky and go extra early some day: All wines and pitchers of beer are \$5 from noon to 5 p.m. daily, a deal that everyone should experience at least once. Even Sundays can be slammed, thanks to Italian-influenced brunch offerings such as a B.E.L.T. panini or ciabatta French toast, perfect for pairing with a fresh-squeezed mimosa or bellini.

Info: 5144 N. Central Ave., Phoenix, 602-274-5144; 3939 E. Campbell Ave., Phoenix, 602-852-3939, postinowinecafe.com

Happenin’ HAPPY HOUR

Blanco Tacos + Tequila

IT’S ALL BUSTLE AT THIS PRETTY, COBALT BLUE-HUED RESTAURANT, WITH SERVERS RUNNING TO AND FROM THE EXPOSED KITCHEN AND BARTENDERS HUSTLING UP AND DOWN THE LONG, OPEN BAR SMACK DAB IN THE CENTER OF THIS EXPANSIVE SPACE. BUT DON’T WORRY – THE SERVICE HERE IS ATTENTIVE DESPITE THE MANIC TEMPO. IF ALL LOUNGE SEATS ARE SPOKEN FOR, HOVER UNTIL A SPOT OPENS UP. HAPPY HOUR RUNS 4 P.M. TO 6 P.M. MONDAY THROUGH THURSDAY WITH HALF-OFF CHEESE CRISPS, STARTERS, HOUSE MARGARITAS AND DRAFT BEER. THE CREAMY, SPICY GUACAMOLE IS ALWAYS A HIT; SO IS THE MOUTH-WATERING SHORT RIB AND AVOCADO CRISP.

Info: 6166 N. SCOTTSDALE ROAD, STE. 601, SCOTTSDALE; 480-305-6692, FOXRC.COM

District American Kitchen & Wine Bar

SETTLE INTO A HANDSOME PALETTE OF SOOTHING EARTH TONES AND MODERN ARCHITECTURE. ADMIRE THE WALL OF GLASS TILES SPARKLING BEHIND THE BAR. GAZE OUT FLOOR-TO-CEILING WINDOWS AT OFFICE DRONES AND CONVENTIONEERS STROLLING BY. THEN TIP ONE BACK AND NIBBLE ON FANTASTIC SNACKS. FROM 3 P.M. TO 7 P.M. OR 10 P.M. TO CLOSE MONDAY THROUGH SATURDAY, BAR BITES LIKE MEATLOAF SLIDERS ARE \$3 TO \$5; DRINK SPECIALS INCLUDE \$6 MARTINIS, \$5 WINES, \$4 WELLS, \$3 DRAFT BEERS (GOOD ARIZONAN STUFF LIKE FOUR PEAKS, OAK CREEK AND NIMBUS) AND, THE BEST DEAL HERE, SUMPTUOUS SANGRIA FOR \$3.75.

Info: SHERATON PHOENIX DOWNTOWN HOTEL, 320 N. THIRD ST., PHOENIX; 602-817-5400, DISTRICTRESTAURANT.COM

Famous Dave’s

OOEY, GOOEY, FALL-OFF-THE-BONE RIBS ARE THE MAIN ATTRACTION AT THESE SLIGHTLY HOKEY “ROADSIDE SHACKS,” SO JUST THROW YOUR INHIBITIONS TO THE WIND AND DIG IN. TWO THICK, MEATY RIBS ARE \$3 FROM 3 P.M. TO 7 P.M. MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY AND 3 P.M. TO 6 P.M. SATURDAY AND SUNDAY; OR YOU CAN GET SIX WINGS, ONION STRINGS, THREE CHICKEN TENDERS, TWO BBQ SLIDERS OR A BASKET OF RIB TIPS FOR THE SAME PRICE. DOMESTIC DRAFTS ARE \$3 (16 OUNCES) AND \$4 (23 OUNCES); IMPORT DRAFTS ARE \$4 AND \$5.

Info: 16148 N. 83RD AVE., PEORIA; 623-979-3706; OTHER LOCATIONS: CHANDLER (480-782-1212) AND MESA (480-615-1444), FAMOUSDAVES.COM

Fleming’s Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar

YOU SAY YOU HAVE TENDERLOIN TASTE ON A BURGER BUDGET? FLEMING’S “5 FOR \$6 ’TIL 7” HAPPY HOUR IS THE TICKET, WITH FIVE OF THEIR DECADENT FULL-SIZE APPETIZERS – AND A BURGER – FOR \$6 UNTIL 7 P.M. DAILY. THIS INCLUDES AN OUTSTANDING BEEF CARPACCIO WITH CREOLE MUSTARD SAUCE, AND THE PIÈCE DE RÉSISTANCE, THEIR JUICY 8-OUNCE PRIME BURGER WITH CHEESE AND BACON ON A GOLDEN,

BUTTERY BUN. IT GETS BETTER. PAIR THESE WITH ONE OF FIVE QUALITY WINES BY THE GLASS OR FIVE COCKTAILS FOR \$6, TOO. THE CLASSIC KETEL ONE MARTINI WITH BLUE CHEESE OLIVES IS A STEAL.

Info: 905 N. 54TH ST., CHANDLER, 480-940-1900; OTHER LOCATIONS: PEORIA (623-772-9463), SCOTTSDALE (480-596-8265), NORTH SCOTTSDALE (480-538-8000), FLEMINGSSTEAKHOUSE.COM

Geisha a Go Go

GREAT GYOZA, SUPER SUSHI, INDOOR/OUTDOOR AMBIENCE AND THE MOST INTERESTING TOILETS IN TOWN (REALLY, CHECK THEM OUT) HAVE MADE GEISHA A DESIRABLE DOWNTOWN SCOTTSDALE DESTINATION FOR A FEW YEARS NOW. DAILY FROM 4 P.M. TO 7 P.M., GET HALF-OFF APPETIZERS, HOUSE MAKI, SAKE BOMBERS, SEASONAL WINE/SAKE INFUSIONS AND SPECIALTY DRINKS, INCLUDING THEIR FAMOUS HELLO KITTY. CHECK OUT ASTROBOY, POKEMON AND RACER X SUSHI ROLLS (AND THEIR CHEEKY DESCRIPTIONS TO MATCH). FEELING ALL LOST IN TRANSLATION? PRIVATE KARAOKE BOOTHS ARE HALF-OFF AT HAPPY HOUR, TOO.

Info: 7150 E. SIXTH AVE., SCOTTSDALE; 480-699-0055, GEISHAAGOGO.COM

North

AH, A BEAUTIFUL SPOT FOR BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE TO HANG OUT AFTER A GRUELING DAY OF SHOPPING AT KIERLAND COMMONS. TAKE A LOAD OFF THOSE LOUBOUTINS ON THE COMFY, CUSHY PATIO FURNITURE AND UNWIND WITH A NOSH AND A SIP, DISCOUNTED FROM 3 P.M. TO 6:30 P.M. MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY. THE TRIO OF SPREADS (\$4.50) IS A GOOD PLACE TO START. WELL DRINKS ARE \$4, BOTTLED BEER IS \$2.50 AND ALL WINES (NEARLY A FEW DOZEN) ARE HALF OFF, MEANING YOU CAN SNAG A GLASS OF REFRESHING FRIULANO OR A DECENT VALPOLICELLA FOR UNDER \$5.

Info: 15024 N. SCOTTSDALE ROAD, STE. 160, SCOTTSDALE, 480-948-2055; OTHER LOCATION: GLENDALE (623-537-4500), FOXRC.COM

P.F. Chang's China Bistro

P.F. CHANG'S ALWAYS SEEMS TO HAVE A LINE, BUT HERE'S THE TRICK: GET THERE EARLY FOR THE 3 P.M. TO 6 P.M. HAPPY HOUR, AND AS A BONUS, GET A GREAT SELECTION OF BEERS, WINES, COCKTAILS AND APPETIZERS FOR \$3 TO \$6. THE HAPPY VALLEY LOCATION IS ESPECIALLY HAPPENING, THANKS TO AN OPEN FLOOR PLAN WITH A LONG BAR CONFIGURED AT EACH END TO BE CONDUCIVE FOR GROUPS – OR FOR MAKING NEW FRIENDS. SHARE PLATES OF CRUNCHY SPRING ROLLS (\$3), CRAB WONTONS (\$4), CRISPY CALAMARI (\$5), SPARE RIBS (\$6), AND THE TRIED-AND-TRUE, CROWD-PLEASING CHICKEN LETTUCE WRAPS (\$5).

Info: 2420 W. HAPPY VALLEY ROAD, PHOENIX, 623-707-4495; OTHER LOCATIONS: CHANDLER (480-899-0472), GOODYEAR (623-536-3222), MESA (480-218-4900), PEORIA (623-412-3335), SCOTTSDALE/KIERLAND (480-367-2999), SCOTTSDALE/WATERFRONT (480-949-2610), TEMPE (480-731-4600), PFCHANGS.COM

Ra

RA HAS ALWAYS KNOWN HOW TO KEEP US HAPPY, FROM THEIR KILLER SUSHI SPECIALS TO THE PRIME PEOPLE-WATCHING OPPORTUNITIES. WE'VE BEEN FANS OF THEIR HALF-PRICE HAPPY HOUR FOR AS LONG AS WE CAN REMEMBER, AND NOW THAT SATURDAYS ARE PART OF THE DEAL, WE'VE GONE FROM HAPPY TO SERIOUSLY SLAP-HAPPY. FROM 3 P.M. TO 7 P.M. MONDAY THROUGH SATURDAY, RA ROCKS OUR WORLD WITH HALF-PRICED SUSHI (WE LOVE THE TOOTSY MAKI AND CRUNCHY CALAMARI ROLL); HALF-PRICED APPETIZERS, INCLUDING TWO NEW ITEMS, KAISEN CEVICHE AND GRILLED SHORT RIBS; PLUS \$1, \$2, \$3, \$4 AND \$5 DRINK SPECIALS, INCLUDING BEER, WINE, SAKE AND COCKTAILS. HAPPY YET?

Info: LOCATIONS IN AHWATUKEE (480-940-1111), TEMPE (480-303-9800), MESA (480-632-9500), NORTH SCOTTSDALE (480-951-5888) AND OLD TOWN SCOTTSDALE (480-990-9256), RASUSHI.COM

Roaring Fork

THE GRANDDADDY OF ALL HAPPY HOURS, THANKS TO THE FULL-POUND BIG ASS BURGER FOR \$7 (REGULARLY \$13), AS WELL AS GREEN CHILI PORK STEW (\$7), GRILLED FISH TACOS (\$10), \$5 WINES, MARTINIS, MOJITOS AND MARGARITAS, \$4 WELL DRINKS AND \$3 DOMESTIC BOTTLES. THE KILLER DEALS, RUSTIC AMBIENCE AND WOOD-FIRED FOOD ACT AS ONE OF THOSE OLD IRON DINNER BELL TRIANGLES FOR THE SCOTTSDALE WORKFORCE UNLEASHED ON THE DAILY GRIND, SO GO EARLY TO STAKE YOUR CLAIM BEFORE THE SUITS SHOW UP. HAPPY HOUR RUNS 4 P.M. TO 7 P.M. IN THE SALOON AND ON THE PATIO, AND SUNDAY AND MONDAY FROM 4 P.M. TO CLOSE.

Info: 4800 N. SCOTTSDALE ROAD, SCOTTSDALE; 480-947-0795, ROARINGFORK.COM

Trader Vic's

MAYBE MANAGEMENT HAS GONE KOO-KOO FROM A TIKI CURSE, À LA THE BRADY BUNCH. OR THEY'VE HAD ONE TOO MANY MAI TAIS. HOW ELSE TO EXPLAIN THE INSANE HAPPY HOUR PRICES, LIKE A 6-OUNCE CHINESE OVEN-ROASTED MAUI BURGER FOR \$2? AND NOTHING ON THE ASIAN-INSPIRED MENU IS MORE THAN \$3, EVEN THE SPARE RIBS OR CALAMARI. DRINK SPECIALS INCLUDE \$6 SIGNATURE COCKTAILS. IT RUNS 4 P.M. TO 6 P.M. AND 9 P.M. TO 11 P.M. DAILY; GO LATE ON WEEKENDS WHEN YOU CAN EAT AND DRINK ON THE CHEAP AND SEE A LIVE BAND.

Info: 6850 E. MAIN ST., SCOTTSDALE; 480-421-7799, TRADERVICS.COM

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