

DISCOUNT BOOZE AND BITES » BEFORE AND AFTER DINNER

Happy hours are here to stay

Portland's bars and restaurants have made after-work drinks a cultural institution. **Cheri Hanson** recommends the top spots

Take a break from the economic bloodletting and visit Portland, Ore., for the best happy hour on the continent. Every weekday afternoon, Portlanders sip cheap cocktails and dig into ridiculously low-priced, well-crafted food. It's the perfect way to sample gourmet dishes from some of the area's top chefs at seriously thrifty prices.

More than 250 restaurants citywide participate in this cherished cultural institution. Relationships blossom, deals are signed on the dotted line and friends gather to gossip at a dizzying array of venues — from clubby old-boy bars to sleek spaces with DJs and rotating art installations. Happy hour typically stretches from 4 to 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. to close, but many restaurants are extending the cutoff and adding all-day-Sunday specials.

Happy hour in PDX (as the city's known in local slang, a nod to its three-letter airport code) is so popular that writer Cindy Anderson creates an annual guidebook complete with restaurant listings, reviews and colour-coded maps. You can also visit online portal UrbanDrinks.com to track lounges by neighbourhood and view hourly updates. Choose your spot and dig in — all for less than \$20 (U.S.). Even with the sluggish Canadian dollar, it's enough to make you forget the R-word.



The Doug Fir Lounge is a happy hour favourite with the indie crowd. TIM LABARGE FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

SAUCEBOX

www.saucebox.com

THE BUZZ Designed by rising architect — and native son — Brad Cloepfil, Saucebox is a sexy, glamorous space with a nice dash of Portland grit. Resident DJ Mr. MuMu and guest spinners provide the soundtrack for some of the best people-watching in town.

THE BITES Pan-Asian meets Pacific Island with locally sourced ingredients. Executive chef Gregory Gourdet turns out culinary mash-ups such as tapioca dumplings, white miso soup and grilled squid skewers.

THE BOOZE Sip a halekulani mai tai or an orchid martini shaken with house-made fruit infusions and elixirs.

THE PORTLAND CITY GRILL

www.portlandcitygrill.com

THE BUZZ Drink in stunning city and mountain views at this grande dame of happy hour, where the downtown suit-and-tie crowd mingles with well-heeled afternoon shoppers. Take the elevator to the 30th floor and get ready to pounce; tables don't remain empty for long.

THE BITES An extensive Northwest-meets-Asian menu that includes \$3 soba salad, \$6 flatiron seared tombo tuna and togarashi spiced fire-fries for a bargain \$2.

THE BOOZE The pricey but inventive cocktail list covers everything from acai berry mojitos to the hot and dirty martini.

UPTOWN BILLIARDS CLUB

www.uptownbilliards.com

THE BUZZ A classic pool hall with a handsome wooden bar and a down-to-earth vibe. Bet your friends on that signature corner pocket shot, but do expect to put your name on the waiting list.

THE BITES Don't miss the five-course happy hour menu for \$10, or \$20 with wine pairings. Every week offers new riffs on a thematic ingredient, from beets to celeriac, transformed into soups, mains and desserts, such as apple celery strudel with Chantilly cream.

THE BOOZE Raid the enormous wine cellar, or get the bartender to pour you one of Portland's renowned craft beers.

JOBA! RESTAURANTE

www.obarestaurant.com

THE BUZZ Experience *hora felix* at this spicy spot in the SoHo-style Pearl district. It's a perennial local favourite.

THE BITES Travel the culinary globe from your barstool with specialties influenced by the Caribbean, Cuba, South and Central America and Mexico — with a Pacific Northwest twist, of course. That means \$6 prime rib coyotes or plantain *tostones* with jalapeno-pumpkin seed *pipian* for \$4.25. There are also extensive wheat- and dairy-free or vegetarian options.

THE BOOZE The massive wine list is appropriately international. You could also sample the killer margaritas.

DOUG FIR LOUNGE

www.dougfir lounge.com

THE BUZZ Take a cool atmosphere and add live bands in this retro-rugged haunt just east of the downtown business district. Watch for skinny indie boys and girls catching their favourite local act in the lounge, or nibble away in the bar (clad in Douglas fir). It's all tucked into a boutique hotel called the Jupiter.

THE BITES Expect log-cabin comfort food, including a cheeseburger with Tillamook cheddar and mom's tomato soup. Or pick the dense bread pudding after you polish off the salmon chowder. They're all around \$6 during happy hour.

THE BOOZE Chug a \$4 draft beer or an equally bargain-priced cocktail. House standouts include the Blackberry Cosmo or the Cowboy Coffee, which mixes local Stumptown coffee with Kahlua, Tuaca and Frangelico.



Sip an orchid martini while people-watching at the Saucebox. BASIL CHILDERS

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