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<Arizona Chain Reaction – Business of the Month profile>

Kazimierz World Wine Bar

“Outside the box but on the same block”

First, you have to find it. Like all good speakeasys, the entrance to the Kazimierz World Wine Bar is hidden in the rear. Signage? Forget about it. Kazbar, as regulars know it, doesn't believe in the obvious.

There's a lot of things Kazbar doesn't believe in. Like being pretentious, predictable, or boring. Conveniently located between Sea Saw, a hybrid Japanese tapas bar and Cowboy Ciao, offering award winning modern American fare, Kazbar's January 2000 debut completed the trilogy known as Restaurant Row on Stetson, all co-owned by industry maverick and resident wino, Peter Kasperski.

Mike Burt, Kazbar's general manager and Scottsdale Culinary Institute graduate, has created what *Phoenix Magazine* hails as “Wine Geek Central.” With its oversized sofas, velvet drapes, low light, stone walls, faux stained glass and candlelit fireplace, the Kazbar is an intimate, European gem in the desert.

First and foremost a wine bar, Kazbar offers wine by the glass, bottle, and flight. For the uninitiated, a flight is a trio of 3-ounce pours of different wines, grouped by themes like geography, variety, or producer. Kazbar's award-winning wine list (the only Wine Bar to win Wine Spectator's Award of Excellence every year) includes 2400 varietals brazenly organized into just three categories: Bubbles, Blanco and Rojo. “We include a lot of tiny producers and boutique wineries because we like to support the underdog, the craftsman, the guy and gal taking a risk and pushing the envelope. Lord knows, we can relate!” says Kasperski.

Kazbar also offers a staggering array of libations, including liquor, specialty cocktails, draft and bottled beer, dessert wines, cognac, armagnac, cau de vie, grappa, sherry, Madeira, port and many non-alcoholic options. A carefully crafted menu of small plates created by Chef Bernie Katak includes fun, exciting pizzas and completely original salads (think Maraska Goat Cheese paired with pears and pecans). Or get right to dessert with Pastry Chef Tracy Dempsey's wine-oriented desserts of chocolate, cheese and nuts.

Being a small independent allows Kazbar to take risks – with the menu, the music, the wine. “No one tells us what to stock,” says Marianne Markogianis, resident buzz & schmooze coordinator. “Many of our products and items were suggested by staff and guests, many of whom are servers, bartenders, sommeliers, chefs and wine representatives.” The menu reflects the culinary muses of the chef and staff is educated in basic Kazbar etiquette, and then encouraged to develop their own authentic style.

“There's no tasting cups, no attitudes,” says Markogianis of Kazbar's commitment to meeting client, not corporate, needs. “We take the time to talk to people, learn their names, their likes and dislikes.” We still remember a time when there was no WalMart or Costco, says Markogianis. “The butcher, the pharmacist, the hardware store owner – they knew their customers and their families and had a friendly, chatty relationship with them.”

That's why Kazbar is proud to be a member of Arizona Chain Reaction, a grassroots organization dedicated to building stronger communities in the metropolitan Phoenix area by supporting and promoting local independents. “We're proud to support a community mindset that encourages and supports unique, interesting businesses that are personalized and have a distinctive style,” says Markogianis.

Peter Kasperski has made his home in the Valley since the late '70s where he and Sheryl, his wife of 21 years, are raising their three daughters. An avowed “restaurant junkie”, Kasperski enjoys traveling to foodie destinations like Chicago, New York, San Francisco and L.A. Mike Burt grew up in Tucson and was a medic in the U.S. Navy before attending culinary school. He plays golf and softball and has diverse musical interests ranging from Rap to Frank Sinatra.

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