

PHOENIX

M A G A Z I N E

Best New Restaurants 2008

WINNER: BOMBEROS

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

Cuisine: South American/Latin American Wine Bar

Price: \$-\$\$

Atmosphere: Much like Arcadia's Postino, Bomberos boasts old digs (Postino is housed in a former post office; Bomberos used to be a fire house). The resulting effect is an intimate but rustic setting with a weathered touch. In fact, loft owners looking for interior decorating tips should take note of Bomberos' brick walls, black leather seating, modern wall sconces, 51-inch plasma television and massive deco mirror that makes the space seem larger (and more crowded) than it is. For an extra kick of personality, the fire station's original double-garage doors are still in place.

Outdoor seating: Yes. In fact, the spacious patio is equal to, if not larger than, the interior. The enclave in the back of the house features a fireplace, plenty of trees and romantic tea lights on every table. Live music on Wednesday and Saturday nights turns the intimate patio into a vivacious scene.

Key players: Husband-and-wife owners Oscar and Kristi Mastrantuono. Born in Uruguay and raised in New York, Oscar brings a touch of South America to North Phoenix, offering wine, beer, coffee and tea inspired by his native continent.

Why we love it: With few independent places to hang out in the north part of town, Bomberos didn't have much competition for becoming "the neighborhood hangout." Even if it opened in the heart of Scottsdale, however, we'd still love this place for its unique (to Phoenix, anyway) concept and comfortable, cool setting.

Must-try menu items: Bomberos offers five artisan cheeses, perfect for nibbling with a glass of vino tinto (red wine). We like the mild, hard Iberico made of goat, cow and sheep milk, and the queso de murcia al vino, a soft goat cheese soaked in wine. You'll also be tempted by savory specialty meats, bruschettas, paninis, olives and a salad of the day. Mornings offer an assortment of breakfast snacks (croissants, pastries, yogurt, granola), and the Illy espresso bar gives non-drinkers something to salivate over.

Drink to die for: Pick a wine, any wine. Seriously, every one of the 27 bottles on the list looks worthy of sampling, but if you can't settle on one, take part in Bomberos' monthly wine tastings, featuring wines from a different South American region each month (\$25 per person, including appetizers and entertainment). The next tasting events are October 6 (Uruguay and Brazil) and November 3 (South American reds) from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Hours: 7 a.m.-midnight, Monday-Thursday; 7 a.m.-1 a.m., Friday, Saturday; 7 a.m.-3 p.m., Sunday

Takes reservations: No

