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# WINE IN A BROWN BAG

## Valley BYOB Restaurants

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BY DEBBIE J. ELDER

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A column in The Wall Street Journal recently talked about wines that people stash away for special occasions and never open. You know the wines I'm talking about ... bottles received as gifts, or wines picked up on a first-time trip to Italy or France. To encourage new diners, several restaurants in

Manhattan elected to waive the corkage fees (usually ranging anywhere from \$5 to \$85) for one night to anyone bringing in a "special" bottle of wine. The eateries' sommeliers were on hand to offer opinions and share in the stories about how the customers came to own these wines. The response was tremendous, with hundreds of people journeying out to restaurants that they had never visited before.

Is it possible to repeat this idea in Greater Phoenix? Is it permissible to bring your preferred bottle of wine into a restaurant and just pay a corkage fee? If so, many of us would be thrilled to trade the hefty "wine per glass" price charged in most restaurants for a full bottle picked up at our neighborhood wine store.

Edible Phoenix went on a search to find out what restaurants offer this tempting option. We learned that BYOB ("bring-your-own bottle") restaurants are in short supply in the Valley. There are only a handful of proprietors who allow customers to drop in toting their individual brown bags of wine. According to the Arizona Department of Liquor Licenses and Control, customers are not allowed to bring in their own wines unless the restaurant qualifies for a BYOB permit. These requirements dictate that the restaurant must be less than 40 in seating capacity. This size limitation appears to be the main reason why we don't have more BYOB restaurants in the Valley.

Why would a restaurant elect to become a BYOB versus a full-service bar? In the case of Coup de Tartes in Phoenix, obtaining a liquor license was a challenge when they first opened in 1997, in part due to zoning issues and the lack of license availability. Gaining a BYOB permit was easier and quicker. Once they put the BYOB practice into place their

customers loved it, and they've continued to operate this way ever since.

Two restaurants, Atlas Bistro in South Scottsdale and Easy Street Bistro, a wine cafe in Carefree, chose the BYOB path, in part, because they are located within close proximity to AZ Wine Company outlets. It's easy for their customers to pick up a bottle of wine even after they've perused the restaurant's menu.

When visiting a BYOB establishment, diners should be aware that the restaurant will provide customers with glassware, a corkscrew, and sometimes an ice bucket, but the servers are not allowed to pour the beverage for you. Some BYOB restaurants in the Valley charge minimal corkage fees, and others do not. Here's the rundown on places where brown bags are encouraged in the Valley, plus a few of their menu specialties to consider when bringing along that special bottle of wine.

### VALLEY BYOBS

#### ATLAS BISTRO

2515 North Scottsdale Road, Wilshire Plaza, Scottsdale,  
(480) 990-2433, [www.atlasbistro.com](http://www.atlasbistro.com)

**Hours:** Dinner, Tue-Sat 5:30-9:30 p.m. Available for private events. **Corkage fees:** Split bottle \$5, 750 ml bottle \$10, large format \$15. *Specialties created by Chef Carlos Manriquez: Maine lobster bisque with organic Rioja chorizo and chile oil drizzle. Espresso-dusted grilled filet mignon with camote fresco tart and Argentinean chimichurri pesto. Braised New Zealand lamb shank au jus with mascarpone polenta and rosemary oil.*

#### COUP DES TARTES

4626 N. 16th Street, Phoenix, (602) 212-1082,  
[www.nicetartes.com](http://www.nicetartes.com)

**Hours:** Dinner, Wed-Sat 5:30 p.m. Private dining room available. **Corkage fees:** Split bottle \$4, 750 ml bottle \$8, magnum \$12. *Specialties: Herb-encrusted Prairie Grove Farms natural pork tenderloin drizzled with a roasted pear and brandy cream sauce and served with morsels of crisp bacon. Sautéed filet mignon served in corn tortillas with fresh chopped onion, cilantro and crème fraîche. A variety of tartes including banana brulee-their signature dessert-a chocolate crust filled with bananas and coconut cream.*

Photograph, Carole Topalian

## CYCLO

1919 W. Chandler Boulevard, Chandler, (480) 963-4490  
www.cyclo.com

**Hours:** Mon-Thu 11 a.m.-9 p.m.; Fri-Sat 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Closes daily from 3-5 p.m. **Corkage fees:** none. *Specialties:* Vietnamese cuisine. *Goi Du Du-green papaya salad with shrimp, peanuts and mint. Ca Ri Ga-chicken and pineapple curry with Kaffir lime, green beans, Thai basil and jasmine rice. Pho Ap Chao-crisp rice noodle cake with beef, shrimp, scallop and veggies.*

## EASY STREET BISTRO, A WINE CAFE

100 Easy Street, Carefree, (480) 488-9400,  
www.theeasystreetbistro.com

**Hours:** Mon-Fri 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Special BYOB wine-pairing dinners on Sat. Available for private events. **Corkage fees:** none. *Specialties created by Chefs Barry and Cathy Rosenberg: Braised short-rib panini. Kobe-style meatloaf. Duck confit. Focaccia Niçoise. Julie Child's favorite chocolate chunk cookies.*

## GIUSEPPE'S ITALIAN KITCHEN

2824 East Indian School Road, Phoenix, (602) 381-1237  
www.giuseppes-restaurant.com

**Hours:** Mon-Fri serving lunch and dinner; Sat open at 3 p.m. **Corkage fees:** \$3 per bottle. *Specialties: Italian cuisine. Penne à la salmon, cured and smoked salmon tossed with asparagus and a rich creamy sauce. Pork ribs Parmigiana with Mozzarella and tomato sauce. Spaghetti à la Gorgonzola, pasta tossed in creamy blue cheese, cream and sage sauce.*

## LATINO MIXED GRILL

3143 E. Greenway Road, Phoenix, (602) 485-1111  
www.latinomixedgrill.com

**Hours:** Tue-Thu 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Fri-Sun 7:30 a.m.-9 p.m. **Corkage fees:** \$5 per bottle. *Specialties: Honduran-Mexican cuisine. Shrimp à la diablo. Plátano relleno. Crunchy empanaditas and Honduran pork tamales (wrapped in banana leaves, not corn husks). Deep-fried plantains covered with ground beef, cheese, cabbage and velvety Honduran cream.*

## TOUCH OF EUROPEAN CAFE

7146 N. 57th Drive, Glendale, (623) 847-7119

**Hours:** Mon-Wed 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Thu-Fri 10:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m., Sat 10:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. **Corkage fees:** none. *Specialties created by Chef Valdimar Okula: Authentic European cuisine. Homemade fresh kielbasa. Sour pickle soup. Pirogies. Hungarian goulash.*

## WRAP-N-FRAPPE GOURMET WRAPS & SMOOTHIES

20511 N. Hayden Road, Scottsdale, (480) 513-9727,  
www.wrapnfrappe.com

**Hours:** Open 7 days a week 10:30 a.m.-9 p.m. **Corkage fees:** a penny a bottle. *Specialties: Mini-Skirt-grilled skirt steak, crispy fried onions, fire-roasted tomatoes, crumbled blue cheese, applewood-smoked bacon, cucumbers, romaine, Italian dressing. Oriental Express-sliced grilled chicken, romaine, cabbage, green peppers, tomatoes, carrots, chow mein noodles, sesame dressing. Up the River-grilled wild salmon, spring mix, Kalamata olives, Feta, tomato, red onion, balsamic vinaigrette.*

diner pub brassiere coffee shop  
roadhouse greasy spoon cantina  
luncheonette delicatessen tavern  
steakhouse buffet barbecue café  
cafeteria lunch counter fast food  
**café BISTRO** smorgasbord  
BAR + GRILL steakhouse  
trattoria brassiere coffee shop  
roadhouse greasy spoon cantina  
luncheonette delicatessen tavern  
steakhouse buffet barbecue café

5101 North Scottsdale Road | Scottsdale  
480 949 7301 [cafebistroscottsdale.com](http://cafebistroscottsdale.com)

a neighborhood organic foodie place