

5-8 p.m. Sundays

Pierre's has long been a warm and inviting bistro, serving simple French Country fare in a restored 18th-century farmhouse. It has only recently become a wine bar, and it's still developing. The list of wines by the glass is short but lovingly assembled by chef/owner Michael Peters, who runs the restaurant with his wife, Marybeth.

The bar area is all dark woods -- a carved bar, plank floors -- but its windowed walls brighten up the room, even at night, when the trees outside twinkle with little white lights. Belly up to the bar if you want to try the bar menu, a casual affair of soups, salads, a cheese plate, oysters and mussels. Or take a table against the windows and make a meal of appetizers from the restaurant menu.

Marybeth Peters is happy to stop by your table to recommend wines. She's as knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the wine list as her husband, and she's delightful company. Looking to extend your wine vocabulary? Pierre's hosts monthly tutored wine tastings; the most recent featured a half-dozen wines from Handley Cellars. (The Handley tasting cost \$30, but the cost varies depending on the wines.) Pierre's draws an older crowd, especially on weekends, but it makes for a lovely date night.

-- Mary Yanni

Bernards Inn

27 Mine Brook Road

Bernardsville

(908) 766-0002

www.BernardsInn.com

5:30 -10 p.m. Mondays-Saturdays, bar open to 11:30 weekdays, 1 a.m. Fridays-Saturdays. 5:30-9 p.m. Sundays

The Bernards Inn doesn't bill itself as a wine bar, but no matter -- the place has one of the finest wine lists in the state. That alone makes it worth a visit.

The bar is warm and inviting, with a library feel and an unobtrusive piano player making music most nights. The bar menu includes the "Bernards burger" with caramelized onions, applewood smoked bacon and cheese and the interesting ahi tuna "pizza," served on grilled flatbread.

But it's not the food that's really the attraction. It's the wine. The wine list, put together by wine director Terri Baldwin, boasts 18 whites and 20 reds by the glass, not to mention 29 ports. And there are plenty of interesting glasses that won't break the bank. Better yet, the restaurant offers tasting flights -- three each of red and white. Each includes 2-ounce servings of three different wines. Again, there's a nice price range -- the flights of white range from \$8.50 to \$24; the reds, \$15.50-\$24. The flights aren't on the bar's wine menu, but if you ask, they'll bring you the restaurant's wine list. Your designated driver may even find something to try; the wine list includes four non-alcoholic whites and three reds.

-- Mary Yanni

Stage House Restaurant and Wine Bar

366 Park Avenue

Scotch Plains

(908) 322-4224

www.stagehouserestaurant.com

5:30-10 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays, 5:30-11 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, 4:30-9 p.m. Sunday.

The building that is the home of the Stage House has been an inn or restaurant since 1737, serving countless guests of Scotch Plains' quaint downtown. Current owners keep up the tradition by serving sophisticated food and a dizzying array of wine.

In the cozy, wood-lined wine bar tucked in the heart of the inn, visitors can graze from the dinner menu that includes deliciously seared foie gras -- or crispy onion rings from the more casual Tavern menu. Full dinner service is available at any of the bar stools, too. The price fix menu is \$24- \$33.

Tom Britt, one of the owners, said the restaurant has 250 wine labels on tap with 30 available by the