



SMALL PLATES

# Big Flavor

Wine Down's crab cakes from its shareable tapas menu.

BY BETH BEHRENDT  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY THERESA THOMPSON

**W**hen we dine out with friends or a romantic partner, it's often more important to be able to focus on the conversation. Sharing small plates lends itself to sharing big conversations, especially when paired with a perfect craft cocktail or bottle of wine. Here are some favorite places in town to do just that.

**Black Canyon Restaurant's** modern space offers views of the culinary crew bustling around the wood-fired grill in the open kitchen. The bar area or seasonal outdoor patio with a huge fireplace are ideal spots to settle in for

a pleasant evening. The New American menu is subtly influenced by global cuisine and includes several hearty, shareable appetizers. Tuna poke is tuna tartar served with wonton crisps, soy chili broth and wasabi in a fresh avocado bowl. The smoked salmon, a customer favorite, is smoked in-house and served with lemon caper aioli and toast points. Crispy Tex-Mex egg rolls are stuffed with chicken, peppers, corn, spinach, tomatoes and black beans and served with two sauces: a house-made avocado buttermilk ranch and barbecue. 509 W. Dupont Road, 260.203.5900, [blackcanyonrestaurant.com](http://blackcanyonrestaurant.com)

**Hideout 125's** cozy bar area is optimal for intimate conversation while enjoying delicious craft cocktails or a healthy pour from an interesting selection of premium wine and craft beers. Small plates are not particularly small, but generously-sized and perfect for sharing. Three large meatballs made from the chef's special blend of meats and herbs are served in a hearty homemade marinara with grilled Italian bread. Chicken & waffles consists of country-fried chicken breast, spicy garlic chili glaze, unagi sauce, Napa cabbage slaw and, of course, a waffle. As for finger food, twice-baked potato bites



Romaine heart wedge salad and oysters from Paula's on Main.

are halved and stuffed with beef confit and crispy lamb belly, baked with a cheddar cheese and served with crème fraîche. 10350 Coldwater Road, 260.206.6192, [hideout125.com](http://hideout125.com)

**Trolley Bar** is a casual cornerstone that offers American seafood, steak and other familiar favorites. The bar area is a pleasurable spot to escape and enjoy another's company. Regulars have strong feelings about their favorite appetizers. The Caribbean chicken satay—grilled and slightly spicy—is served with a sweet chili-lime sauce, and the tenderloin steak-tip skewers come on a bed of rice pilaf with red wine demi-glace. Walleye fingers are a Fort Wayne fave:

almond-crusted, fried crisp and served with sweet jalapeño tartar sauce. 2898 E. Dupont Road, 260.490.4322, [trolleysteaksandseafood.com](http://trolleysteaksandseafood.com)

This venerable fresh fish venue with an eclectic, lake cottage-y feel makes **Paula's** a local favorite. Of course, seafood options abound on the appetizer menu. But if you aren't in the mood for seafood, there are a number of other delicious options. A Boursin cheese medallion, for instance, is baked and topped with raspberry-chipotle sauce and served with crostini. Lamb Pops are served with a balsamic drizzle. Finally, rumor has it the best romaine heart wedge salad in the city can be found here with house-made

ranch dressing, bleu-cheese crumbles, bacon crumbles and grape tomatoes. 1732 W. Main Street, 260.424.2300, [paulasonmain.com](http://paulasonmain.com)

Come for the fun and unique wine-tasting experience, stay for the creative food. **Wine Down** is gaining a reputation as the place to go for cocktails. In warm weather, enjoy people-watching at The Sidecar, its outdoor bar and grill. A plethora of popular small plates options complement either wine or cocktails—or both. Blackened Mahi Mahi tacos are served in a crunchy wonton. Three-cheese arancinis are deep-fried risotto balls stuffed with goat, parmesan and cheddar cheeses




## Small Plates

served with marinara sauce.  
301 W. Jefferson Boulevard,  
260.755.1019, [winedownfw.com](http://winedownfw.com)

### 800 Degrees Three Fires

is beloved for its made-to-order hand-stretched Neopolitan pizzas, commitment to locally-sourced ingredients (like its homemade sausage from Gunthorp Farms pork) and impressive selection of craft beer and great wines. Its appetizer selections show off the other skills in the kitchen beyond pizza making. Each can make a meal on its own or is perfect for sharing. Provoleta is a baked casserole dish bubbling with roasted red peppers, Italian sausage crumbles and provolone cheese. The star of its eggplant parmesan, another personal-sized hearty casserole, is roasted eggplant in marinara, topped with mozzarella, parmesan and fresh basil. Its meatballs are handmade from ground pork and beef and baked in marinara with roasted red onions, parmesan and slivered almonds. 5215 Illinois Road, 260.416.0005, [800degrees.net](http://800degrees.net)

Along with a selection of carefully-selected wines, bourbons and craft cocktails, **Chop's Wine Bar** has been serving up a variety of smaller portion menu items to share since 2010. The food bar seating is a fun place to watch the chefs work and enjoy some of their creative and delicious dishes. Breaded burrata—a "pouch" of solid fresh buffalo milk mozzarella filled with stracciatella (a soft, stringy curd) and fresh cream—is served with a chunky tomato sauce with guanciale (seasoned pork cheek, similar to pancetta) and toasted paratha (Indian flatbread). Ahi tuna is first marinated in ginger before being seared and served with a seaweed and calamari salad, pickled ginger, wasabi and soy sauce.

Fancy Tots are large house-made tots with the chef's constantly rotating selection of fillings and toppings. 6417 W. Jefferson Boulevard, 260.436.9227, [chopswine.com](http://chopswine.com) 



# Paula's On Main

Casual fine dining / Seafood market

## Daily Lunch and Dinner Features



Lunch: M - F, 11am - 2pm  
Dinner: M - S, 5 - 10pm



1732 West Main Street  
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46808

reservations (260) 424-2300 • inquire about our private dining room   

[www.paulasonmain.com](http://www.paulasonmain.com)