

Wine Spectator

www.winespectator.com

THE MAINE EVENT

*Portland offers fine seafood and
imaginative wine lists* **By SAM GUGINO**



WHERE TO EAT

Back Bay Grill

65 Portland St. **Telephone** (207) 772-8833 **Web site** www.backbaygrill.com **Open** Dinner, Monday to Saturday **Cost** Entrées \$18–\$35

Situated in a blue-collar section of the Old Port area, the Back Bay Grill has a genuine neighborhood feel. Enter into a casual bar of dark woods, then continue to a dining room that looks like your grandma's parlor, except for the rather garish 20-foot-long mural. Neither the old-fashioned carpeting nor the turn-of-the-century lighting hints at the excitement to be found in the cellar. The wine list shows more than 50 California Cabs, including multiple vintages of Robert Mondavi Reserve dating back to 1993 (\$275) and Stag's Leap Wine Cellars (SLV 2001 at \$250; Cask 23 1999 and 2001, both at \$350), plus Château Mouton-Rothschild to 1985 (\$625). Italian offerings include Sassicaia 2001 (\$250) and Ornellaia 2000 (\$275). There are also more than 40 half-bottles.

The new-American menu features supremely light crab cakes, accented by a crisp and refreshing jicama-mango relish and spicy chipotle mayonnaise. Homemade noodles were tender, and fresh peas, favas and cherry tomatoes made the dish sing with late-spring flavors.