

## Perfect pairings – from the 2013 Salem Business Guide – Salem Area Chamber of Commerce

Business owners will tell you that relationships are key to the success of any business. Regardless of the product or service they offer, strong relationships with employees, vendors and customers are critical in order to succeed. This is especially true for small businesses who rely heavily on word-of-mouth to grow their business.

There is another type of relationship that is popping up now, where two businesses work together to receive a greater benefit than if they tried to work on their own. In nature, this is known as symbiosis; in business, it's called collaboration.

Santiam Wine Company is one example of a local business that is thriving, in part, because of its partnership with the business next door.

Three years after purchasing Santiam Wine Company, owner Debbie Rios had seen great success with the wine shop, but knew she needed a larger space. That's when she noticed the space next to Fitts Seafood on 12th Street was empty.

"The people who owned this store were on a summer break. Fall came and the store never opened back up. Pretty soon, I contacted the real estate company. They brought me in here and I said this is it!"

Debbie knew right away that being next to the seafood market would be a perfect fit.

"Wine and seafood, everything goes together so well. And the synergy is great."

While she used to get some people coming in to ask about pairings with food, she says now she gets it all time because they are right next door to the seafood market.

"All day long people come in with their little bags of fish and want to know what to pair with that piece of fish. It's helped Fitts, it's helped me. It's awesome."

They took the effort one step further by putting on a food and wine festival during the summer. It expanded this last summer to also include Davidson's Garden Store who is also located in their 12th Street mall. She said its success has been incredible.

Debbie has seen her business continue to flourish, as well as other businesses in the area. She believes that 12th Street is an up and coming area.

"When I first came here, it was sad. But things just keep happening. It's growing. There's renovation going on all over the place."

The new location has also allowed her to expand her business with a wine bar, a selection of wines that rivals Portland and a bistro featuring local produce.

"I offer everything I used to offer; now I offer more."

Debbie will tell you that it's not the full house on Friday nights for wine tastings that keeps her going.

Like most entrepreneurs, Debbie's success has come from a love of what she does.

"What could be better than having your job be the same as your passion. That's why I do it."