



Noteworthy Additions, Changes and Closures from publication date through March 31, 2008

Key to Night+Day Symbols

Restaurants

Singles-friendly


-  Communal table
-  Food served at bar

(G) Gourmet destination

Venues followed by an * are those we recommend as both a restaurant and a destination bar.




Nightlife

Includes bars, clubs, and entertainment

-  Cover or ticket charge (otherwise, entry is free)

Restaurants + Nightlife

Prime-time noise levels

-  Quiet
-  A buzz, but still conversational
-  Loud

Key to Pricing

Hotels

Best deluxe room

\$	\$100-\$199
\$\$	\$200-\$299
\$\$\$	\$300-\$399
\$\$\$\$	\$400 and up

Restaurants

Main course

\$-	less than \$10
\$	\$10-\$19
\$\$	\$20-\$29
\$\$\$	\$30-\$39
\$\$\$\$	\$40 and up

Attractions

Entry or service

\$-	less than \$10
\$	\$10-\$19
\$\$	\$20-\$29
\$\$\$	\$30-\$39
\$\$\$\$	\$40 and up

The Night+Day promise

Night+Day writers and editors use the same high standards in selecting and researching venues to be included in our Ins and Outs updates as we do for our books. Our local correspondents determine which new hot spots are the real deal and which are simply hype—just as you'd expect from Night+Day—to provide the kind of reliable information you need to make the best possible choices.

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Hot & Cool Chicago Hotels

The Trump International Hotel & Tower • Near North • (339 rms)

Chicago's newest luxury hotel and condominium complex, the Trump International Hotel & Tower, soars 92 stories over the Chicago River and the Near North neighborhood. Upon entering, guests are greeted with a quietly elegant lobby featuring a welcoming sitting area with custom-designed contemporary furniture. The hotel's 339 guestrooms, including one-, two- and three-bedroom suites, as well as 53 separate spa accommodations, occupy floors 14-27 of the property, with condos taking up the higher levels. Each guestroom has 10-foot floor-to-ceiling windows with magnificent views of Lake Michigan, the Chicago River, and the city skyline. Lavish amenities include contemporary, custom-designed furniture, the Trump Luxury Sleep System beds, plush bathrooms with deep soaking tubs, and kitchens outfitted with stainless-steel appliances, Sub Zero refrigerators, and Bernadaud china. Suites offer fireplaces, dressing areas, and spacious dining rooms. Tip: the "double 00" suites are of the grand deluxe variety, if you're so inclined. The Trump property includes Sixteen, its fine-dining restaurant, Rebar, a sophisticated lounge, and The Spa at Trump. You'll be rubbing elbows with high-flying travelers in Chicago for business and/or pleasure during your lap-of-luxury stay. \$\$\$ 401 N. Wabash Ave. (Kinzie St.), 312-588-8000 / 877-458-7867, trumpchicagohotel.com

Hot & Cool Chicago Restaurants

A Mano • River North • Italian

Chicago is in the throes of a revived love affair with Italian cuisine, and A Mano is one of the best products of that passion. Here, the owners of the wildly popular, wine-obsessed BIN 36 and Bin Wine Café have created a contemporary version of an authentic Italian trattoria. An expansive lounge, bar, and dining room are tied together with modern, organic touches, such as countertops made from reclaimed oak floorboards, mocha-colored wainscoting, and matte-steel fixtures. A handcrafted brick oven is situated in an open showcase kitchen, so diners can actually see their crispy-crusteds pizzas being created. An on-site gelato machine churns out flavors ranging from familiar (hazelnut, pistachio) to far-out (olive oil, limoncello). A Mano caters to a nearly packed house of amorous couples, stylish groups of friends and well-dressed families every night, so get here early in the evening (or for lunch), or prepare to cool your heels in the chi-chi lounge with a glass of Nero d'Avola. Sun 5-10pm, Mon-Thu 11:30am-2pm and 5-10pm, Fri 11:30am-2pm and 5pm-midnight, Sat 5pm-midnight. \$\$ 📍 335 N. Dearborn St. (Kinzie St.), 312-629-3500, amanochicago.com

Ai • River North • Japanese

The name translates to "love" in Japanese, and sushi aficionados are falling head over heels for Ai, a new Japanese restaurant causing ripples throughout Chicago's saturated sushi scene. Ai features a chic River North address, a sleek dining room and a slick red-and-black lounge serving an extensive wine and sake list and a late-night menu. Ai is quickly making a name for itself with signature maki creations (soft shell crab "volcano," spicy tuna with pinenuts, pistachio, and rosemary) and elegant entrees (wasabi filet mignon, parmesan salmon teriyaki). Feel the love with other sushi fans, from large groups of friends to amorous couples whispering sweet nothings over their sashimi. Mon-Fri 11:30am-11:30pm, Sat-Sun 5-11pm, lounge open Fri-Sat until 2am. \$ 📍 358 W. Ontario St. (Orleans St.), 312-335-9888, aichicago.us

Blueprint • River North • Contemporary American

As style-savvy as its landlord (the design mecca Merchandise Mart), Blueprint offers a brilliant plan for lunch, dinner, or drinks in the center of Chicago's art and fashion district. Shimmering stainless steel and cobalt blue make up the cool design scheme, while clean, Asian-inspired dishes appear on the streamlined menu. The über-elegant lunch crowd consists of showroom owners and other tastemakers from the Merch Mart, while dinnertime welcomes an equally sophisticated, if a bit more varied, group. Communal dining tables and a lively bar scene make Blueprint an especially attractive choice for a solo outing. Mon-Thu 11am-2pm and 5-10pm, Fri 11am-2pm and 5-11pm, Sat 5-11pm. \$\$ 📍 222 Merchandise Mart Plaza, Ste. 135 (Wells St.), 312-410-9800, blueprintchicago.com

Brasserie Ruhlmann • River West • French Bistro

One would expect a restaurant named for a famed 20th-century French interior designer would be all style and little substance, but Brasserie Ruhlmann (a spinoff of the New York location) is full of surprises. First of all, the meat-heavy bistro menu comes courtesy of Christian Delouvrier, a French master with a weighty resume. A fabulous, overflowing raw bar commands attention for its

sheer abundance, while ruby-colored crushed velvet banquettes and dramatic hand-laid tilework take up residence under soaring ceilings. Located right on the Chicago River in the Montgomery building (which is also home to Ruhlmann's sister restaurant, the perennially hip Japonais), this is one of the hottest tickets in town (as evidenced by the jet-set crowd of 20- and 30-something bon vivants), so plan accordingly and come early or late, or try the magnificently decadent weekend brunch. *Sun-Mon 11:30am-2:30pm and 5-10pm, Tue-Thu 11:30am-2:30pm and 5-11pm, Fri-Sat 11:30am-2:30pm and 5pm-midnight.* \$\$\$ 📍 500 W. Superior St. (Kingsbury St.), 312-494-1900

La Madia • River North • Italian

Chicagoans have been lusting for authentic Italian, thin-crust pizza in all its incarnations, and La Madia entered the dining scene at just the right moment. The restaurant has taken a simple, time-tested formula—wine and pizza—and brilliantly elevated it to something chic and truly memorable. The surroundings are stunning (a glass-enclosed, 250-bottle wine cellar, a clean, modernist décor, and a lovely-to-look-at crowd of professional diners and drinkers). Elbow past the PYTs crowding the front lounge, and try to score a seat at the pizza bar, where you can catch your artisanal pie being made first hand. The mind-boggling wine list is a draw in itself—peruse selections from around the globe while you ponder the simple pleasures of pizza. *Sun-Thu 11:15am-11:15pm, Fri-Sat 11:15am-midnight.* \$ 📍 59 W. Grand Ave. (Clark St.), 312-329-0400, dinelamadia.com

ROOM 21 • South Loop • American

Situated in a former Prohibition-era Al Capone safe house, ROOM 21 retains a sexy, in-the-know speakeasy feel with a thoroughly modern revamp. Eye-popping shades of crimson and fuchsia in plush, lush textures enliven a sophisticated, boudoir-esque lounge and dining room, which are separated by an art installation that resembles pillowy sea creatures. Contemporary American cooking (mostly seafood and steaks done with flair) complements an ample wine selection and clever martini list. A diverse group, from flashy young professionals to artsy creative types, frequents this South Loop gem. A sultry secret garden is a hot spot for warm-weather dining or drinks. *Sun-Thu 5:30-10pm, Fri-Sat 5:30-11pm.* \$\$\$ 📍 2110 S. Wabash St. (21st St.), 312-328-1198, room21chicago.com

Sepia • West Loop • Contemporary American

A burnished glow permeates Sepia, one of Chicago's most buzzed-about restaurants of 2007. Art Nouveau-meets-Austin Powers touches are found throughout the intimate space, including crystal chandeliers encased in translucent silver scrim, floor tiles featuring a custom-designed scrollwork pattern, and wood paneling reminiscent of the '70s lining the cozy lounge. Plan in advance to score the semiprivate circular table lit by a branch-covered pendant lamp. This earthy-glam mix is evident in chef Kendal Duque's menu as well, which features rustic dishes made with fresh-from-the-farm ingredients. Signature cocktails made with infused vodkas and old-school spirits keep the fashionable lounge full. Expect a well-turned-out crowd that is into more cash, less flash. *Mon-Thu 11:30am-2pm and 5:30-10pm, Fri 11:30am-2pm and 5:30-10:30pm, Sat 5:30-10:30pm, Sun 5:30-10pm; lounge Sun-Thu until midnight, Fri-Sat until 1am.* \$\$ 📍 123 N. Jefferson St. (Randolph St.), 312-441-1920, sepiachicago.com

Sixteen • Near North • Contemporary American

Sixteen, the restaurant at the new Trump International Hotel & Tower, is no standard-fare hotel restaurant. Elegantly appointed and graciously staffed, Sixteen is a fine-dining destination par excellence. An intimate lounge area at the entrance is a stylish hangout for guests awaiting tables or enjoying a nightcap. Diners then pass through a 900-bottle, glass-enclosed wine gallery that leads into the stunning dining room. The first thing you'll notice is the face-to-face view of the Wrigley Building clock tower, followed by the Tribune Tower, Navy Pier, and Lake Michigan, through floor-to-ceiling windows. A large-scale mirror on the back wall of the restaurant provides reflected views for those diners facing away from the windows. A dazzling 14-foot chandelier, made of 19,000 Swarovski crystals, is another dramatic touch. The menu, which changes daily, is the work of celebrated Australian chef Frank Brunacci and pastry chef Hichem Lahreche. Sixteen is the current talk of the town, drawing droves of hotel guests and sophisticated locals alike; make dinner reservations early, or, in a pinch, consider a lunch date. *Sun-Fri 6:30-10:30am, Sat 6:30am-noon; Mon-Fri 11:30am-2:30pm; Sun-Wed 5:30-10pm, Thu-Sat 5:30-10:30pm; high champagne Sat 12:30-3pm; brunch Sun 11am-3pm.* \$\$\$ 📍 Trump International Hotel & Tower, 401 N. Wabash Ave. (Kinzie St.), 312-588-8030, trumpchicagohotel.com

Spertus Café by Wolfgang Puck • South Loop • American

The recently redesigned (and architecturally significant) Spertus Center for Jewish Studies has partnered with celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck to open a café in its gorgeous new space in the South Loop. The restaurant, which is overseen by local chef Laura Frankel, offers a completely kosher menu, which makes it the only kosher restaurant in the area. Puck-o-philes will notice some signature dishes, such as the Chinois chicken and Caesar salads, as well as peppercorn-crusted roast beef and an Israeli salad pita sandwich. The second-floor space features a contemporary, minimalist design and offers beautiful views of Grant Park. Loop worker bees and museum visitors gather here for lunches and grab-and-go snacks like the addictive Devil's food cupcakes and chocolate-peanut butter tarts. *Mon-Wed 9am-6:30pm, Thu 9am-7pm, Fri 9am-3pm, Sun 10am-5pm.* \$ 📍 610 S. Michigan Ave. (Harrison St.), 312-322-1757, spertus.edu

Table Fifty-Two • Gold Coast • American

With the almighty Oprah seal of approval, chef Art Smith has become a household name. His upscale comfort food is being re-created in kitchens across America, but now you can go straight to the source at Table Fifty-Two, Smith's new Gold Coast restaurant. Plantation chic is Smith's aesthetic (he's from Florida), with a pressed-copper ceiling, ornate light fixtures, a fireplace, and paintings of the American South. During the week, join Gold Coast denizens and Oprah groupies sampling such dishes as cedar-planked fish and wood-oven pizzas. But the pièce de résistance is Smith's famous "Sunday suppers," a traditional feast boasting Southern specialties like fried chicken and waffles, shrimp and grits, and the delightful hummingbird cake. *Tue-Sat 5-10pm, Sun 4-8pm.* \$\$ 📍 52 W. Elm St. (Dearborn St.), 312-573-4000

Takashi • Bucktown • Japanese

Acclaimed chef Takashi Yagihashi, who has helmed the kitchen at such world-class restaurants as Ambria in Chicago, Tribute in Detroit, and Okada in the Wynn Las Vegas, returned to Chicago to open his eponymous restaurant in late

2007. This highly personal endeavor shines with its uncomplicated elegance and attention to detail. Located in a Bucktown townhouse, the slender dining room decorated in sedate tones of gray and taupe has the inviting feel of a neighborhood restaurant, but it has the menu of a fine-dining destination. Yagihashi combines his Japanese heritage with an extensive background in French cuisine to create inventive, flavorful dishes with an emphasis on seafood. An open kitchen provides an entertaining glimpse into the process. The affable servers are incredibly well versed in the menu and wine list, which features global selections, including an innovative sake program. Takashi attracts diners from around the city and suburbs, as well as a good number of well-dressed neighborhood regulars. *Tue-Thu 5:30-10pm, Fri 5:30-10:30pm, Sat 5-10:30pm, Sun 5-9:30pm.* \$\$ ☒ 1952 N. Damen Ave. (Armitage Ave.), 773-772-6170, takashichicago.com

Tallulah • Lincoln Square • American

Tallulah is a contemporary American bistro that perfectly suits its neighborhood of Lincoln Square—it's chic without being overbearing, which makes it the natural hangout of choice for the young professionals and families who inhabit this affluent area. The dining room is dolled up in sophisticated earth tones, with walnut accents and an illuminated alabaster-topped bar. The sophisticated surroundings are the perfect foil for elevated comfort food from chef Troy Graves, which includes dishes such as braised short ribs with bacon-and-Brie mashed potatoes, and Meyer lemon risotto with crispy artichokes. Tallulah is a don't-miss brunch spot (as long as you don't mind a wait), with such decadent dishes as bananas Foster pancakes and a braised rabbit skillet. *Tue-Thu 5-10pm, Fri-Sat 5-11pm, Sun 11am-3pm.* \$\$ ☒ 4539 N. Lincoln Ave. (Sunnyside Ave.), 773-942-7585, tallulahchicago.us

Hot & Cool Chicago Nightlife

Climax Lounge • River North • Nightclub

Decadent in every way, Climax Lounge wants you to have a good time... a really good time. Vying for the title of Chicago's top DJ-driven dance club, Climax hosts the nation's top spinners, including L.A. gadabout DJ AM. Just a few of the outrageous design details: two 750-pound griffin-shaped lights salvaged from an East Coast mansion, a bar made from a 700-year-old bubinga tree, a 21-foot live maple tree, and 35-foot ceilings topped with skylights. All this in a 6,250-square-foot 1920s-era building, and all smoke-free... talk about a happy ending! Weekends can be unbearably crowded; we recommend Thursday nights. *Wed-Fri 8pm-2am, Sat 8pm-3am.* ☒ 324 W. Chicago Ave. (Orleans St.), 312-280-9800, climaxloungechicago.co

Mannequin Nightclub • West Town • Dance Club

An ode to fashion and the supermodels who prance around in it, Mannequin is a tongue-in-cheek club with display cases featuring tableaux of designer looks. A hard-partying throng fills the two levels of this massive dance club (perch on the mezzanine to check out all of the action below). The city's top DJs take up residence here, while the girls on the dance floor seem to be competing with

the club's namesakes. Tables are available for bottle service, but you'll be just as happy to mix and mingle with the comely crowd until dawn. *Thu-Fri 10pm-4am, Sat 10pm-5am.* ☒ 306 N. Halsted St. (Wayman St.), 312-850-0065, mannequinchicago.com

Manor • River North • Nightclub

Opulence and decadence reign supreme in this return to over-the-top after-dark glamour. Rich woods, Bordeaux-colored leather banquettes, and an omnipresent crest, as well as ultra-VIP bottle service, entice Chicago's nightlife royalty. A bevy of beautiful servers offers attentive, professional service, while go-go dancers and innovative DJs keep the crowds amped. Personal lock boxes stow away belongings under your table while you're shaking it with the young and ready-for-anything throng. There's even a concierge on hand to help set up hotel and travel reservations. (How's that for service?) Weekends are slammed, so arrive early and dressed to impress to avoid the inevitable velvet-rope wait. *Thursday-Friday 10 pm-2 am, Saturday 10 pm-3 am.* ☒ 642 N. Clark St. (Ontario St.), 312-475-1390, manorchicago.com

Martini Park • River North • Lounge

Polished to a decidedly upscale sheen, Martini Park is an elegant lounge that somehow skirts taking itself too seriously. Decked out in golden limestone, with three gleaming honey-hued bars and enough candles for a cathedral, Martini Park attracts a sophisticated social set. The menu is made up of small, shareable plates; all the better to put the focus on Martini Park's namesake—more martinis than you can shake a swizzle stick at. Happy hours are becoming legendary here—show up on a weeknight around 6pm, and don't be surprised if you stumble out in the wee hours. *Mon-Fri 4pm-2am, Sat 4pm-3am.* ☒ 151 W. Erie St. (LaSalle St.), 312-640-0577, martinipark.com

NV Penthouse Lounge • River North • Ultra Lounge

One of the Windy City's most buzzed-about new bars is NV Penthouse Lounge, loftily located on the top floor of a River North high-rise (you can see it glowing green from street level). Even the elevator ride up is exciting. All of the elements of a chic after-dark playground are in place: DJ beats, scantily clad servers and table dancers, and a glammed-out crowd of young clubbers. What sets this place apart is the intimate (read: tiny) balcony offering private cabanas, heat lamps in chilly temps, and a breathtaking skyline view. The earlier you arrive, the shorter your inevitable velvet-rope wait. Better yet, make a reservation for bottle service. *Thu-Fri 9pm-2am, Sat 9pm-3am.* ☒ 116 W. Hubbard St. (Clark St.), 312-329-9960, nvpenthouselounge.com

Pomme Rouge • River North • Ultra Lounge

Decked out in the finest Moulin Rouge fashion, Pomme Rouge is the place for an illicit rendezvous. Plush red velvet banquettes can be coquettishly cordoned off with lace curtains or completely shrouded with a heavy drape. The room is cleverly designed in three distinct areas: Paradis, the heavenly main area, which is laden with luxurious couches, fireplaces, and a gorgeous French Victorian bar; Enfer, a seductive seating area for 12 with the design scheme of an opium den; and La Salle à Manger, the dining room, which serves tempting French-tinged dishes. *Sun-Fri 5pm-2am, Sat 5pm-3am.* ☒ 108 W. Kinzie St. (Clark St.), 312-245-9555, lapommerouge.com

Rebar • Near North • Lounge

Rebar, the chic lounge in the new Trump International Hotel & Tower, has the benefit of a truly exceptional vantage point. Located on the mezzanine level of the hotel, Rebar seems to float over the Chicago River. The views of the Michigan Avenue Bridge through floor-to-ceiling windows are incomparable. Rebar, which is named for the building's construction style of reinforced concrete, also flaunts beautiful black-and-white architectural photographs and a gorgeous backlit bar. Guests indulge in a "liquid kitchen" menu of cocktails made with fresh-squeezed fruit juices, plus wines, champagnes, and sipping spirits, as well as light bites, sushi, and sashimi. The crowd includes hotel guests, as well as slick executive types after work and a chic gathering of beautiful people as the night progresses. A plush private V.I.P. room can accommodate up to 25 bon vivants. *Mon-Wed 2:30pm-midnight, Thu-Fri 2:30pm-1am, Sat noon-1am, Sun noon-midnight.* 📍 [Trump International Hotel & Tower, 401 N. Wabash Ave. \(Kinzie St.\), 312-588-8000, trumpchicagohotel.com](#)

Hot & Cool Chicago Attractions

The Spa at Trump • Near North • Spa

The Spa at Trump, located on the Trump International Hotel & Tower's 14th floor, offers sleek, serene surroundings in which to enjoy decadent treatments that aim to calm, balance, purify, heal, and revitalize. The spa features 11 luxurious treatment rooms, including two offering couples' services, an event space, and a store stocked with high-end bath and beauty products. Signature treatments include gemstone massages, Dermalucent facials, relaxation programs, hydrotherapy options, and lavish nail services. A personal spa attaché attends to guests' needs during their spa visit. Personalized services include a private nutritionist, spa products, and wellness education. The hotel's Health Club, which adjoins the spa, offers state-of-the-art equipment, personal trainers, a yoga and Pilates studio, a heated pool, and roomy areas for weights, cardio and classes. *Daily 8am-9pm.* \$\$ [Trump International Hotel & Tower, 401 N. Wabash Ave. \(Kinzie St.\), 312-588-8000, trumpchicagohotel.com](#)

Hip Chicago Restaurants

The Bluebird Bistro and Wine Bar* • Bucktown • American

If we had to pick one restaurant style that has dominated Chicago in the last year, it would have to be the gastropub, that heady combination of bistro food and abundant alcohol. Enter the Bluebird Bistro and Wine Bar, from the owners of the perennially popular Webster Wine Bar in Lincoln Park. A cozy urban-country ambiance is enhanced by the use of reclaimed materials (the lighting fixtures and wood were salvaged from old buildings). Grab a seat at the long, skinny bar, or head to the back if you've got the menu more in mind. A list of more than 50 handcrafted beers, a well-chosen wine list, and superb small plates and entrees like flatbreads, salads, and charcuterie please the palate. Bucktown regulars flock here when they're looking for an easygoing weeknight out, while weekends see plenty of small groups and couples perched on bar stools and snuggled into banquettes. *Sun-Fri 5pm-2am, Sat 5pm-3am.* \$ 📍 [1749 N. Damen Ave. \(Willow St.\), 773-486-2473](#)

Café Wicked • Bucktown • American

There seems to be a profusion of dessert-focused cafes cropping up in Chicago—not that we're complaining. Bucktown's Café Wicked is one such sweets destination, with more than 35 temptations on hand, including cakes, pies, tortes, mousses, pastries, and ice cream. House favorites include the dulce de leche cheesecake, the red velvet cake, and the Chocolate Eruption (a turtle cheesecake with chocolate cream and a caramel center). The café also offers paninis, salads, and soups, in case you need a little sustenance before you indulge, as well as coffee and tea drinks and smoothies. Low-slung tables with overstuffed chairs create a living room feel, but the stylish crowds of kissy couples and groups of girlfriends are more reminiscent of an in-the-know, European-style hangout. *Tue-Thu 11am-9pm, Fri-Sat 11am-10pm, Sun 11am-7pm.* \$ 📍 [2151 W. Armitage Ave. \(Leavitt St.\), 773-227-8227](#)

Exposure Tapas • South Loop • Contemporary American

A polished new addition to the burgeoning South Loop scene, Exposure Tapas features a glam supper club atmosphere (think glittering chandeliers, rich red crushed velvet walls, loads of candlelight) and an assortment of fashionable guests of all ages from the neighborhood and beyond. The menu mingles Mediterranean flavors with straightforward American favorites (such as beef carpaccio and Moroccan lamb "lollipops," plus tempting raw bar selections and fondue), all served tapas style. The drinks list won't disappoint, either, with fresh fruit mojitos getting top billing. Exposure showcases works by local artists, as well as occasional live jazz bands. *Tue-Thu 5-11pm, Fri 5pm-1am, Sat 5pm-3am.* \$ 📍 [1315 S. Wabash St. \(13th St.\), 312-662-1082, exposuretapas.com](#)


Mercat a la Planxa • South Loop • Spanish

As part of the reopening of the revamped Blackstone Hotel, Mercat a la Planxa has breathed new life into this Loop legend. Chef Jose Garces, a Chicago native who made a name for himself with his popular Philadelphia restaurants Amada and Tinto, has returned to his hometown to head up this authentic Catalan tapas lounge and restaurant. A vibrant design scheme includes a lower-level lounge outfitted with a multi-colored backdrop, a cozy bar, and banquettes with groovy armchairs. A sweeping staircase leads to the sprawling main dining room, which offers a convivial atmosphere and killer views of Grant Park. The menu features tapas classics, plus cured meats, cheeses, flatbreads, and grilled dishes ("a la planxa" means on the grill). Various sangrias, cocktails, wines, beer, and even absinthe keep the cosmopolitan crowds partying late into the night. *Daily 6:30-2am.* \$\$ 📍 [638 S. Michigan Ave. \(Balbo Dr.\), 312-765-0524, mercatchicago.com](#)


Otom • River West • Contemporary American

Smaller, less expensive, and infinitely more accessible than its sister restaurant, the infamously adventurous Moto, Otom is a chic-but-cheery lounge serving creative comfort food and flawless top-shelf cocktails. A modern space revved up with juicy hits of orange hosts an equally easy-on-the-eyes group; expect gallerinas, scenesters, and hipsters galore. Nibble on teensy portions of hearty food, such as chicken pot pie, andouille mac 'n' cheese, and hot wings with a celery root puree, from talented chef Daryl Nash (formerly sous chef under the mad genius Homaro Cantu at Moto). Want the Saturday night buzz without the weekend-style wait? Come on a Wednesday night. *Mon-Thu 5-11pm, Fri-Sat 5pm-midnight; lounge Fri-Sat until 2am.* \$\$ 📍 [951 W. Fulton Mkt. \(Sangamon St.\), 312-491-5804](#)


Paramount Room • River West • American

Breathing new life into the seemingly inexhaustible gastropub trend, Paramount Room has a refreshing rock 'n' roll attitude. Housed in a former speakeasy (yes, Chicago has plenty to go around), Paramount Room spreads the easy-going, good-time vibe over two floors. On street level, you'll find a welcoming storefront tavern with upscale touches—lofted ceilings, wrap-around tufted banquettes, and an indigo color scheme. In a separate space downstairs, the owners have resurrected a speakeasy scene, with an elevated DJ booth cranking out loud rock tunes and a laid-back, fun-loving crowd. The impressive pub food menu features such delicacies as tempura-fried green beans, ale-steamed mussels and wagyu (American Kobe) beef burgers. While there is a healthy selection of wines, champagnes and cocktails, the focus here is beer—drafts, bottles, and cans—of the world's best. *Mon-Fri 11:30am-2am, Sat noon-3am, Sun noon-10pm.* \$  [415 N. Milwaukee Ave. \(Kinzie St.\), 312-829-6300, paramountroom.com](#)

Powerhouse • West Loop • American

The aptly named Powerhouse opened in one of the more unique venues we've heard of—a building that formerly housed the coal-fired generators and boilers used to power the Chicago Northwestern Railroad. Because this is Chicago after all, the building isn't some depressing warehouse; it's a historic Beaux-Arts jewel with a grand 223-foot smokestack towering over the West Loop neighborhood. The restaurant is garnering lots of buzz for its contemporary comfort food menu, served in both the fashionable dining room and bar. Expect trendy burgers, seasonal game and meat dishes, served with the requisite mile-long wine and cocktail list. A young, stylish group turns out in droves most nights—better make reservations. *Sun-Thu 11am-2:30pm and 5-10:30pm, Fri 11am-2:30pm and 5-11pm, Sat 11am-2pm and 5-11pm; bar open 11am-1am daily.* \$\$  [215 N. Clinton St. \(Lake St.\), 312-928-0800](#)

Risque Café • Wrigleyville • American

Where there's smoke there's fire, which is certainly the case at this popular new barbecue joint in Wrigleyville. Combining a love of bourbon, craft beers, barbecue, and 1940s-style pinup girls, Risque Café offers a throwback charm not often found in this sports-crazed neighborhood. The racy interior features a plethora of pinup girl photos and B-movies shown on 42-inch plasmas, plus burgundy-colored walls and a stainless steel-topped bar. The smokehouse menu is made up of barbecue favorites—pulled pork, brisket, ribs, and the like—as well as home-style side dishes like fried green tomatoes, bacon-cheddar gratin, and broccoli with beer-cheese sauce. The beer list is organized by state and features more than 200 selections, while the whiskey menu offers all of the heavy hitters. You'll find a young, friendly crowd of Wrigleyville inhabitants hanging out; however, if it's a home game day for the Cubs, expect the place to be a madhouse. *Mon-Fri 5pm-2am, Sat 11-3am, Sun 11-2am.* \$  [3419 N. Clark St. \(Roscoe St.\), 773-525-7711, risquechicago.com](#)


Sushi X • Lincoln Park • Japanese

Just when you think another trendy sushi restaurant couldn't possibly pop up, one makes a splash. The highly stylized Sushi X of West Town recently launched a hotly anticipated larger location in Lincoln Park. The bulk of the extensive menu is made up of both traditional and creative rolls, such as the White Tiger (a spicy concoction of tuna, hamachi, and salmon) and the Five-O (bacon and hamachi rolled in bacon bits and wrapped in prosciutto). A long list of nigiri,


sashimi, and pan-Asian entrees are also on hand. The stylish scene features a sleek blue-and-silver design scheme, with Japanese animation projected on a beaded shimmer screen and a cool little lounge area. The place gets packed with young couples and posers of friends on weekend nights; try coming in for lunch, or pick a weeknight. *Mon-Fri 11am-2pm and 5-11pm, Sat-Sun 5-11pm.* \$  [543 W. Diversey Pkwy. \(Cambridge Ave.\), 773-248-1808, sushi-x.net](#)

Hip Chicago Nightlife


Aberdeen • Wicker Park • Lounge

A high-flying yet laid-back hangout in the heart of the ever-evolving Wicker Park nightlife scene, Aberdeen parlays its small space into an intimate atmosphere. It's a sports bar by day, with six TVs and a straightforward bar-food menu, including burgers, hot wings, and salads, but by night Aberdeen morphs into a laid-back lounge, and resident DJs and bottle service rule the roost. Wooden accents, tons of candles, and white chandeliers lend some swagger to the space and create a classy atmosphere for a diverse group of clubbers. Weekends can be a bit claustrophobic, so show up early or choose a weeknight. *Mon-Fri 4pm-2am, Sat noon-3am, Sun noon-close.*  [1856 W. North Ave. \(Wolcott Ave.\), 773-365-0091, aberdeenchicago.com](#)

Chaise Lounge • Wicker Park • Ultra Lounge

It's the Delano-meets-Chicago at this gorgeous, ethereal hangout. A pastel color scheme complements free-flowing fabrics, candlelit tables, and a breezy indoor-outdoor vibe. The romantic dining room and bar is a sweet spot for sampling chef Isaac Holzwarth's seasonal Mediterranean-influenced menu, sipping creative fruit-flavored cocktails, and sizing up the young, beautiful, and typically eclectic Bucktown crowd. The street-level patio and breathtaking rooftop deck are wildly popular options when it's balmy. Come on a weeknight and you might find yourself surrounded by couples, but Fridays and Saturdays are dominated by groups of good-looking jetsetters. *Monday-Friday 11am-2am, Sat 11am-3am, Sun 10:30am-2am.* \$0  [1840 W. North Ave. \(Honore St.\), 773-342-1840, chaiseloungechicago.com](#)

The Libertine • Lincoln Park • Lounge

Embracing a *Pirates of the Caribbean* décor, with vintage-looking chandeliers, gilded mirrors, a wooden staircase, and fleur-de-lys motifs, and drawing an equally decadent party crowd, The Libertine isn't all about debauchery. The bar/restaurant also boasts a French-accented menu (think charcuterie, grilled steak, and pommes frites) with global beer pairings. The dinner crowd thins out as the night goes on, and by midnight The Libertine is full of sexed-up revelers. A separate bar upstairs boasts a roped-off V.I.P. area. Monday nights cater to the hospitality-industry crowd with Chicago's top chefs serving as guest bartenders, a great opportunity for anyone to meet some of the city's culinary stars in an up-close-and-personal atmosphere. *Mon-Fri 6pm-2am, Sat 6pm-3am, Sun 9pm-2am.*  [1615 N. Clybourn Ave. \(North Ave.\), 312-654-1782, libertinechicago.com](#)

Lumen • River West • Ultra Lounge

Art gallery sleek and minimalist chic, Lumen attracts Chicago's most resplendent party stars. A multimedia installation of LED lights, video, and sound elevates Lumen above the dime-a-dozen dance clubs, while a no-VIP policy makes

everyone shine. This 5,000-square-foot former meatpacking factory is filled with low-slung modular sofas, so there are plenty of places to take in the show of lights and streams of pretty people. You can call ahead for bottle service, which reserves you a table, but otherwise it's first come, first served. You might encounter a line on weekends, but you'll find a stylish crowd here on school nights, too. *Wed-Fri 8pm-2am, Sat 8pm-3am.* \$0 ☏ 839 W. Fulton Mkt. (Green St.), 312-733-2222, lumen-chicago.com

Par Lounge • Wicker Park • Lounge

Par Lounge has taken over the legendary Sweet Alice space on Damen Avenue. Gone is the grungy rock vibe, and in its place is a sexy, artsy lounge feel. Exposed brick walls are adorned with paintings by local artists, while low-slung ottomans, candlelit tables, and a long, narrow bar are filled with eclectic, easy-on-the-eyes regulars. The bar menu of globally influenced small plates, a bevy of beers, and signature cocktails satisfies the crowd, while a sultry soundtrack of jazz, funk, and R&B creates a mellow vibe. You might encounter a wait on weekend nights, but the place never feels overly packed. Get there early to grab a seat. *Mon-Fri 6pm-2am, Sat 6pm-3am.* ☏ 1415 N. Milwaukee Ave. (Wolcott Ave.), 773-252-6410

Relax Lounge • Wicker Park • Lounge

Formerly known as Pharmacy (gee, wonder why that didn't fly?), Relax retains some vestiges of its former taboo moniker. The bar's exterior is marked by a glowing acid-green cross, and a vintage "Prescriptions" sign gets top billing. Otherwise, it's all rock 'n' roll, baby. Black-and-white photos of legendary musicians like the Rolling Stones, Bob Marley, and Frank Sinatra by photographer Paul Natkin set the mood, while neighborhood regulars and unpretentious tattooed tastemakers make the too-cool-for-school scene. Order your poison: cocktails are stiff (bourbon is a favorite) and the burgers and fries are tasty. *Mon-Fri 6pm-2am, Sat 7pm-3am, Sun 2pm-2am.* \$0 ☏ 1450 W. Chicago Ave. (Bishop St.), 312-666-6006

Scarlet • Lakeview • Lounge

Scarlet, Chicago's newest gay bar, has a decidedly upscale sheen, with a colorful backlit bar, gorgeous stained-glass windows, vintage photographs and two giant antique mirrors. Speaking of reflective surfaces, Scarlet also displays flat-screen TVs showing pop music videos or sports during the early evening hours that humorously switch over to mirrors as night descends. DJ-driven dance music and signature martinis served by eye-candy bartenders keep the good-looking patrons (of both sexes, but heavily in favor of boy toys) grooving and cruising. The entire effect is laid-back, but unmistakably sophisticated. *Mon-Wed 6pm-2am, Thu, Fri and Sun 4pm-2am, Sat 4pm-3am.* \$0 ☏ 3320 N. Halsted St. (Buckingham Pl.), 773-348-1053

Violet Hour • Wicker Park • Ultra Lounge

With a magical name (referring to T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" and Bernard DeVoto's ode to the martini, "The Hour"), an intriguing concept (a bar that perfects cocktail recipes, some a century old), and an all-star lineup (including renowned mixologist Toby Maloney of NYC's Pegu Club and Milk and Honey), the Violet Hour has achieved instant classic status. The bar staff has been trained for 50 hours to craft concoctions using eight varieties of ice, house-made bitters, and fresh-squeezed juices. The décor is out of your dreams: floor-

length velvet curtains in cornflower blue, glittering crystal chandeliers, and high-backed chairs surrounding candlelit tables create a fantasy feel. The bar only lets in about 100 people at a time, so get here early in the week if you want to get in at all. *Sun-Fri 8pm-2am, Sat 8pm-3am.* \$0 ☏ 1520 N. Damen Ave. (LeMoine St.), 773-252-1500

Classic Chicago Restaurants

Tavern at the Park • Loop/Downtown • American

The City of Big Shoulders lives large at this clubby hangout located across from Millennium Park. Macho décor includes a gigantic granite-topped bar (a wildly popular gathering place for the Loop office crowd), plush leather banquettes, and Old World pressed-tin ceilings. Sweeping views of the park come courtesy of floor-to-ceiling windows in this imposing two-story space. Plenty of private dining rooms host scores of business meetings, while the happy hour habitués mingle for drinks and stay for dinner. Chef John Hogan's style is straightforward and substantial; feast on pork chops in a cherry cola barbecue sauce, filet mignon sliders, and gooey cheese fondue. *Mon-Thu 11am-10pm, Fri 11am-10:30pm, Sat 4-10:30pm.* \$\$ ☏ 130 E. Randolph St. (Michigan Ave.), 312-552-0070, tavernatthepark.com

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