



Here's where I eat when I'm in town.

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The Michelin BlogHer Guide to Chicago

Chicago is known for its world-class dining, and if you're in town for the conference then you shouldn't miss a chance to sample some of the local fare! But where do you turn to find the best of Chicago dining? Michelin's got you covered. Our Michelin Guides team has carefully selected some of the best spots in town to satisfy the foodie in all of us. Enjoy!

RESTAURANTS

The venues listed below were selected for their ambience, location and/or value for money. Rates indicate the average cost of an appetizer, an entrée and a dessert for one person (not including tax, gratuity or beverages). Most restaurants are open daily (except where noted) and accept major credit cards. Call for information regarding reservations, dress code and opening hours. For a list of restaurants organized by theme (Special Occasion, Easy on the Budget, etc.), see p138.

Luxury	\$\$\$\$	Over \$50
Moderate	\$\$\$	30-\$50
Inexpensive	\$\$	15-\$30
Budget	\$	Under \$15

LUXURY

Arun's

\$\$\$\$ Thai
4156 N. Kedzie Ave., Wrigleyville.
Dinner only. Closed Mon.
773-539-1909.
www.arunsthai.com.

Reputedly among the best Thai restaurants in the country, Arun's does not offer a standard menu, preferring to serve a 12-course—and popular—prix-fixe menu (\$75 and up). Against a backdrop of mahogany, Thai silk, wall murals and Thai craftwork, diners here can sample a delightful array of delicacies and flavors selected and blended with exquisite attention to detail. Whereas the six appetizer courses are served one by one, the entrées are served family style. Choices can range from snapper in red tamarind sauce to “golden baskets,” a house specialty of shrimp-and-chicken-filled pastries. The meal ends with Arun's palate cleansing lemongrass elixir.

Charlie Trotter's

\$\$\$\$ New American
816 W. Armitage Ave., Lincoln Park.

Dinner only. Closed Sun & Mon. Jackets required. 773-248-6228. www.charlietrotters.com. Tables at the restaurant run by culinary genius Charlie Trotter get booked 4 to 12 weeks in advance. The draw? One-of-a-kind dishes prepared with naturally raised meats, organic produce and vegetable-based sauces. Choose from two daily eight-course prix-fixe menus, the grand dégustation menu (\$135) and the lighter vegetable menu (\$115). For a special treat, reserve the sole kitchen table, where cooking becomes performance.



L20

\$\$\$\$ Seafood
2300 N. Lincoln Park West.
Lincoln Park. 773-868-0002.
www.l2orestaurant.com.
Chef Laurent Gras gained fans in New York and San Francisco (not to mention France) before he moved to Chicago. His seafood-centric restaurant almost immediately had an obsessive following. Housed in the former Ambria space, L20 fuses Japanese and European influences for its fresh-from-the-sea approach. If you can't decide with all the good dishes on the menu, try one of two prix-fixe options: a four-course menu for \$110 or a 12-course tasting for \$165.

Spiaggia

\$\$\$\$ Italian
980 N. Michigan Ave., 2nd floor of One Magnificent Mile Building, Magnificent Mile. Dinner only. Jackets required. 312-280-2750. www.levyrestaurants.com.
Overlooking Oak Street Beach and Lake Michigan through its floor-to-ceiling windows on the north end of Michigan Avenue, Chicago's toniest Italian restaurant offers a soaring array of dishes that are well-grounded in regional Italian cuisine. Pastas are handmade; meat and fish are wood-roasted—



try the signature Colorado lamb chop with polenta and Brussels sprouts. Next door, dressed-down **Café Spiaggia** (lunch Mon-Sat, dinner nightly, brunch Sun) serves tasty pizzas and pastas at more palatable prices.

Tru

\$\$\$\$ New American
676 N. St. Clair St., Magnificent Mile. Dinner only. Closed Sun. Reservations required. 312-202-0001. www.trurestaurant.com.
At once lush and spare, the dining room at Tru sets the stage for the epicurean theater to follow. Original Warhols and other artworks add color to the room, and the tables are serenely minimalist. After you choose from four prix-fixe menus, the fun begins. Award winning chefs Rick Tramonto and Gale Gand (of Food Network fame) send out course after course, each more exquisite than the last in both food and presentation. These are not large courses, mind you, but jewel-like creations to tease the palate. Dinner takes about three hours when served this way, but it's a lovely, sensual experience.

MODERATE

Bistro 110

\$\$\$ French
110 E. Pearson St., Magnificent Mile. 312-266-3110. www.bistro110restaurant.com.
The roasted garlic bulb that accompanies your baguette at this bright, bustling French bistro sets the tone for the wood-oven-roasted meats and fish served here—all redolent with garlic. Good basic steak au poivre and steaks frites are sure to satisfy, as are bistro favorites like cassoulet Toulousian and Robuchon lamb shank, slowroasted in its own juices. This is a great place for a lunch break while shopping on Mag Mile.

Blackbird

\$\$\$ New American
619 W. Randolph St., Near West Side. Closed Sun. 312-715-0708. www.blackbirdrestaurant.com
In contrast to its stark white exterior and minimalist décor, this tiny Market District hot spot serves dishes that are a feast for the eyes, prepared in a style that acclaimed chef Paul Kahan describes as “seasonal American with French countryside influences.” The name Blackbird comes from French slang for a plump Merlot grape. Try the signature wood-grilled California sturgeon, or perhaps a stuffed breast of bobwhite quail with medjool dates, lobster mushrooms and white-corn grits. You never know what you might find; the menu and wine list both change frequently.

Brasserie Jo

\$\$\$ French
59 W. Hubbard St., River North. Dinner only. 312-595-0800. www.brasseriejo.com.
Chef Jean Joho (also of the dressier Everest; see p124) works magic with the country fare of Alsace, offering among other hearty dishes a marvelous sausage choucroute, a flaky onion tart, a lobster bouillabaisse, and the restaurant's “Famous Shrimp Bag” (shrimp and vegetables bathed in a light cream sauce and steamed in a phyllo bag). The largely Alsatian wine list, good beer and authentic Parisian brasserie atmosphere complete this delightful dining experience. Bring the kids; they get some surprises along with their own menu.



Custom House

\$\$\$ Steakhouse
500 S. Dearborn St. Printers Row. 312-523-0200. www.customhouse.cc.
Certainly, Chicago has no shortage of steakhouses. But chef-owner Shawn McClain (Spring, Green Zebra) challenges the genre. Instead of oversized portions of classics, he offers up new interpretations, using local ingredients and a minimalist aesthetic. Not for those who just want a slab of beef, but for those who are ready for a different side of the cow.

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Green Zebra

\$\$\$ Vegetarian

1460 W. Chicago Ave., River West.
Dinner only. Closed Mon.
312-243-7100.

www.greenzebrachicago.com.

Chicago may be prized for its beef, but you couldn't tell it by Green Zebra, which has been packing in crowds of vegetarians since it opened in spring 2004. Named for a variety of heirloom tomato, this hot spot pulses with a hip vibe evident in its buzzing dining room and techno-modern décor. Chef Shawn McClain displays his culinary artistry using the freshest offerings of the season in selections like silky avocado panna cotta with tomato gelée, crème fraîche and sweet corn chips; and cave-aged gruyère soufflé with endive and heirloom apples. Save room for the white-chocolate dreamsicle, with vanilla-bean ice cream, orange granité and ginger soda.

Harry Caray's

\$\$\$ American

33 W. Kinzie Ave., River North. 773-465-9269. www.harrycarays.com. Cubs fans will revel in the atmosphere here, which is chock-full of baseball memorabilia and items relating to the Hall of Fame career of late baseball announcer Harry Caray. House specialty chicken Vesuvio (chicken sautéed with garlic, then baked with crispy potatoes and served with peas and a whitewine reduction) and 23-ounce Prime Porterhouse steaks top the menu. The 60-foot-long bar makes a great gathering place. Prices range widely so there's something for everyone.

The Pump Room

\$\$\$ American

In the Omni Ambassador East Hotel, 1301 N. State Pkwy., Gold Coast. 312-266-0360. www.pumproom.com.

In its heyday during the 1940s, this restaurant was the place for Chicago's swell set and visiting Hollywood stars to see and be seen. They undoubtedly came for the outrageous service—dishes were delivered on flaming swords, and guests' dogs could dine in the adjacent Pup Room. While it's no longer the center of Chicago society, the Pump Room remains a charming, elegant restaurant with excellent food. Rumors are it's becoming fashionable again.

Rhapsody

\$\$\$ New American

65 E. Adams St., Loop. Closed Sun. 312-786-9911. www.rhapsodychicago.com.

Much of the charm of this elegant urban dining spot derives from its location in Symphony Center at the heart of Chicago's Loop, which

is framed beautifully in the restaurant's glass window-walls. Eclectic and inventive dishes (Coq au Vin blanc, Nantucket Bay scallops glazed with orange reduction) and desserts worthy of an encore draw on flavors from around the world. Wrap up your meal with the aptly named Chocolate Symphony, a sampling of bittersweet chocolate crème caramel, molten chocolate brownie and white praline hot chocolate. Reserve early on performance nights.

Russian Tea Time

\$\$\$ Russian

77 E. Adams St., Loop. 312-360-0000. www.russianteatime.com.

Distinguished by red-velvet furnishings, this elegant (if over the top) tea room located one block from the Art Institute buzzes with the polite chatter of classical-music lovers when the symphony performs. Fine caviar and champagne are de rigueur in the evening as is tea in the afternoon. The restaurant also offers a complete menu for lunch and dinner featuring Russian, Uzbek, Ukrainian and Baltic delicacies. Like Rhapsody, this is another restaurant that's popular with the symphony crowd, so reserve early.

Saloon Steakhouse

\$\$\$ American

200 E. Chestnut St., Magnificent Mile. No lunch weekends. 312-280-5454. www.saloosteakhouse.com.

There are plenty of good steakhouses in Chicago. It's the atmosphere at the Saloon that sets it apart—more a neighborhood tavern than a swanky steakhouse. The room is small, but comfortable, and the steaks, vegetables and potato sides keep 'em coming back for more. Among its other fine cuts, The Saloon serves Wagyu beef, which is American-raised Kobe-style beef. Added benefits: the service is friendly and the wine list is long.

Tizi Melloul

\$\$\$ Moroccan

2531 N. Wells St., River North. Dinner only. 312-670-4338. www.tizimelloul.com.

Wonderful contemporary Moroccan and Mediterranean cuisine is served here amid billowing curtains and pillows in rich reds and golds. Every inch the casbah, Tizi Melloul is a lot of fun. Start with a refreshing Rockin' Moroccan cocktail (vodka, lime juice, fresh mint, soda water and a splash of Sprite), then dive into the fire-roasted mussels. The tagine (lamb and dates stewed in a special clay pot and served over toasted orzo) makes a particularly good entrée. After dinner, lounge in the bar with a nightcap and a hookah.

Come Sunday nights to catch the belly dancing.

Topolobampo

\$\$\$ Mexican Regional

445 N. Clark St., River North. Closed Sun & Mon. 312-661-1434. www.fronterakitchens.com.

Chef Rick Bayless has given his sophisticated cuisine a nationwide reputation by the skillful blending of traditional Mexican flavors from Yucatan to Oaxaca. The chef's way with chilies and mole is particularly notable, and fish dishes excel. The menu changes every two weeks, but *puerco en manchamanteles* (Maple Creek Farm pork loin in red-chile sauce with plantains, pineapple and homemade chorizo) and *pescado en mole Amarillo* (pan-seared day-boat catch in Oaxacan yellow mole with smoked Prince Edward Island mussels and red-chile rice) are typical of the chef's culinary artistry. You'll find the same quality—at a lower cost—at the more casual **Frontera Grill**, which shares space with Topolobampo.



Topolobampo Restaurant

INEXPENSIVE

17 West at the Berghoff

\$\$\$ German

17 W. Adams St., Loop. Closed Sun. 312-427-3170. www.17westchicago.com.

On the site of what was the 107-year-old beloved German restaurant called The Berghoff, 17 West blends contemporary bistro food with classic German fare. Look for modern takes on sauerbraten, schnitzel and bratwurst. The authentic 19th century atmosphere, such as the carved wood bar, may make you want to linger.

Andies

\$\$\$ Mediterranean

5253 N. Clark St., Andersonville. 773-784-8616. www.andiesres.com. It may be off the beaten path, but if you're shopping in Andersonville (see p33) at lunch or dinnertime, give Andies a try. A nice fireplace warms up the whitewashed room, which is clean and inviting. The menu blends Mediterranean and Middle Eastern flavors into an impressive montage of dishes at very reasonable prices Ingredients

are always fresh, and the service is friendly. Andies also features a kids' menu. You'll find another location a little farther south at 1467 W. Montrose Ave. (773-348-0654).



avec

\$\$ New American

615 W. Randolph St., Near West Side. 312-377-2002. www.avecrestaurant.com.

It is hard to believe that this small space was once intended to handle the overflow from Blackbird. Instead, now avec, from the same crew that brings you Blackbird, is a destination in its own right. The communal tables are always packed, often with chefs from other restaurants. The strength of the menu is in its simplicity. The house-made charcuterie is legendary. **Note:** avec does not accept reservations, so you are likely to wait for a table.

Café Ba-Ba-Reeba!

\$\$\$ Spanish

2024 N. Halsted St., Lincoln Park. 773-935-5000. www.leye.com.

Though other tapas bars have cropped up since, this was Chicago's original. Seven seating areas decked in bright Mediterranean colors accommodate 360 diners. Ambience and food still sizzle, and the crowds come to enjoy hot and cold tapas ("little dishes" ordered in quantity and shared), paella, and a nice selection of Spanish wines.

Club Lucky

\$\$\$ Italian

1824 W. Wabansia Ave., Bucktown. 773-227-2300. www.club-lucky.com.

In a neighborhood where eateries come and go, Club Lucky has endured. Generous portions of homestyle Italian cooking—rigatoni with veal meatballs, eggplant parmigiana, shrimp scampi, chicken oreganato—great martinis and a funky 1940s supper-club atmosphere team up to make this lounge/restaurant a long-lived hit.

Erwin

\$\$\$ American

2925 N. Halsted St., Lakeview. Dinner only (brunch Sun). Closed Mon. 773-528-7200. www.erwincafe.com.

Seasonal specialties with Midwestern flavor grace Erwin's simple but robust menu. Creative vegetable and fruit preparations and savory sauces embellish basics like calves' liver, pan-roasted Great Lakes whitefish, wood-grilled pork chops, and even hamburgers—served with fries, horseradish slaw and homemade pickles. The smallish room is casual yet chic and comfortable, with the cozy feel of a friend's dining room.



Gino's East

\$\$ Pizza

633 N. Wells St., River North. 312-943-1124. www.featuredfoods.com. Chicago's favorite deep-dish pizzeria, renowned for its two-inch-thick pies and its graffiti-splattered wooden booths, which have been moved to a new location in the space once occupied by Planet Hollywood. Call ahead and order your pizza, or be prepared to wait at least 30 minutes for your pie to cook.



marine sandwiches) are generous. Good food and the laid-back atmosphere make this place popular and the waits sometimes long.

Heaven on Seven

\$\$ Cajun

111 N. Wabash Ave., 7th floor of Garland Building, Loop. Breakfast & lunch Mon–Sat. Dinner third Fri of month (reservations required). Closed Sun. 312-263-6443. www.heavenonseven.com. Creole shrimp, crab cakes, po-boy sandwiches and gumbo are just a few of the New Orleans-style dishes served in this small but bustling lunchroom. Most entrées are served plenty spicy, but connoisseurs of Cajun heat use the bottles of Louisiana hot sauce on the tables to season their food. For a sweet ending, try a healthy serving of cinnamon-spiked bread pudding. A slicker version of the original, **Heaven on Seven on Rush**, is at 600 N. Michigan Ave., 2nd floor (312-280-7774).

BUDGET

Ann Sather

\$ Swedish-American

909 W. Belmont Ave., Lakeview. No dinner Mon, Tue. 773-348-2378. www.annsather.com.

A welcoming atmosphere and home cooking with a Swedish flair have made this a favorite among Chicagoans since 1945. Breakfast is a specialty—think Swedish pancakes with lingonberries or Swedish meatballs. And be sure to try the homemade cinnamon rolls. Reasonably priced dinner entrées (baked chicken, Tom turkey, Lake Superior whitefish) come with two sides and dessert. Belmont Avenue is the flagship, but Ann Sather also has other locations in Lakeview and Andersonville.

Chicago Pizza and Oven Grinder

\$ Italian

2121 N. Clark St., Lincoln Park. Dinner only Mon–Fri, lunch weekends. 773-248-2570. www.chicagopizzaandoven.grinder.com.

Located across the street from the site of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, this nook in the basement of a Victorian brownstone serves unusual topsy-turvy pizzas that resemble potpies. Abundant salads can be shared and the grinders (the local term for sub-

Ed Debevic's

\$ American

640 N. Wells St., River North. 312-664-1707.

www.featuredfoods.com. "Good food, fresh service": that's the mantra of this Chicago institution, known for its sassy waitstaff who talk back and randomly jump up on the counter to sing. Kids and tourists seem to love it, and the diner fare—chili, burgers, hot dogs, meatloaf, ribs, milkshakes and thick malts—isn't bad either.

Gold Coast Dogs

\$ American

159 N. Wabash Ave., Loop. 312-917-1677.

The Chicago-style hot dog ranks with deep-dish pizza as a source of local culinary pride, and this busy stand serves up some of the best in town. Though topping choices vary depending on individual taste, the Chicagostyle dog (known as a "red hot") typically consists of a Vienna beef frank served on a poppy-seed bun. Mustard, relish and onions are a must, and tomatoes, pickle slices, cucumber, lettuce and both green and hot peppers are often added, along with a dash of celery salt. Ketchup, however, has no business on a red hot!

Green Door Tavern

\$ American

678 N. Orleans St., River North. 312-664-5496.

Constructed only one year after the Chicago Fire of 1871, this is among the oldest downtown buildings and shows its age in a ten-degree list to the right and sloping floors. It's been a tavern since 1921 and today serves good burgers, sandwiches (try the tripledecker grilled cheese), and 35 different kinds of beer.

Half Shell

\$ Seafood

676 W. Diversey Pkwy., Lincoln Park. 773-549-1773.

This quintessential neighborhood dive is located below street level; its downscale atmosphere is at odds with its surroundings. Though small and dark, Half Shell lures loyal locals craving fresh crab legs,

shrimp, oysters and fried seafood for lunch or dinner. Diners are welcome to belly up to the curving bar, which takes up half the room, rather than wait for a table.

Healthy Food

\$ Lithuanian

3236 S. Halsted St., Bridgeport. 312-326-2724.

Don't let the name fool you; they don't serve health food here. What they do offer is yummy Lithuanian home cooking. Traditional folk art decorates the walls and the menu offers a mix of specialties, vegetarian entrées and some American favorites. Breakfast is best and the blynais (pancakes served with sour cream), smeared with chunky fruit compote, are to die for.

Hema's Kitchen

\$ Indian

6406 N. Oakley Ave., West Rogers Park. 773-338-1627. www.hemaskitchen.net.

Hema Potla and her family prepare awesome home-cooked Indian food in her little Far North Side restaurant. The wait can be awesome, too, especially on weekends, so be prepared. You can BYOB to enjoy while you wait. So popular has Hema's cooking become that she's opened another spot in Lincoln Park at 2411 N. Clark Street (773-529-1705).

Lou Mitchell's

\$ American

565 W. Jackson Blvd., Near West Side. 312-939-3111.

The place for breakfast (you can get lunch, too) in downtown Chicago since 1923, Lou Mitchell's still serves up manly portions of oatmeal, eggs, pancakes, French toast and fluffy over-stuffed omelets to satisfy the heartiest appetites. Don't mind the plastic plants and the non-sense service.

Mr. Beef

\$ Italian

666 N. Orleans St., River North. Lunch only Mon–Sat. Closed Sun. 312-337-8500.

Tonight Show host Jay Leno put this place on the map. He discovered it as a struggling stand-up comic working the nightclub circuit and has been recommending it to his Hollywood pals for years. Go to Mr. Beef for the Italian beef sandwiches, consisting of a soft Italian roll piled high with thinly sliced marinated beef garnished with giardinere (pickled peppers, celery and spices).

The Third Coast

\$ American

1260 N. Dearborn St., Gold Coast. 312-649-0730. www.3rdcoastcafe.com.

Sip cappuccino or claret in this warm, comfortable coffeehouse and wine bar, which is open early

and into the wee hours. The clientele here ranges from well-dressed Gold Coast matrons to bohemian art students who stay at the Three Arts Club across the street. Good, light fare includes soups, sandwiches and salads. It's a nice place to meet for lunch.

Twin Anchors Restaurant-Tavern

\$ Barbecue

1655 N. Sedgwick St., Old Town. 312-266-1616. www.twinanchorsribs.com.

Beloved for its succulent, melt-in-your-mouth ribs, Twin Anchors has been a popular pub since it opened after Prohibition; Frank Sinatra stopped here regularly in the 1960s. The essential neighborhood joint with its relaxed and modest atmosphere makes a nice escape from upscale chic.

Viet Bistro

\$ Vietnamese

1346 W. Devon Ave., Rogers Park. 773-465-5720.

The family who was once behind the beloved Pasteur opened this more budget-friendly Vietnamese eatery. While the menu may be easier on the wallet than their previous restaurant, the dishes are still authentic. Pasteur fans are happy to see the return of whole red snapper on the menu. But Viet Bistro is hipper than Pasteur ever was, with fun tasting events and a creative drinks menu.

Wishbone

\$ Southern

1001 W. Washington Blvd., Near West Side. No dinner Mon. 312-850-2663.

www.wishbonechicago.com. Have a heaping helping of oppin' John or mix and match downhome side dishes with blackened catfish and chicken étouffée. Wishbone's colorful, lively dining room attracts an eclectic crowd, from kids to celebrities, and serves a hearty Cajun breakfast as well. There's another location at 3300 N. Lincoln Avenue (773-549-2663).

Wow Bao

\$ Asian

835 N. Michigan Ave., in Water Tower Place, Magnificent Mile. 312-642-5888. www.wowbao.com.

If you want a quick bite while you're shopping on Mag Mile, Wow Bao serves up fresh steamed buns (bao) to business-lunchers and shoppers alike from their take-out booth just inside the Chicago Water Tower. Asian buns are served hot and stuffed with such combinations as Kung Pao chicken, spicy Mongolian beef, and green vegetables. Wash your selection down with ginger ale made with fresh ginger, or hibiscus iced tea. Rice bowls, salads and soups are also available.

