

# DINE AROUND

MAY 2016 | ISSUE 32 | YOUR MONTHLY FOODSERVICE IMMERSION

## CHICAGO TAKES IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

*Prime & Provisions*  
←

SPECIAL  
EDITION

**NRA  
2016**

IN THIS ISSUE

ITALIAN • SEAFOOD • LATIN • ETHNIC MASHUPS • SINGLE-SPIRIT BARS

# 65%

**OF CONSUMERS WANT TO SEE MORE  
CHICAGO FLAVORS AND INGREDIENTS  
ON MENUS AND AT RETAIL**

DATASSENTIAL RESEARCH

# THE MENU ADOPTION CYCLE

Datassential's Menu Adoption Cycle (MAC) is a framework for understanding, predicting, and leveraging food trends. A trend's life cycle is defined by where that trend shows up, starting at fine dining restaurants and then eventually finding its way to mainstream supermarket shelves and beyond.

## RETAIL

## FOODSERVICE

I

### MAC STAGE INCEPTION

Trends start here. Inception-stage trends exemplify originality in flavor, preparation, and presentation.

Ethnic Markets

Ethnic Independents

Fine Dining

Ethnic Aisle

A

### MAC STAGE ADOPTION

Adoption-stage trends grow their base via lower price points and simpler prep methods. Still differentiated, these trends often feature premium and/or generally authentic ingredients.

Farmers' Markets

Gastropubs

Chef Casuels

Food Trucks

Specialty Grocers  
Gourmet Food Stores

Upper Casual

Casual Independents

Fast Casual

Traditional Grocery

Lodging

Mass Merchandisers

Casual Chains

Colleges

Quick Service Restaurants

Grocery Deli

Club Stores

P

### MAC STAGE PROLIFERATION

Proliferation-stage trends are adjusted for mainstream appeal. Often combined with popular applications (on a burger, pasta, etc.), these trends have become familiar to many.

Drug Stores

Convenience Stores

Corporate Cafeterias

Dollar Stores

Family Restaurants

Healthcare

K-12 Schools

U

### MAC STAGE UBIQUITY

Ubiquity-stage trends have reached maturity, and can be found across all sectors of the food industry.

# TERMS TO KNOW

Datassential's MenuTrends data is reported using two key measures: **PENETRATION** and **INCIDENCE**.

## PENETRATION

*% of RESTAURANTS that serve that food, flavor, or ingredient.*

This is a measure of **adoption**. Increases in penetration indicate that more restaurants are adding the item to their menu.

Penetration is the most important statistic and the best indicator of trend movement.

## INCIDENCE

*% of MENU ITEMS that feature that food, flavor, or ingredient.*

This is a measure of **versatility**. A restaurant adding yet another chicken dish to its menu will result in an increase in incidence.

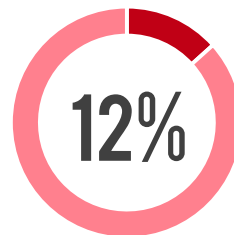
Incidence is a supporting statistic, to be used as a complement to penetration.



### EXAMPLE **CHICKEN**



**PENETRATION**



**INCIDENCE**

Chicken is found on **98% of all restaurant menus**, and is featured in **12% of those dishes**.

## HOW DO YOU CREATE A SUCCESSFUL NEW STEAKHOUSE (OR OYSTER BAR, OR ITALIAN RESTAURANT...) IN A CITY FULL OF THEM?

Chicago's dining scene is equal parts old and new – old-school steakhouses and red sauce Italian joints right next to temples of molecular gastronomy that invite guests to eat helium-filled balloons. You'll find almost any type of food you can imagine, and new coffee, donut, and ramen shops open every few days. How do you stand out in this crowded market?

By taking it to the next level.

In recent years, a number of restaurants across the city have opened that take well-known, consumer-friendly, sometimes even generic ideas and update them, creating bolder, more memorable concepts. These aren't just Italian restaurants or crab shacks or breweries, these are restaurants with hot, heavy hearths in the middle of the dining room and duck hearts, gochugaru, and yerba santa on the menu.

Of course, Chicago isn't the only place you'll see this evolution. You'll find hip oyster bars in Charleston, unusual brewpubs in Portland, chef-driven dim sum in Atlanta, and funky taquerias in Los Angeles, while major chains look for ways to stand out while feeling more personal and unique with authentic, on-trend, local, and global menus and concepts.

Just in time for the 2016 National Restaurant Association Show, Datassential is taking you across Chicago to find the restaurants that are taking classic concepts to the next level. Experience and be inspired by the next evolution of Latin and Italian restaurants, steakhouses and oyster bars, and so much more. To put these forward-thinking ideas and concepts to work for you, contact us while you are in town – email Dave Jenkins at [dave@datassential.com](mailto:dave@datassential.com).

## WHY IT MATTERS

Everyone is looking for the next big thing and, in Chicago, you just may find it. As segments meld and the trend cycle speeds up, the flavors, dishes, ingredients, and concepts in this issue could be translated for a larger audience in the years ahead. These concepts are also designed to stand out in the crowded Chicago market – the city has no shortage of steak houses, Italian restaurants, and taco shops, and the same could be said for the country as a whole. By focusing on particular regions, modernizing menus, infusing classic dishes with global flavors, and taking calculated risks with new ideas, these operators stay fresh and relevant.

*A number of dining groups from outside Chicago have brought concepts to the city recently. The Lavender Collins from Freehand Miami's Broken Shaker (top), Saffron Spaghetti with Uni Sauce at GreenRiver from Danny Meyer's New York-based Union Square Hospitality Group (middle), and Chicharrones at Bernie's Lunch & Supper, from Detroit-based Peas & Carrots Hospitality (bottom).*



## NEXT CONCEPT

CHICAGO RESTAURANTS ARE RECONCEPTING, DISCARDING OLD IDEAS FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT AND NEW

Chef Grant Achatz's **Alinea** closed last year after a decade of awards and Michelin stars. Now it will reopen with a new look and a new concept that is focused less on molecular gastronomy and more on experiential dining and an emotional connection with the food (a recent test meal featured envelopes that said "Please, shut up," and diners ate the course in silence). Earlier this year **Intro**, the Lettuce Entertain You restaurant that switches up chefs and concepts a few times a year, announced it was making a few conceptual changes, including the appointment of an executive chef to work with each visiting chef. There are now two menus – a permanent a la carte menu and the guest menu – in an attempt to make the concept less of a "special occasion-only" restaurant. **C Chicago**, the seafood restaurant from the Chicago Cut Steakhouse team, reconcepted to become Ocean Cut, with a more accessible, "fun" atmosphere, with dishes like a lobster burger and lobster bloody mary, plus a few steaks. **Piccolo Sogno Due**, the sister restaurant to the original Piccolo Sogno, closed last month and will become Nonnina, a more casual concept with a to-go counter that has the feel of an "old-school Italian shop" plus a modern, upscale dining room with a new bar, according to *Eater Chicago*. **Protein Bar**, the health-focused fast casual with 13 locations around Chicago, announced it would change its name, appearance, and menu to "stay abreast of customer's rapidly-changing and increasingly discerning tastes," reported the *Chicago Tribune*. Although the new name has yet to be unveiled, the new menu will include more proteins and greens, with additional options like noodle bowls and kombucha mocktails.

The Shellfish Bouquet at Ocean Cut. The new menu from chef Dirk Flanigan features a wider range of options, including Ge Goki (seafood bulgogi), seafood charcuterie, and a "Fish Market" menu that guests can choose to order salt crusted or grilled.



## WINNER WINNER

A NUMBER OF CHICAGO RESTAURANTS HAVE RACKED UP SOME SERIOUS AWARDS LATELY



### LOST LAKE

*Imbibe Magazine* named Logan Square's Lost Lake the "Cocktail Bar of the Year" in January. Chicago bartender extraordinaire Paul McGee, formerly of Three Dots and a Dash, opened the spot last year, saying he wanted to "distill the original spirit of Don's Beachcomber Café down to its very essence."



### THE BLANCHARD

*Chicago Magazine* named this French spot the "Best New Restaurant in Chicago" this year, calling it a restaurant "by grownups, for grownups." For more on French cuisine, search for our recent issue of *World Bites: France* in SNAP!



### ORIOLE

*Chicago Magazine* doesn't normally give out stars for restaurants, but it made an exception for Oriole, giving it four stars at only two months old. This fine dining restaurant accessed by an alley in the West Loop belongs on Chicago's "restaurant Mt. Rushmore" said reviewer Jeff Ruby.



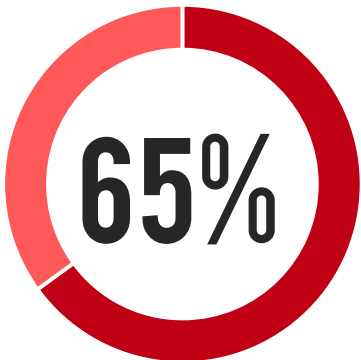
### CHERRY CIRCLE ROOM

This hotspot in the Chicago Athletic Association Hotel took home a James Beard Award for Outstanding Restaurant Design (for a restaurant 76 seats and over) last month. The clubby restaurant features dishes inspired by CAA menus dating back to the 1890s.

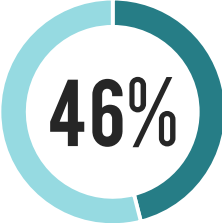


Baker Miller grinds its own flours for its baked goods and to sell at retail around the Chicago area.

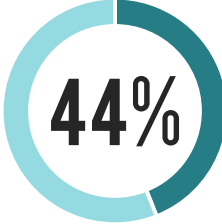
# WHAT DO CONSUMERS THINK ABOUT NEXT-LEVEL CONCEPTS?



WANT TO SEE MORE FOODS, FLAVORS, & INGREDIENTS FROM CHICAGO ON MENUS OR IN STORES



HAVE VISITED CHICAGO



WOULD VISIT JUST FOR THE RESTAURANTS

HAVE TRIED      AWARE HAVE NOT TRIED      INTERESTED

**MODERN STEAKHOUSES**  
More casual, with unexpected global flavors and twists on classic dishes.

44%      37%      61%

**MODERN BAKERIES**  
Often feature unique breads and pastries, house-milled flours, and global flavors.

38%      41%      58%

**MODERN COFFEEHOUSES**  
Offer unique options like coffee cocktails, unusual flavors, and innovative brewing methods.

36%      44%      42%

**MODERN SEAFOOD**  
Hip oyster bars, Cajun-inspired seafood boils, and chef-driven restaurants.

36%      42%      53%

**MODERN ITALIAN**  
Combine traditional Italian dishes with modern, unique ingredients and interpretations.

30%      35%      50%

**MODERN BARS**  
May focus on a single spirit, offer more chef-driven food, or use unique flavorings.

26%      40%      34%

**MODERN HANGOUTS**  
Offers activities like ping pong or bowling with chef-driven menus.

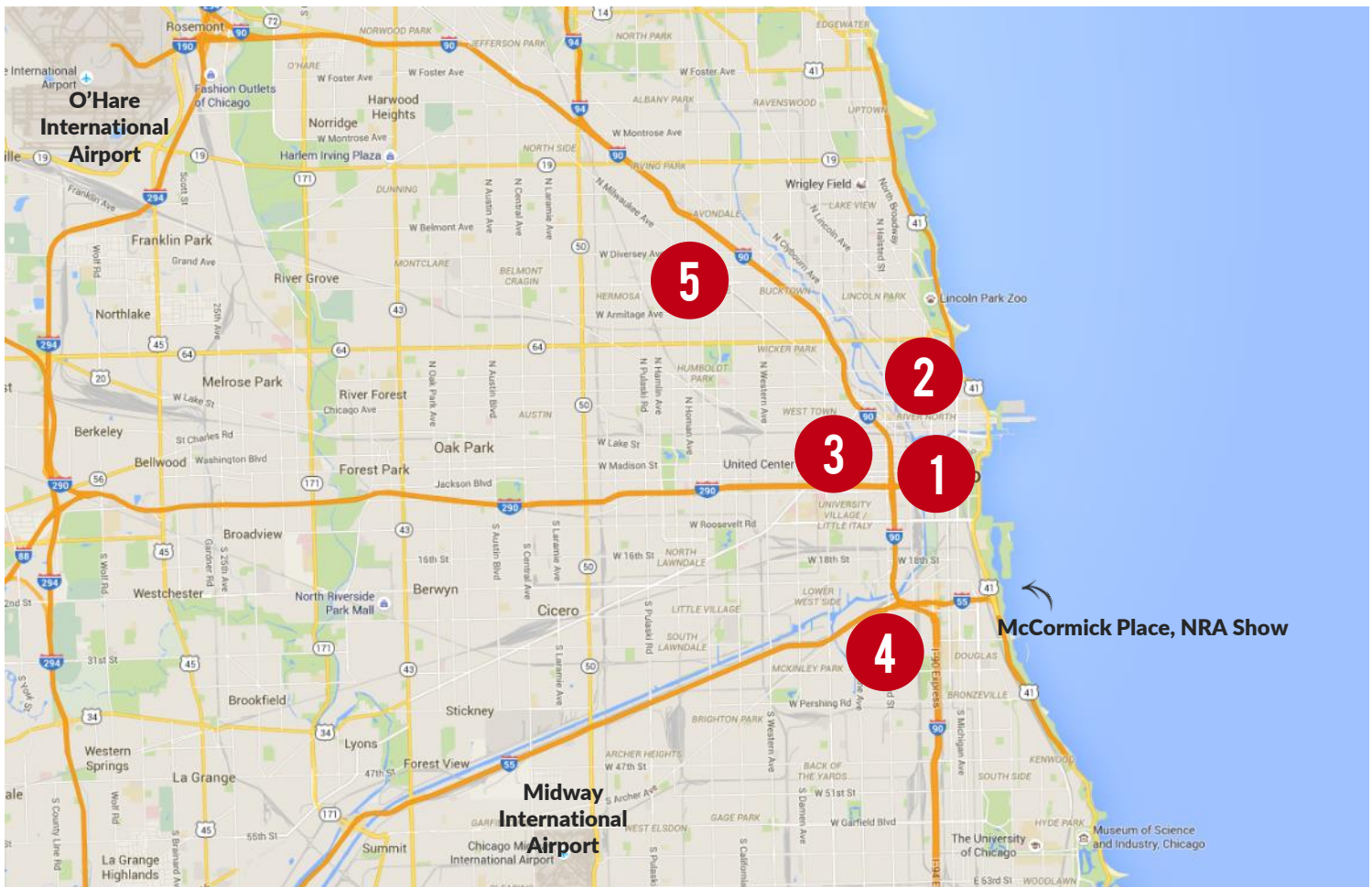
23%      37%      36%

**MODERN FUSION**  
Goes beyond well-known combos with options like Dutch & Indonesian, or British & Indian.

21%      37%      38%

# TRENDMAPPER

LOOKING FOR THE **CAN'T-MISS FOOD NEIGHBORHOODS** WHILE YOU ARE IN TOWN? CHECK OUT:



## 1 THE LOOP

The center of it all – as the central business district in Chicago, you'll find plenty of lunch options and fast casuuls in the Loop, plus a number of new after-work options that have opened in recent years, from the many concepts at the Chicago Athletic Association Hotel to steakhouses like Prime & Provisions.

## 2 RIVER NORTH

Walk a few blocks off the Magnificent Mile and you'll find a little bit of everything, from classic Chicago deep dish joints to hip new restaurants and nightclubs. From Peruvian to Bohemian, breakfast to late night snacks, you can find it in River North.

## 3 WEST LOOP/ FULTON MARKET

Possibly the hippest dining destination in the city – head up Randolph for some of the best new restaurants to open in Chicago in the past decade, or head north to Fulton Market and check out destination-worthy spots like Next, Publican, and Swift & Sons.

## 4 CHINATOWN

"At a time when traditional urban Chinatowns...are fading, Chicago's Chinatown is growing larger," noted the *Tribune* this month. The neighborhood's population grew 24% from 2000 to 2010, with plenty of new restaurants and markets opening to handle the growth.

## 5 LOGAN SQUARE

Logan Square gives the West Loop a run for its money, with chefs opening concepts that aren't afraid to take chances – we dedicated our entire *Dine Around* to this neighborhood two years ago (search for it in SNAP!). You'll find nostalgic classics like Margie's Candies, new classics like Longman & Eagle, creative options like Fat Rice, and a number of operators featured in this issue – Sink | Swim, Osteria Langhe, Dos Urban Cantina.





## PUB ROYALE

**CONCEPT:** British-Indian

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Wicker Park

Pub fare...with an Indian twist? That's what you'll find at Pub Royale, a fusion of classic British cuisine and Northern Indian flavors and dishes. The menu is described as approachable, encompassing dishes ranging from the "rare and esoteric to hometown favorites." Find traditional samosas, stuffed with spiced potatoes and peas, as well as salt cod-stuffed samosas, alongside dishes like Buttered Paneer with paratha (at left), doughnuts with chai dulce de leche, and drinks like the fan favorite Frozen Mango Lassi with Bacardi and paprika.



## KIMSKI

**CONCEPT:** Korean-Polish

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Bridgeport

From the team behind the iconic Bridgeport Maria's Packaged Goods & Community Bar is the newly-opened Kimski, a food counter featuring Korean-Polish fusion. According to *Eater Chicago*, chef Won Kim got creative when it came to menu mashups, creating "tongue in cheek" dishes and saying they "don't want to compete with Polish grandmothers." So you'll find everything from Potskis, or potsticker/pierogi hybrids filled with potatoes, cheese, and soy cream sauce, to the Maria's Standard, a Polish sausage topped with soju mustard and kraut-chi.



## DE QUAY

**CONCEPT:** Dutch-Indonesian

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Lincoln Park

de Quay restaurant, named for chef/owner David de Quay, is a casual dining restaurant serving Dutch dishes with an Indonesian flair. There's everything from Nasi Goreng, also known as Indonesian fried rice, with pork belly and duck cracklins; to Steamed Mussels flavored with a Balinese coconut curry sauce, and Oorlog Amsterdam Frites, served with herb mayonnaise and spicy peanut sauce. For brunch, dig into de Quay's interpretation of French Toast (left), crusted with Seroendeng (spicy fried coconut flakes), served with pandan butter and kaya coconut jam.

**UNIQUE  
MASHUPS**

## BEYOND RESTAURANTS



### 3 GREENS MARKET

**CONCEPT:** Multi-Concept Emporium

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** River North

Opened in a space formerly housing two short-lived concepts from Brendan Sodikoff's Hogsalt group, Cocello and Dillman's, is 3 Greens Market, a food hall showcasing the group's greatest hits. Sodikoff describes 3 Greens as "a bit of a food circus," (*Chicago Mag*) where you'll find a coffee bar, pastries (from Bavette's), donuts from Doughnut Vault, and cocktails in the evening along with Au Cheval burgers, Dillman's pastrami, an 18-foot salad/hot bar, plus a mini putting green, dart boards, and an oversized couch.



### 3 ARTS CLUB CAFE

**CONCEPT:** Brunch & Cafe

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** River North

Also from the Hogsalt Group is 3 Arts Club Café, a swanky café/restaurant in the center of a multilevel Restoration Hardware store. The collaboration between Sodikoff and Gary Friedman is described as "blurring the lines between residential and retail, home and hospitality, indoor and outdoor..." The *Tribune* notes that the concept has been "exceeding expectations" for the company, with the "food and beverage operations doing particularly well," which means more of these opulent hybrid stores are on the way in other cities.



### SPiN

**CONCEPT:** Ping Pong Restaurant & Bar

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** River North

Susan Sarandon's SPiN, (yes, that Susan Sarandon) a ping pong venue-restaurant-bar-club hybrid opened last February in a 16,000-square-foot space, features two bars, three private lounges, 20 ping pong tables, stadium seating, and a full food menu showcasing shareable small plates. There is classic pub fare like burgers and wings, combined with heartier dishes like beef ribs with mole and pumpkin brittle, all made (when possible) with ingredients sourced within 200 miles of the restaurant's River North location.



### ARBOR

**CONCEPT:** Restaurant/Urban Farm/Café

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Logan Square

"At Arbor, you get hyperlocal food, no hype," is the headline of *DNA Info's* review of Arbor, a farm-to-table restaurant located in the second floor of an office building (an old lamp factory) in Logan Square. What's offered on the menu depends on what's growing – directly outside in a garden behind the building with more than 60 herbs and vegetables. While customers can order from set menus, the highlight of the Arbor experience is the Midwestern Omakase where dishes are customized to the specific likes of the customer.



*Goat Cheese  
Ravioli with  
Ramp Pesto at  
RPM Italian*

## NEXT-LEVEL ITALIAN

From pizza to pasta, Italian cuisine has truly become an American favorite. Now, to differentiate themselves in a crowded field, chefs are taking Italian concepts to the next level. You'll find the classic "red sauce joint," a staple of the 1950s, updated with more innovative flavors and décor (for more, check out our Spring edition of **TIPS**), or concepts that focus on a specific region or city in Italy. These restaurants often seek out Italian favorites that American consumers may be less familiar with (tigelle, cacio e pepe), or update classic dishes with on-trend and/or global ingredients. Look for these flavors to influence Italian-American menus in the years to come.



**CONCEPT:** SERIOUS PASTA

**SEGMENT:** CHEF CASUAL

## MONTEVERDE

### WEST LOOP

### BACKGROUND

Chef Sarah Grueneberg left Chicago's epicenter of Italian fine dining, Spiaggia, to open Monteverde, where the pasta is the star of the show – there are racks of drying pasta on both sides of the bar, while pasta chefs roll and fold fresh noodles just off the main dining room, with a mirror above them to show off their artistry. The menu makes it clear that Grueneberg wants to both celebrate traditional Italian dishes and take them up a notch, dividing the pasta selections into "Pasta Tipica," or "Italy's pasta," and "Pasta Atipica," translated to, "Our pasta."

### WHY IT MATTERS

Monteverde is "Chicago's most essential pasta destination," according to the *Chicago Reader*. The restaurant allows diners to be as traditional or as adventurous as they want – there are simple antipasto plates of ham, cherry tomatoes, and tigelle bread, or entrees like lasagnette noodles with ragu, but there are also global flavors that pop up all over the menu, like yogurt and za'atar served with ocean trout, hamachi crudo with avocado, a skate wing schnitzel, and a shareable 22-ounce Ribeye (a nod to Grueneberg's Texas upbringing). That adventurous spirit also translates to dishes like Cacio Whey Pepe, a take on the classic Italian dish that has recently been embraced by American chefs – it's a staple at the "modern red sauce" restaurant, according to our Spring 2016 edition of **TIPS**. At Monteverde, the dish replaces the traditional pasta water with ricotta whey to amp up the cheese flavor, while the pepper is kicked up a notch with a four peppercorn blend. But the restaurant's signature dish comes from the shareable "For the Table" section of the menu – a hearty bowl of Ragu alla Napoletana, with rustic fusilli, cacciatore sausage, soppressata meatballs, and a tomato-braised Berkshire pork shank. There are also small plates, like a "Pig Skin" Tortellini in Brodo which is augmented with a traditional shot of Lambrusco at the table, and Stuzzichini, or "Snacks," like Octopus Spiedini (skewers) with leeks, baby sweet potato, pimenton, and peperonata. Like many ingredient-focused chef casuals, Monteverde also sells bags of pasta, which guests can purchase from the host stand before they leave.

# MENU INSPIRATION

## FROM MONTEVERDE

\$6.00

### PROSCIUTTO BUTTER TOAST

Mixed radish, dill, lemon.

\$10.00

### “PIG SKIN” TORTELLINI IN BRODO

48-hour poultry brodo, asparagus,  
Lambrusco, parm.

\$13.00

### CACIO WHEY PEPE

Gentile bucatini, pecorino Romano,  
ricotta whey, four peppercorn blend.

\$16.00

### LASAGNETTE

Pork neck ragu, ramps, chili flake,  
pecorino Romano.

\$12.00

### VESPA

Olive oil washed gin, CH vodka,  
Lillet Blanc.

\$8.00

### SALTED BUTTERSCOTCH BUDINO

Bruleed top, pecan toffee, whipped  
mascarpone.



### WORLD BITES

We covered budino, the thick Italian pudding, in our very first issue of *World Bites* in 2013. Today it is making its way onto chain menus – this year Caribou Coffee introduced a Salted Caramel Budino flavor.



*Ragu alla Napoletana*



*Cannelloni Saltimbocca*



*Forgotten Cookies*

# FORMENTO'S

"Formento's is an Italian restaurant inspired by classic red-sauce joints of the 1950s," with classic old school dishes tweaked and upgraded. There are Italian favorites, like Rigatoni Vodka with on-trend Calabrian chile and fresh, home-made pasta, or the Quail Saltimbocca with roasted cauliflower, plus old fashioned dishes like the Crab & Artichoke Dip with home-made "Ritz" crackers or the Caesar Salad with anchovy croutons and a farm egg yolk. The famed chocolate cake, with layers of chocolate pudding and hazelnut praline, has become a staple on social media feeds.

The Prime Beef Meatballs from the Hot Antipasti menu at RPM Italian.



## RPM ITALIAN

**CONCEPT:** Luxe Italian

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** River North

Part of the growing “RPM” empire (RPM Steak is covered later in this issue and there is a second RPM Italian in Washington D.C.), RPM Italian is “modern in approach and Italian in spirit” with a menu of “celebrated Italian classics with an elevated twist.” All of the pasta is fresh and made in-house daily, found in dishes like the Spicy King Crab Spaghetti. The wide-ranging dinner menu is divided into 14 different sections, from Cicchetti (small bites) to Wood-oven Pizzettes. Many of the dishes have a luxe twist – Lobster Caprese, a “600-Day Prosciutto,” Truffled Garlic Bread (“circa 1963”), or the 38-ounce, \$135 Prime Dry-Aged Bistecca Fiorentina. Like RPM Steak, RPM Italian has also become a hotspot for celebrities visiting town.

## OSTERIA LANGHE

**CONCEPT:** Piemontese

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Logan Square

Like a number of new Italian restaurants across the country, Osteria Langhe differentiates itself by focusing on a specific region, in this case Northern Italy’s Piedmont region, famous for its antipasti, cheeses, meats, and agnolotti al plin – a small, simple, filled pasta. The hand-pinched variety at Osteria Langhe are filled with parmesan and La Tur, a blended cheese from Piedmont, and they are even available to-go. Next the team plans to open Animale, a fast casual restaurant offering Italian street foods where the chefs will serve the dishes at the counter.





King Crab Bites,  
Oyster Bah

## NEXT-LEVEL SEAFOOD

It's been a big year for seafood in Chicago as several new concepts have taken root here. You'll find the Cajun-style, buy-by-the-pound seafood boils at the "hugely popular" (*DNA Info*) Angry Crab and similar establishments, including the picnic-table, red-and-white checkered tablecloth-filled Lowcountry, as well as Asian Cajun, which fuses classic seafood boils with entrees like Pad Thai. You'll also find restaurants taking inspiration from casual New England 'seafood shacks,' and restaurants that are taking things to the next level with house-cured fish. Or try Brown Bag Seafood Co., a fast casual in the Loop offering affordable, quick, and healthy seafood – customers order by writing on menus with a dry-erase marker, selecting a protein (crispy fish bites, lemon-broiled whitefish, etc.) and format, like tacos, sandwiches, or simply "straight up."





## FACT

All of the fish served at Snaggletooth is purchased whole, then scaled, cleaned, and trimmed by hand, before getting meticulously wrapped in cheesecloth and flavored with curing spices.

## BACKGROUND

Snaggletooth, opened in February, is the low-key, approachable seafood concept from Bill Montagne, former chef at fine-dining seafood spot C Chicago and girlfriend and former colleague Jennifer Kim. The name, a playful jab at Montagne's "slight snaggletooth," reflects the restaurant's casual atmosphere, one they wanted to keep "light and jovial," according to the *Tribune*.

**CONCEPT:** SEAFOOD DELI

**SEGMENT:** FAST CASUAL

## WHY IT MATTERS

The small, 17-seat restaurant takes inspiration from old-school Jewish delis in New York, accented with a large refrigerated deli counter, rustic chalkboard menu, and fresh bagels hung on the walls. While the décor and concept are traditional, curing techniques are decidedly not – according to the *Tribune*, the couple uses techniques from high-end restaurants to create cured fish "unlike anything currently available in Chicago." Snaggletooth's spin on lox is made with trout, indirectly cured with salt and spices through cheesecloth, and left unsmoked. The process is longer, taking five days instead of the usual one, but results in a clean flavor reminiscent of "pristine slices of sashimi." Customers can choose from a tasting selection of the restaurant's multiple styles, like jasmine trout or lime hamachi, order a la carte by the quarter pound, or select from various tartines like the Pastrami Trout with a kimchi schmear and shaved fennel slaw. Snaggletooth also offers a curated collection of coffee from Sparrow Coffee Roastery as well as custom tea blends from Rare Tea Cellars.

# SNAGGLETOOTH

## LAKEVIEW



# MENU INSPIRATION

## FROM SNAGGLETOOTH

### AVOCADO + EGG TARTINE

Avocado-mango schmear, chickpeas, cucumbers, served with polenta hash.

### SAVORY OATS

Slow-cooked egg, beet romesco, kale chips.

### TROUT LOX TARTINE

Cured ocean trout, scallion schmear, pickled radishes.

### SPRING FENNEL FLUKE

NJ fluke, grapefruit, fennel fronds.

### BBQ SABLEFISH

Lapsang souchong, coriander seeds.

### SNAGGLETOOTH HIGH OCTANE ICED TEA

Magnolia bloom oolong, 48-hour cold brew – also available in a grumbler format to enjoy at home.



Bagel with Schmear



Cured Swordfish with crudité, butternut schmear.



O.G. Lox



Coco Tart



### CREATIVE CONCEPTS

We covered cold brew coffee in our July 2015 issue of **Creative Concepts: Third-Wave Coffee**, a trend Snaggletooth has taken to the next level with cold brew tea.



# OYSTER BAH

## LINCOLN PARK

### BACKGROUND

Oyster Bah is the East Coast-inspired oyster bar and seafood restaurant opened by Lettuce Entertain You in collaboration with the team behind Shaw's Crab House. The restaurant, with a casual, fun atmosphere targeted toward younger crowds, opened at the end of last year, joining Naoki Sushi, a Shaw's spinoff also in Lincoln Park.

**CONCEPT:** NEW ENGLAND SEAFOOD

**SEGMENT:** CASUAL

### WHY IT MATTERS

The two-level restaurant is decorated true to the theme of New England oyster "bahs," with an interior that "feels like Red Lobster reimaged by hipsters," according to Michael Nigrant of the *Red Eye*, with nautical décor, red-and-white-checkered tablecloths, plenty of wood, and signs with slogans like "Stop, Drop, and Lobster Roll." While the menu features all of the hallmark seafood options, including a New England clam chowder and Maryland style crab cakes, to name a few, you'll also find dishes prepared with "painstaking techniques and modern twists," according to the *Red Eye*. The chilled seafood platter, with an assortment of oysters, clams, lobster tail, and tuna poke, is served with cocktail sauce, a mustard-infused aioli, and a unique Guinness Stout granita with hints of chocolate and coffee. There are also New England Stuffies (see **Dine Around: Providence** for more on this local classic, made at Oyster Bah by topping quahogs with chorizo and breadcrumbs), a Crispy One-Sided Red Snapper (the other filet is usually used in a fish-of-the-day preparation) with a Thai chili sauce and coconut-ginger rice. To complement the seafood, there is also a nautical-themed drink menu on hand, with drinks like the Cape Cod (vodka, lavender and cucumber, cranberry) and the She Sells Sea Shells (gin, chartreuse, apricot liquor).

# MENU INSPIRATION

## FROM OYSTER BAH

**\$9.95** **NEW ENGLAND STUFFIES**  
Quahogs, celery, chorizo.

**\$7.95** **SMOKED TROUT**  
Marinated onions, pickled gherkins,  
grilled bread.

**\$17.95** **SEARED YELLOWFIN  
TUNA SANDWICH**  
Pumpernickel, green goddess, tomato,  
sunflower sprouts.

**\$25.95** **SIGNATURE SEAFOOD SALAD**  
King crab, Maine lobster,  
shrimp, louie dressing.

**\$12.00** **OLD SAILOR COCKTAIL**  
Plantation pineapple rum, mint, fresh  
lime juice, house pineapple syrup,  
angostura bitters.

**\$7.95** **GRILLED GREEN BEANS**  
Bacon jam, pickled pearl onions.



### KEYNOTE INSIGHT

Savory jams, most commonly made with bacon, onions, or tomatoes, can be used in a number of different applications – according to Datassential's **MenuTrends Keynote Report: Burgers**, these savory condiments have increased nearly 400% on burger menus since 2010.



Tuna Poke



Lobster Roll



Snapper Crudo



## SINK | SWIM

**CONCEPT:** Seafood Small Plates

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Logan Square

Sink | Swim is the first restaurant-focused venture for the cocktail heavy-hitters at Scofflaw Group (Scofflaw, Slippery Slope), which the team opened in Logan Square last summer. With dishes like a Beef & Oyster Tartare with malt chips and S+P Fried Shrimp Heads with harissa and pickled fennel, Sink | Swim is “unlike any other seafood restaurant in Chicago,” reviewed the *Tribune*. And as a sibling to Scofflaw bar, there’s a curated cocktail menu here, with drinks like the blackberry-infused Splash Ghost.

## COLD STORAGE

**CONCEPT:** Raw Bar, Sandwiches

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Fulton Market

Located within Swift & Sons (a repurposed cold storage building) is the Boka Restaurant Group’s aptly named seafood-focused restaurant, Cold Storage. The menu is divided into five sections, from classic raw bar options to shellfish towers (priced per person, starting at \$20.00 for a ‘small’), shared plates like Charred Turnips with a soft boiled egg and trout roe, and sandwiches with international flair, like a Shrimp Banh Mi with spicy aioli and a Crispy Clam Roll with tzatziki.



## ANGRY CRAB

**CONCEPT:** Cajun Seafood

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** West Rogers Park

The Angry Crab made a splash when it opened last year, drawing long waits for “remarkably fresh tasting” seafood (*Chicago Reader*) all available by the pound (a large chalkboard details current market prices) and served in large, clear plastic bags, filled with a heap of various spices and seasonings. Choices of seasonings range from lemon pepper to “Angry spice” or a combination of all seasonings, called the Maniac, and every order can be made according to four spice levels named after Chicago sports teams. A second location has been slated for Wicker Park.

## BUZZ BAIT TAQUERIA

**CONCEPT:** Fish Tacos

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Near North

Seafood and tacos... and deep-dish pizza? Well, not quite – Buzz Bait Taqueria, which specializes in fish tacos, opened last summer by none other than Marc Malnati, current owner of Lou Malnati’s pizza. Buzz Bait takes inspiration from Malnati’s travels along the West Coast, and you’ll find international flair throughout the menu, from the Sapporo Battered Alaskan Cod tacos, served with mango salsa and yogurt sauce, to the Sweet and Spicy Ahi Tuna Poke (at right), loaded on a teriyaki-glazed tortilla and topped with a tequila soy dressing.





*Prime & Provisions  
Lavender-infused  
sea salt.*

## NEXT-LEVEL STEAKHOUSE

Steakhouses are a dime a dozen in Chicago, from old-school, traditional establishments dating back decades, like Gene & Georgetti (1941) and Gibsons Steakhouse (1989), to a number of new, modern steakhouses that are seemingly popping up every week. In November 2014, Datassential covered the overall industry modern steakhouse trend (search SNAP! For **Creative Concepts: Modern Steakhouses**), eateries that are shying away from old-fashioned table service and white tablecloths (sometimes perceived as stuffy or pretentious) and moving toward innovative spins on classics like reinvented Caesar salads. Here we're diving into a slew of new steakhouses in Chicago – STK, the chain that's "not your daddy's steakhouse," set up shop in River North, trying to reach female consumers with smaller cuts of meat and an upscale, clubby atmosphere; while the Boka Group's highly-anticipated sister restaurant to GT Fish & Oyster, GT Prime, is set to open this summer.



**SEGMENT:** FINE-DINING

**CONCEPT:** SWANKY STEAKHOUSE

# SWIFT & SONS

## FULTON MARKET



### DATASSENTIAL INSIGHT

For those looking for more casual experience at a fine-dining restaurant, consider offering a bar or tavern menu – Swift & Sons' tavern menu includes just a handful of items, like Sticky Chicken Wings and a Tavern Burger.

### BACKGROUND

When Swift & Sons opened in October, it was a culmination of more than two and a half years of planning and designing. The expansive restaurant, located on the ground floor of Google's new headquarters in a former meatpacking facility, is a partnership between Boka Restaurant Group (Girl & the Goat, Momotaro) and B. Hospitality (Bristol, Formento's).

### WHY IT MATTERS

From the beginning, Boka partners Kevin Boehm and Rob Katz had designed the menu to feature entrees and dishes reminiscent of the traditional steakhouse, but accented with more creative appetizers and slightly lower price points. Heading the kitchen is chef Chris Pandel (formerly of the aforementioned B. Hospitality), who puts a modern spin on dishes like the Chopped Steak Tartare with egg yolk custard and hot or cold seafood platters, available for a less intimidating price per person. Prime steaks, are of course, at the center of the entrée menu, with several cuts available with sauce options like an anchovy-garlic butter, topped with anything from marrow bone to Nigerian prawns. The signature entrée is a classic hybrid – not quite a simple steak, not quite a pastry – a Beef Wellington with mushrooms, foie gras, and spinach, priced for two, and sliced tableside (often by Pandel himself). Dessert is far from overlooked at Swift & Sons, whose pastry program is headed by Meg Galus, a NoMi vet, who offers everything from a whimsical S&S Cracker Jack dessert with peanut butter mousse to a variety of handmade chocolates available through a chocolate trolley service.

# MENU INSPIRATION

## FROM SWIFT & SONS

**\$14.00**

### CHILLED SPRING VEGETABLE TART

Pistachio crust, French feta, market vegetables.

**\$32.00**

### COLD PLATTER

Priced per person. Shrimp, mussels, bay scallop leche de tigre, king crab, oysters.

**\$31.00**

### GRILLED OCEAN TROUT

Ramps, spring onions, hazelnut crumble.

**\$29.00**

### HANGER STEAK

Chimichurri, fingerling potatoes, spring onions.

**\$16.00**

### THE FULTON BURGER

Caramelized onion, bacon, dijonaise.

**\$8.00**

### DEEP DISH COOKIE

Chocolate chip, butterscotch ice cream.



#### MENUTRENDS INSIGHT

Butterscotch has increased 4% on menus over the past year, according to MenuTrends data. The brandied butterscotch ice cream at Swift & Sons is also available by the scoop or included in a sundae.



*Steak Tartare*



*Steak in a Pan*



*Deconstructed Boston Crème Pie*





Located in the Gold Coast neighborhood of Chicago, Maple & Ash is a modern and elegant restaurant with a “whimsical twist on the typically stuffy steakhouse,” as described by the *Chicago Reader*. The steakhouse is divided into a downstairs (where you enter the restaurant) with a more casual menu featuring sandwiches like the Downstairs Burger, and the upstairs, with the restaurant’s main menu, featuring lavish options like American Ossetra caviar (\$220 for 1 oz.) and the monster-sized, 40 oz.-plus Eisenhower steak and hearth-roasted seafood towers. Maple & Ash’s wood-fired grill is at the center of the menu, asserting smokiness to dishes like a Baked-in-Coals French Onion Soup. And while the menu may be full of extravagant choices, like 600 different bottles of wine, the restaurant is also not afraid to have a little fun with menuing – their version of an omakase/tasting menu is labeled the “I Don’t Give a F\*@k” choice.

## MAPLE & ASH

### GOLD COAST



## RPM STEAK

**CONCEPT:** Sleek Steakhouse

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** River North

RPM Steak, part of the RPM restaurant group (Bill and Giuliana Rancic, chef Doug Psaltis, Lettuce Entertain You), is the sister restaurant to RPM Italian, serving a traditional yet chef-driven, contemporary menu. You'll find appetizers like Thick-Cut Bacon with a bourbon-vanilla glaze, Parker House Rolls with a rosemary Nordic butter, and cold bar staples like a Grand Seafood Platter. There are also, of course, signature steaks like "The Duke," a 10 oz. ribeye filet, game steaks like a bison filet, and a monster 42 oz. Mishima Tomahawk Wagyu steak. There are plenty of lavish choices throughout the menu, from the \$18.00 Millionaire's Potato, double baked with fontina and black truffle and the 14k Chocolate Cake dessert, a triple-chocolate cake finished with edible gold flake. For a more traditional dessert, customers can opt for the Baked Alaska with salted caramel, vanilla, and warm chocolate sauce, flamed and served tableside.



## RURAL SOCIETY

**CONCEPT:** Argentinean Steakhouse

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Near North

Rural Society is "Iron Chef" Jose Garces' contemporary Argentinean steakhouse, but the restaurant, connected to the Loews Chicago Hotel in Streeterville, is "more than a cow palace," according to the *Chicago Reader*. The menu is inspired by Garces' travels to South America, featuring a large South American wine list available for pairing with a chef's tasting menu designed to give customers a sample of Argentina's flavors. Rural Society also offers a variety of empanadas, stuffed with anything from braised wagyu beef belly to swiss chard and sardo cheese, a selection of house-made sausages, like a Chorizo Con Queso with provoleta, and a selection of Desde la Parrilla, or "items from the grill." You'll find specialty Argentine cuts like a grass-fed ribeye or tenderloin from Uruguay as well as domestic lamb chops or seafood – whole Maine lobster, Mediterranean bass.



# STEAKBAR

SteakBar is the industrial-chic steakhouse collaboration between Four Corners Tavern Group (Benchmark) and Hogsalt Hospitality (Brendan Sodikoff's heralded Au Cheval), which opened in Chicago's Old Town neighborhood last month. The steakhouse is decidedly un-steakhouse-like, with the most expensive item on the menu being a wet-aged ribeye at \$38.00, and all steaks are served with fries or veggies. There is also a focus on more approachable foods catering to the nearby North Avenue Beach. These efforts are designed to make SteakBar "a fun concept" where "people can drink until midnight and meet people, mingle, and come in for groups and birthdays," Four Corners' director Ryan Indovina told *Eater Chicago*.



**CONCEPT:** GERMAN-FRENCH BRASSERIE

**SEGMENT:** UPPER CASUAL

# BOEUFHAUS

## HUMBOLDT PARK

### BACKGROUND

In almost every review of Boeufhaus you'll read – and there are many – you'll find a similar theme outlining a restaurant that “seemingly came out of nowhere” to become an “unpretentious” (*Chicago Reader*), unassuming, “chic, meaty brasserie” (*Eater Chicago*). The “Chicago steakhouse that isn't a steakhouse” (*Tribune*) has many makings of a nontraditional steakhouse – it's located in a border area that is simultaneously referred to as Humboldt Park, Ukrainian Village, or West Town, certainly nowhere near most of the steakhouses in River North or downtown. It also seats just 34 ( the number of people Gibsons seats just between 6 and 6:03 p.m., notes the *Tribune*), and features a fusion of French (where “boeuf” comes from), and German (“haus”) cuisines.

### WHY IT MATTERS

While the house dry-aged steaks are hands down the stars of the menu, co-owners Brian Ahern (executive chef) and Jamie Finnegan tend to shy away from the word “steakhouse,” more aptly describing the restaurant as a French and German brasserie. Instead of the multiple page menus found at some steakhouses, at Boeufhaus there's a succinct menu devoid of the hallmark steakhouse appetizers like Caesar salad, but filled with dishes like Salade Du Marche with seasonal vegetables, the much buzzed-about Shortrib Beignets, filled with pureed pastrami and taleggio cheese and served with a beefy jus, and German-inspired side dishes like the Leek Spaetzle with brown butter and herbs. Shortly after opening, Boeufhaus added lunch service, offering hearty sandwiches like homemade cheesesteaks and reubens.



#### WORLD BITES

Search SNAP! for more on French food in our most recent edition of **World Bites: France**. And for more on German cuisine, search for **World Bites: Germany**.

# MENU INSPIRATION

## FROM BOEUFHAUS

\$16.00

### CECI BEAN CAVATELLI

Haus merguez, caramelized shallot, fried ceci bean, caciocavallo jus.

\$12.00

### CITRUS SALMON

Ginger oil, pickled honjimeji, fresno chili, crisp skin, herb salad.

\$10.00

### BOEUF ON WECK

Slow-roasted boeuf, horseradish, caraway, sea salt, jus.

\$7.00

### CAULIFLOWER GRATIN

Leek, gruyere, béchamel, herbed bread crumb.

\$38.00

### DUCK BREAST

Choucroute, root vegetable, natural jus.

\$11.00

### HAUS SMASH COCKTAIL

Old Forester signature bourbon, zucca amaro, lemon, mint.



### MENUTRENDS INSIGHT

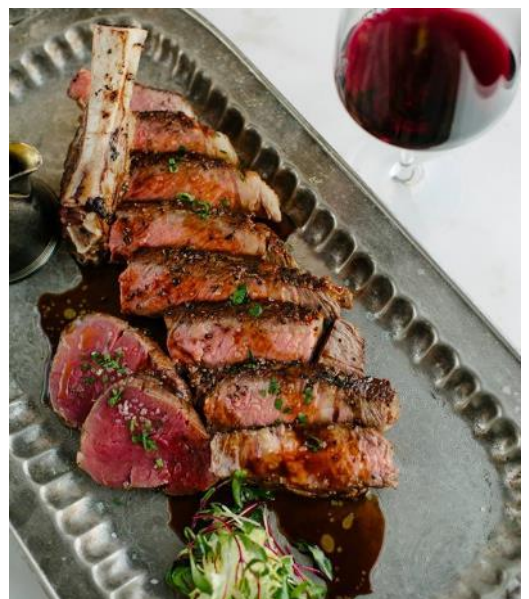
Amaro, a bitter Italian herbal liqueur, has grown nearly 40% over the past four years. The versatile mixer can take on a variety of flavors, like the zucca (pumpkin) here.



Shellfish Tower



Mini French Onion Soup



Dry-Aged Ribeye

# PRIME & PROVISIONS

Prime & Provisions comes from DineAmic Group, the team behind sports bars Bull & Bear and Public House, and Italian restaurant Siena Tavern. The steakhouse opened last May, just across the river from heavy-hitter steakhouse Chicago Cut. The two-story restaurant features an on-premise aging room, an outdoor dining area, as well as a cigar lounge accompanied by a menu of about a dozen selections. The Loop restaurant has also become known for its chocolatey concoctions, from its bacon appetizer, so thick that “thick-cut doesn’t adequately” describe it, according to the *Tribune*, crusted with black pepper and maple chili glaze and served with a smear of chocolate sauce, to its show-stopping dessert, the Tableside S’mores, which arrives at the table as a chocolate sphere with graham cracker soil and chocolate-marshmallow sauce. Hot chocolate is poured over top, revealing campfire smoke, ice cream, and more chocolate.





*Cantina 1910 offers "an updated approach" to authentic Mexican flavors.*

## NEXT-LEVEL LATIN

These days, every segment is looking for the next big thing in Latin concepts. In Chicago, you'll find a number of chefs who are stepping out on their own after years of success in big-name Chicago kitchens (namely, Rick Bayless' restaurants – he's also unveiling his own new concepts, which we cover later in this issue). You'll find fast casuals looking to become the next Chipotle, or food trucks testing out off-the-wall ideas and dishes. You'll even find well-known QSRs testing next-level iterations of their flagship brand – you'll find Taco Bell's first "Cantina" concept in Wicker Park, with options like boozy Twisted Freezes and seasonal beer.

## BACKGROUND

Dos Urban Cantina's menu "is an original interpretation of Mexican cuisine combined with modern flavors and ingredients." Husband-and-wife team Brian Enyart and Jennifer Jones Enyart cut their teeth at Rick Bayless' Topolobampo (where Brian was the chef de cuisine and Jennifer was the pastry chef) before opening Dos Urban late last year. They joined up with another husband-and-wife team, Michael Rotolo and Erika Martinez Rotolo, formerly of Lettuce Entertain You, to bring the restaurant to life.

## WHY IT MATTERS

"Dos Urban Cantina is the most important Mexican restaurant to open in Chicago since Topolobampo," claimed the *Tribune's* Phil Vettel, while the *Chicago Reader* said the restaurant "offers a glimpse at the future of Mexican food." The menu, divided into four sections – Vegetable, Masa, Seafood, and Meat – is inspired by Mexico, but there are plenty of unexpected flavors. The Chicharrones are served with French onion yogurt, for instance, while the seafood menu includes Sea Urchin with tomatillo and green apple salsa. There's a Sweet Corn Tamal with charred parmesan, grilled Asian mushrooms with Oaxacan red mole, and chestnut cornbread, and a Piloncillo Sugar Pie with malted whipped cream for dessert. While the dishes may be more modern, the basis is still grounded in Mexican cuisine and ingredients. "I think, inherently, that Mexican food is very well balanced and that you can carry it through the upper echelons in dining," Brian Enyart told *Eater Chicago*, noting the balanced flavors of a taco – tortilla, protein, vegetables, lime juice, garnish.

Sweet corn tamal (top) and goat albondigas (bottom)



# DOS URBAN CANTINA

LOGAN SQUARE

**CONCEPT:** MODERN MEXICAN

**SEGMENT:** CHEF CASUAL

### FACT

This month Dos Urban debuted a new brunch service, with a guacamole bar, egg and cheese empanadas, and chilaquiles, plus cocktails like the Bloody Maria, made with mezcal.





# MENU INSPIRATION

## FROM DOS URBAN CANTINA

\$8.00

### BUTTERED CHAYOTE

Avocado, serrano chile, peanut mole.

\$21.00

### SEARED SALMON

Pistachio pipian, cotija, zucchini.

\$8.00

### STREET STYLE CORN

Cotija, mayo, hominy, masa pudding.

\$13.00

### GOAT ALBONDIGAS

Black mole, masa gnudi.

\$7.00

### COCONUT TRES LECHES

Meringue and gooey coconut.



#### ON THE MENU

Meringue has grown 23% on dessert menus in the past four years. For a vegan, on-trend take, check out aquafaba in this month's **On the Menu**.



*Scallops in Aguachile*



*Carnitas, Kapusta, Buttered Potatoes, and Tomatillo Broth*



*The Best Chocolate Cake Ever*



# BROKEN ENGLISH

THE LOOP

Chicago restaurateurs Phil Stefani and Adolfo Garcia (who are also opening Flamingo Rum Club, covered later in this issue) opened this taco pub earlier this month. The striking concept features elements that keep popping up at modern Mexican concepts – Day of the Dead skulls, lucha libre wrestlers, bright neon colors – plus ten different taco options, ranging from carnitas to pork belly al pastor with charred pineapple. The drink menu is heavy on Mexican beer and mezcal, including the restaurant’s very own mezcal from Garcia’s father’s distillery. To cater to the Loop lunch crowd there are combo specials during the day, and soon they will offer brunch options like breakfast tacos and tortas (there is already a Chorizo Con Huevos taco on the all-day menu).



## TACO IN A BAG

**CONCEPT:** Walking Taco Fast Casual

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Lincoln Square

Taco in a Bag is exactly what the name suggests – a fast casual concept dedicated to “walking taco” varieties. Owners Pat Bertoletti and Tim Brown had plenty of proof that the concept would work – they spun the concept off of their Glutton Force Five food truck when it was the most popular item on the menu, and the duo won Food Network’s “Food Court Wars.” That win gave them a one-year lease at a suburban mall, but they were quick to move to Chicago, where they say diners are more quick to accept a “different concept.”



## IXCATECO

**CONCEPT:** Southern Mexican

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Albany Park

Chef Anselmo Ramirez, a veteran of Rick Bayless’ Frontera Grill and Topolobampo, opened Ixcateco Grill in Albany Park last year, with a seasonal menu that focuses on Southern Mexico, particularly moles. The moles feature as many as 30 ingredients cooked for exceptionally long times – over a day – just like the owner’s grandmother did. The menu also features options like picaditas (left), or “masa canoes” filled with carnitas, avocado cream, and pickled cactus, or made-to-order tilapia ceviche, with lime juice and homemade chips.



## EL CHE

**CONCEPT:** Argentinian

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** West Loop

Set to open any day now, chef John Manion (who is also behind Fulton Market’s La Sirena Clandestina) says this Argentinian spot (with a Midwestern twist) may be his last restaurant, according to *Eater Chicago*. The center of the kitchen will be an on-trend wood-fired open hearth, where the team will prepare dishes like blackened sweetbreads and charred, skin-on vegetables. The beverage program, meanwhile, will feature in-your-face flavors like smoke, leather, and acid.



**CONCEPT:** MODERN MEXICAN

**SEGMENT:** CASUAL

## CANTINA 1910 ANDERSONVILLE

### BACKGROUND

Cantina 1910 opened in late 2015 and quickly garnered praise from multiple publications, who called it one of Chicago's best new restaurants. Three months after opening, founding chef Diana Davila, along with the restaurant's chef de cuisine and sous chef, exited the restaurant, citing "irreconcilable differences" with management. After a long, nationwide search, a replacement chef was found – Scott Shulman, hailing from California. The menu has stayed the same, and will only shift with the seasons in the summer.

### WHY IT MATTERS

While publications and critics praised the creative spins on traditional Mexican food at Cantina 1910, with *Eater Chicago* saying it "gave Chicagoans one of the most fascinating Mexican concepts in recent memory," the restaurant faced what's become an important lesson for many operators – the art of dealing with negative customer reviews. The *Chicago Reader* called on readers to, "Save Cantina 1910 from ignorant Yelpers," to support a menu that many online reviewers complained of being pretentious with high prices and small portions. After much commotion on what customers deemed lacking on the menu, management made some compromises, like adding a selection of margaritas to the cocktail menu. The margaritas, however, like everything else on the menu, include creative spins – the 1910 Margarita is made with Tequila Cabeza and Combier, given an acidic kick with lime cordial instead of the traditional lime juice. The margarita now joins a few other variations as well, like the #MargaritaParty, a cocktail that serves four. Cantina 1910 is also doling out food all day, for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and late night, offering everything from breakfast burritos to a cemita with al pastor and head cheese.

### DATASSENTIAL INSIGHT

Cantina 1910 set out to be an innovative, Midwestern-Mexican-themed restaurant, but also balances out more unique items, like head cheese, with classics – churros with roasted cinnamon sugar or chips and salsa.



# MENU INSPIRATION

## FROM CANTINA 1910

\$8.00

### ARROZ CON LECHE CALIENTE Y AVENA DORADA

Warm Mexican rice pudding with our house granola.

\$9.00

### LUIS' TAMAL

Husk corn tamal stuffed with chile or pollo with salsa and herbs.

\$6.00

### PANECITOS SALSEROS

Mexican bread, lava rock chile, cultured butter.

\$26.00

### TRES MARISCOS

Squid ink rice, scallops, smelt, roasted baby carrots, gribiche, ginger habanero.

\$10.00

### 1910 MARGARITA

Tequila Cabeza, lime cordial, Combier.

\$12.00

### JALAPENO CON CREMA

Buttermilk crema, jalapeno ice, cherry apple, cilantro.



### CREATIVE CONCEPTS

Spicy and savory flavors have been taking over menus at modern ice cream parlors, who, like Cantina 1910, feature peppers in flavors like the Sichuan Pepper Chocolate (Sweet Republic in Arizona). For more, search SNAP! for **Creative Concepts: Modern Ice Cream.**



Fried Chicken & Churros



Chilaquiles Verdes



Huevos en Cazuela



*The Elixir Series at  
Forbidden Root*

## NEXT-LEVEL BARS & BREWERIES

It seems like bars and breweries are always evolving – interest in new types of spirits, beers, wines, and concepts is constantly shifting as trends change and consumers look for the next big thing. In Chicago, you'll find concepts that infuse beer with botanical flavors, secret cocktail bars that serve up rare spirits, and a number of bars that focus on a single product. You'll find a bar that infuses the flavors of breakfast cereal into ice cubes, and a concept that has decided now is the perfect time to bring back retro favorites.



## BACKGROUND

Forbidden Root calls itself Chicago's first "botanical brewery." That means brewing with flowers, barks, spices, and other ingredients for "today's sophisticated, thrill-seeking palates." The refined menu at the brewpub is designed to highlight the flavor-forward beers, not overpower them.

## WHY IT MATTERS

With the current emphasis on foraging and back-to-basics cuisine, it was only a matter of time before breweries started to incorporate some of these trends into the brewing process. "The use of bark, stems, blossoms, sap, herbs, spices, leaves, bark, flowers, honey, and roots" in beers has long been a part of early-American brewing notes the team at Forbidden Root, from tonics and elixirs to botanical birch and root beers. Today the company indeed makes its own Forbidden Root beer, with a long list of ingredients that includes everything from wintergreen to "balsam of Peru." The company's other three flagship brews include the Sublime Ginger, Shady Character porter, and Wildflower Pale Ale, while special releases include options like the Cherry Amaro Ale or the special Elixir Series. The menu features its own unusual flavors – ash salt on Root Chips, gochugaru (Korean chili flakes) over popcorn (both from the Bar Snacks menu), with a number of options utilizing Forbidden's brews or ingredients, like the Malted Hanger Steak, which uses the malt used in the beer, or the Forbidden Root Float on the dessert menu. The *Chicago Reader* said Forbidden Root is the first brewpub in town to figure out how to combine "nongimmicky beer and beer-friendly food" with the type of concept that keeps popping up around town – a "big, bustling, beautiful space" with "gleaming brew vats on display" on a "formerly barren, working-class commercial corridor."



# FORBIDDEN ROOT

## WEST TOWN

**CONCEPT:** BOTANICAL BREWERY

**SEGMENT:** CHEF CASUAL BREWPUB

# MENU INSPIRATION

## FROM FORBIDDEN ROOT

\$6.00

### N'DUJA SAUSAGE

Pickled mustard seeds, Tokaji honey, toast.

\$14.00

### MILK BRINED PORK SCHNITZEL SANDWICH

Pickled beet mayo, slaw, sesame seed bun.

\$16.00

### CRISPY DUCK LEG

Marrow bean and spicy pork sausage stew, garlic citrus breadcrumb.

\$8.00

### FORBIDDEN ROOT FLOAT

Vanilla ice cream, brownie, Tokaji honey, cacao salt rim, brandied cherry. Choice of Forbidden Root, Whole Lotta Love, Cherrytree Amaro Ale, Cola, or Cream Soda.

\$9.00

### ROASTED BABY SWEET POTATOES

Vadouvan butter, pistachios, cilantro.



#### TIPS INSIGHT

Vadouvan was featured in our Spring edition of **TIPS** - only 13% of consumers have heard of it, but 38% say they are likely to try it at a restaurant and 32% will try it at retail.



*Fig Dubbel*



*Malted Hanger Steak with provolone scrambled eggs and breakfast potatoes.*



*Asparagus Soup with fresh goat cheese, pork belly, preserved lemon jam, basil.*



# MILK ROOM

## THE LOOP

The small coffee bar inside the lobby of the Chicago Athletic Association Hotel transforms into Milk Room each evening, a ticketed, eight-seat bar overseen by local cocktail legend Paul McGee (Lost Lake). Drinks cost between \$20 and \$50, but they are made with some of the rarest spirits in the world – Fernet Branca from the 1950s, Cuban rum from the 1940s, or pre-regulation absinthe (you’ll often get a sip of the spirit with your cocktail).





## MONEYGUN

**CONCEPT:** Essential Cocktails

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** West Loop

The team behind Chicago's Longman & Eagle and Thalia Hall quietly opened Moneygun in March, an unassuming bar behind a rusty green door (the tagline is "It's just a bar"). The drink menu is focused on retro favorites done perfectly, like the Pimm's Cup, Amaretto Sour, and Long Island Iced Tea – there are 30 "Essentials" in total, all priced at \$10.75. The menu ranges from Snacks (a Soy Pickled Egg with togarashi and bonito flake) to Sandwiches (Shaved Prime Rib with house-made giardiniera) and Entrees (Kentucky Fried Quail or Buffalo Frog Legs). Next door you'll find Saint Lou's Assembly, from the same team, a modern take on the "meat and three" cafeteria, with options like Apricot Glazed Duck and Lobster Thermidor with cognac sauce.

## THE SIXTH

**CONCEPT:** Whimsical Cocktails

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Lincoln Square

The Sixth isn't afraid to get a little funky with its cocktails. Benjamin Schiller (also behind River North's Berkshire Room) opened the concept in his own neighborhood last December and since then it "has been totally mobbed" according to *Chicagoist*. Patrons are seeking out drinks like the Silly Rabbit (pictured at right), with individual ice cubes representing each flavor from Trix cereal, served with a gin and citrus mixture to pour over, and with a small bottle of mint bitters. The Spaceman Spiff, meanwhile, features mezcal, pineapple, and hazelnut flavors in a glass placed over a small bowl. Lift the glass and a scented smoke is released – made from cedar wood, dried citrus peel, and shisha – unveiling a tiny scene inspired by Calvin & Hobbes.



## BAND OF BOHEMIA

**CONCEPT:** Culinary Brewhouse

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Ravenswood

The Band of Bohemia team has a serious pedigree – the owners are Alinea alums, while executive chef Matt DuBois worked at the Michelin-starred El Ideas. The menu is designed to complement the Band's flavorful brews (Guava Pink Peppercorn, Fennel Coriander Coconut) – the Small Plates section offers four dishes to pair with four different beers currently offered, like a Banana Curry to pair with the Lime-Leaf Lemongrass Jasmine. There is also a serious coffee and tea program – during the day customers can purchase to-go drinks from the coffee bar, which serves up options like the Orange Doily, with espresso, milk, cinnamon, cardamom, and candied orange, while at night it serves a full "Libations" menu.



CONCEPT: CIDER BAR

SEGMENT: CASUAL

# THE NORTHMAN

## NORTH CENTER

### BACKGROUND

When The Northman opened in March, it became Chicago's first cider bar after a very lengthy wait – it was originally supposed to open in Spring 2014. There are over 100 varieties available, including 18 on tap, allowing visitors to sample the huge range of flavors in ciders from around the U.S. and overseas. To complement the ciders, a wide-ranging menu features bar-friendly, globally-inspired dishes.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Hard cider has been exploding in popularity in recent years, with new cideries opening across the country and cider-focused bars like New York's Wassail introducing U.S. consumers to cider and helping them develop their palate. The Northman specializes in French ciders, known for their fruit-forward flavors and sparkling effervescence (they also have the city's largest selection of Calvados, or apple brandy), but there are plenty of English, American (Michigan's Farmhaus sells exclusively to The Northman), and funkier Spanish varieties – a tap above the bar allows The Northman's bartenders to pour Spanish ciders from a great height, the traditional "long pour" way, which naturally aerates the cider. Chef Sean Sanders, previously the chef/owner at Chicago's highly-regarded Browntrout (now closed), takes inspiration from the regions represented by the cider menu. There's a shareable Ploughman's Platter, Welsh Rarebit, and Daily Pasties inspired by England; Normandy-style French Onion soup (made with cider) and Wild Burgundy Escargot from France; Fabada, a bean stew from Spain's Asturias region, made with morcilla and bacon; plus options like Doner Kabobs and, on the dessert menu, Maple Glazed Cider Donuts. To begin every meal, however, the bar offers a sample of the house cider to gauge each patron's tastes and preferences.





Maple Glazed Cider Donuts



Maine Mussels

## MENU INSPIRATION FROM THE NORTHMAN

**\$5.50** **CAMEMBERT AU CALVADOS**

**\$7.00** **PORCHETTA DI TESTA**  
Black garlic, pretzel.

**\$6.00** **DAILY PASTIES**  
Homemade hand pies.  
Beef or sunchoke & gouda.

**\$10.00** **DONER KABOB**  
Roasted beef, chicken, and lamb spit,  
served spicy or regular, marinated  
tomato, cucumber, wild lemon, crispy  
rice, yogurt, pita.

**\$8.00** **WELSH RAREBIT**  
Barber's cheddar, chile,  
worcestershire miche toast.

**\$14.00** **WILD BURGUNDY ESCARGOT**  
Bacon & snail ragu, beef demi, leek  
Swede strudel, fine herbs, parsley.



### WORLD BITES

We covered escargot in last month's  
**World Bites: French Cuisine** – 38%  
consumers prefer to try this classic dish  
in a modernized version, like the bacon  
& snail version found here.



**SINGLE-SPIRIT  
CONCEPTS**

## MEZCALERIA LAS FLORES

**CONCEPT:** Mezcal Bar

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Logan Square

Before opening, Mezcaleria partner Jay Schroeder traveled to Oaxaca to not only source the best mezcal, but to bring back traditional drinking vessels. "I have to get people to like this before they have it, so if you're excited to see this thing come toward you, you're probably going to like it," Schroeder told the *Red Eye*. The mezcal menu is divided into sections like the wide-ranging Espadin (the predominant agave variety in Oaxaca) and "Celebration Mezcal" for special occasions, but customers can also try the mezcal blended into a signature cocktail, like the Illuminati Handshake, with Mina Real espadin, rye, sherry, rooibos, and sal de gusano (worm salt).



## QUIOTE

**CONCEPT:** Mezcaleria

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Various (Pop-Up)

The owner of Chicago's Taco Truck and former The Garage food truck commissary is testing his own version of a mezcaleria around town with Quiote. Dan Salls is offering a series of pop-up restaurants, including a recent stint at Humboldt Park's Bar Marta, which offered a selection of tacos, hamburguesas, and chapulines (grasshoppers), plus rare mezcals and mezcal-based cocktails, allowing the team to test ideas before a permanent bar opens this fall.



## FLAMINGO RUM CLUB

**CONCEPT:** Rum Bar

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** River North

Chicago restaurateurs Adolfo Garcia and Phil Stefani are partnering to open this rum bar, scheduled to open at the end of the month. With U.S. and Cuban diplomatic relations opening, the duo are anticipating an interest in Cuban cigars, rum cocktails, and the type of Caribbean cocktail culture that was popularized in the 1950s. The bar will serve the largest selection of rum in the country, with bartenders in pink tuxedos and a small stage to host Cuban and Afro-Cuban jazz bands.



## TROPIKAVA

**CONCEPT:** Kava Cafe

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** West Town

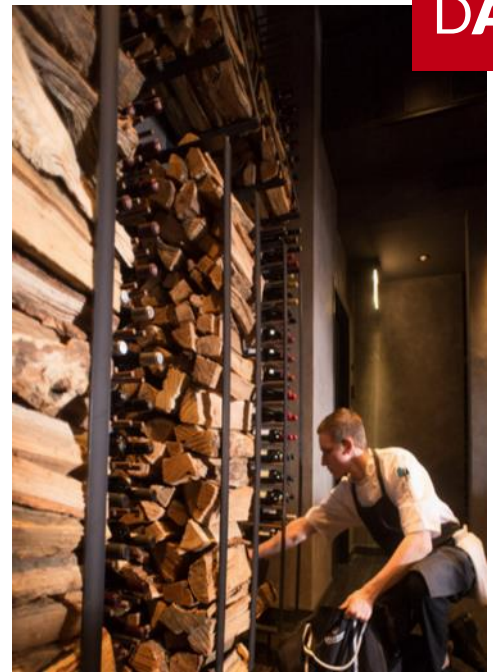
Tropikava may not feature a spirit, per say, but it still promises a "natural buzz" with its focus on kava, a member of the black pepper family native to the South Pacific with an effect that is similar to "consuming booze or smoking marijuana," according to *Eater Chicago* (customers can also bring their own spirits to mix). The five kava varieties are added to a customer's choice of juice blend, like the Ging Rickey, with ginger, beet, pineapple, and pear.



*Whole Chicken  
with Chamomile at  
Roister*

## NEXT ACTS

Grant Achatz, Stephanie Izard, Rick Bayless – they’re some of the most respected chefs in Chicago, with restaurants that have won numerous awards and that have lengthy waits for reservations. Now these chefs are unveiling their next acts, and they are going in completely new directions for each concept, embracing an entirely new segment, cuisine, or product. On their menus you’ll see how these chefs are responding to the latest trends and taking their cuisines to the next level.



**CONCEPT:** HEARTH CUISINE

**SEGMENT:** FINE CASUAL

# ROISTER

## FULTON MARKET



### DATASSENTIAL INSIGHT

There are few ingredients that can't be charred or burnt – we're seeing vegetables at breakfast, meats at dinner, burnt marshmallows on the dessert menu, and charred citrus in a cocktail.



## BACKGROUND

Chef Grant Achatz is switching things up. After a decade, his avant garde Alinea, one of the most lauded restaurants in the world, has closed for a complete remodeling and reconcepting (it's scheduled to reopen this week), and now he's opened his first casual spot with partner Nick Kokonas – Roister, with loud music, a truly open kitchen, and an a la carte menu. Roister has been a hot ticket since it opened last month (it has been planned since 2006) – actual tickets from the Group's TOCK reservation system sold out immediately for the first few weeks.

## WHY IT MATTERS

Datassential named "charred and burnt" one of our trends to watch this year, and you'll find plenty of options at Roister, where a large hearth is the centerpiece of the kitchen/dining room (a 26-ton cooling system ensures that guests aren't overwhelmed by the hearth's heat). On the menu there's Hearth Baked Lasagne with tomato gravy and burrata for an entrée, while the shared plates menu features a \$125 Japanese Wagyu steak, served with sea urchin butter and togarashi. That shared menu is also home to what has become the restaurant's signature dish, the Whole Chicken & Chamomile, with chicken that has been brined for a day in chamomile sweet tea prepared three ways: braised, poached, and fried. Guests can choose the a la carte options and sit in the front dining room, but the \$85 tasting menu includes a seat at the kitchen-side bar, with the chefs serving patrons themselves. The team recently opened The Prep Kitchen, a slightly more refined, intimate experience in the restaurant's basement (with its own, separate kitchen), which could also hold special late night dinners in the future.



Scallop Crudo



Yukon Fries on the hearth



Chicken Confit with sunchokes,  
artichokes, and cardoons.

## MENU INSPIRATION FROM ROISTER

\$15.00

### AGED CHEDDAR RILLETTES

Truffle, cauliflower, fry bread.

\$13.00

### BEEF BROTH

Beef cheek & tongue, soft cooked egg, noodles.

\$26.00

### MAPLE POACHED SALMON

Blistered egg yolk, ramp tops, romanesco.

\$75.00

### PORK BUTT & RIBS

Dark & stormy glaze, tiki parsnips, sour cabbage.

\$12.00

### FOIE GRAS

Black walnuts, pretzel, marshmallow.

\$16.00

### OYSTERS

Seaweed smoked, preserved galangal, horseradish.



### ON THE MENU

Galangal, an on-trend member of the ginger family, was featured in last month's *On the Menu*. Only 6% of consumers have heard of the root, which has sharp citrus and pine undertones.





## BACKGROUND

“Top Chef” winner Stephanie Izard’s Girl & the Goat is still one of Chicago’s most hard-to-get-reservations-for restaurants since opening in 2010 – currently the fifth most booked restaurant in the city, says OpenTable. Two spots up you’ll find Duck Duck Goat, Izard’s newest venture, a “reasonably authentic” Chinese restaurant.

## WHY IT MATTERS

Izard traveled throughout China and America’s Chinatowns to gain inspiration for her Duck Duck Goat menu, but she’s certainly not afraid of putting her own spin on dishes. There are hand-pulled noodles, made-to-order Xiao Long Bao (soup dumplings, a hot trend popping up across the country – for more, check out Imperial Lamian in this issue), and plenty of Chinese-American favorites, including Crab Rangoon. There are nods to the nose-to-tail dishes (Crispy Pig Face) found at Girl & the Goat, like the Wood-fired Duck Hearts with sesame-horseradish sauce, plus plenty of Izard’s signature goat – rice dumplings with goat, Slap Noodles with goat sausage, Goat Belly Lo Mein, Forbidden Goat fried rice with pickled quail eggs. “I would eventually like to have a secret menu with funky stuff on it,” Izard told the *Tribune*, inspired by the street foods she tried on her travels through China, while a weekend dim sum-style brunch just launched and a late night takeout window is also planned. To complement the menu (and its many spicy options) there are flavorful beers (curated by Izard’s husband) and cocktails like the Tiger Duck, made with bourbon washed with duck fat, and a variety of white wines. The restaurant’s design, by AvroKO, has received its own wave of media mentions – the restaurant is divided into multiple dining rooms, each with its own unique theme, but all designed to evoke an “everytown Chinatown.”

CONCEPT: SEMI-AUTHENTIC CHINESE

SEGMENT: CHEF CASUAL

# DUCK DUCK GOAT

## FULTON MARKET



**DATASSENTIAL  
INSIGHT**

Fat washed cocktails – in which a fat like butter or animal fat is added to a drink, chilled, and skimmed off to leave a slightly oily, fatty flavor – are popping up on numerous drink menus. Chicago’s Duck Inn also features a duck fat-washed bourbon, while The Broken Shaker uses cheese fat-washed bitters.





Scallion Pancakes



Pork Belly



Chocolate Filled Buns

# MENU INSPIRATION

## FROM DUCK DUCK GOAT

**\$10.00** **XIAO LONG BAO**  
Pork and crab soup dumplings.  
Five per order.

**\$9.00** **DUCK EGGROLL**  
Nom Wah style. One per order.

**\$17.00** **SILVER NEEDLE NOODLES**  
Clams and bacon.

**\$15.00** **DUCK FRIED RICE**  
Jasmine rice with soft-boiled duck egg.

**\$22.00** **CRISPY FROG LOGS & POTATO**

**\$15.00** **MAPO DOUFU**  
Sichuan spicy tofu and pork.



### ON THE MENU

Mapo doufu gets its signature “tongue numbing” spiciness from Sichuan peppercorns, which we covered early last year in *On the Menu*. At the time, 14% of consumers wanted to try this unique spice.



# DUMPLING ALERT



## IMPERIAL LAMIAN

**CONCEPT:** Dim Sum, Hand-pulled Noodles

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** River North

Indonesia-based Imperial Group's first foray into the U.S. market is Imperial Lamian, a contemporary, chic restaurant with an open kitchen that allows customers to get a view of the restaurant's namesake specialty, la mian, or hand-pulled noodles. The la mian is available as a wok-fried stir-fry (tiger shrimp, beef) or as a hearty soup (minced pork, beef brisket). The restaurant has also become Instagram famous with its vibrant color-coded xiao long bao, or soup dumplings with fillings like truffle or crab.



## CRUZ BLANCA & LENA BRAVA

WEST LOOP

Chef Rick Bayless, one of Chicago's most respected chefs, announced his newest projects in 2013; three years later he finally opened them. Lena Brava is a Baja-inspired seafood restaurant with lots of wood hearth-fired dishes – the kitchen doesn't even have a gas line (for more on Baja cuisine, check out our April issue of *On the Menu*). Next door, Cruz Blanca is a brewery featuring six house beers (to start), plus Oaxacan tacos and a number of tequilas. Together, Bayless said the projects were the most difficult undertaking in his three decades in the industry, according to *Crain's Chicago Business*.



## 5

# THOUGHT STARTERS

## GO NEXT-LEVEL

1

Consider how you can take your own concept or product line to the next level. Burgers, pizza, sandwiches – these are all tried-and-true customers favorites, but may not stand out on their own. How can unusual ingredients, global flavors, or focusing on a single place or region add interest to your own offerings? Is it time to update or create an eye-catching line extension to breathe new life into the category?

## RETRO CAN BE NEXT-LEVEL

2

A number of retro concepts are finding new life, but updated with the trends that resonate with consumers today – local ingredients, unusual spices, customizable options. At Moneygun, retro cocktails like the Amaretto Sour and Long Island Iced Tea are made with the attention to detail that customers expect, all served in a hipster atmosphere. Are there any nostalgic, retro dishes and concepts that you can update?

## TAKE CALCULATED RISKS

3

While all of the operators in this issue are embracing new ideas and flavors, the roots of their segment, cuisine, and/or category are still visible. Combine Inception or Adoption-level flavors with more well-known ingredients further along in the Menu Adoption Cycle, or infuse a classic dish with a burst of creativity. It's not about being weird for the sake of being weird, it's about standing out while also reaching a wide audience. Where can you afford to take a risk and where should you play it safe?

## AUTHENTICITY MATTERS (SOMETIMES)

4

Stephanie Izard proudly calls Duck Duck Goat “reasonably authentic Chinese food,” which diffuses any objections to menu items like crab rangoon. Other operators pay homage to the authentic origins of the cuisine, while updating it with local ingredients or modern flavors – they aren't just cramming two cuisines together or throwing cheese and hot peppers on a sushi roll.

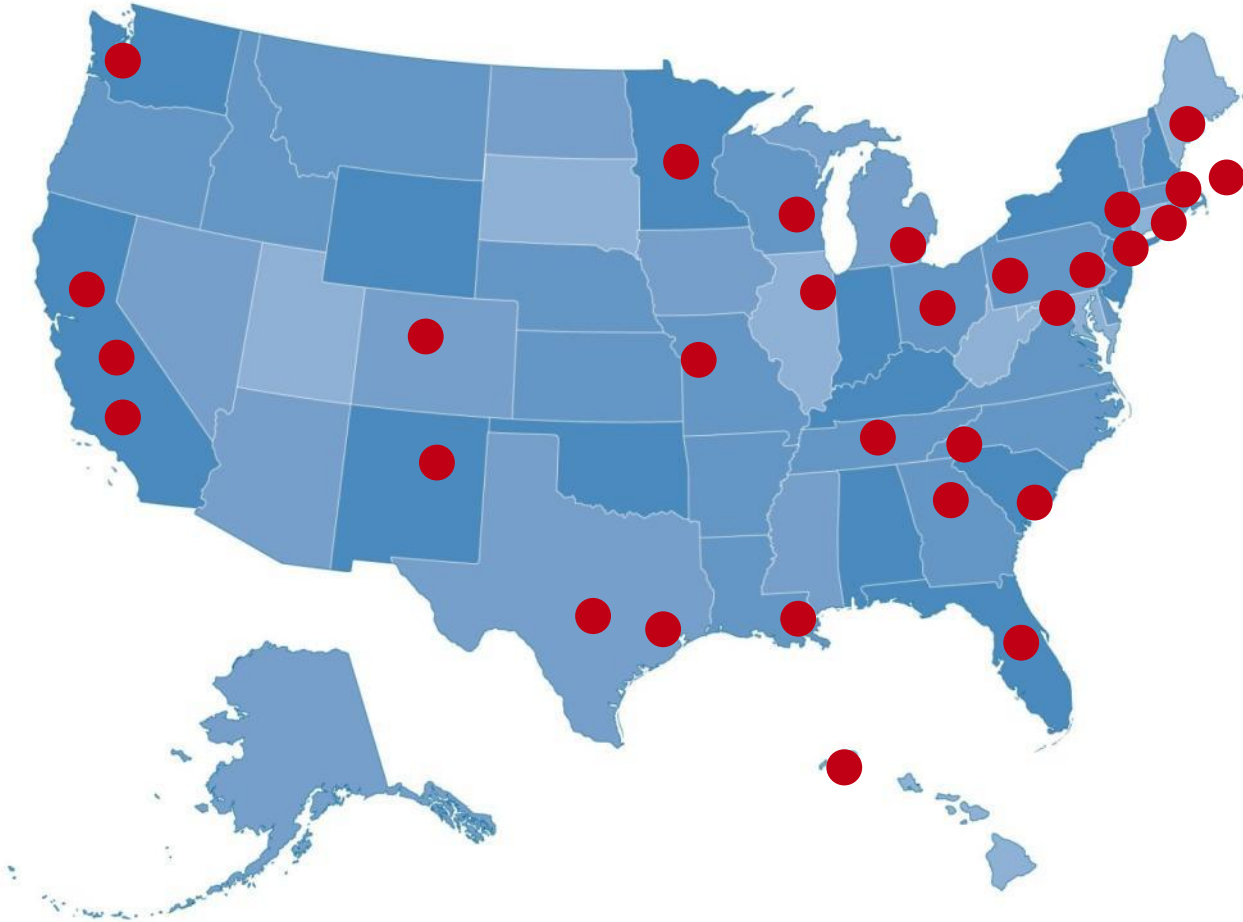
## FOCUS

5

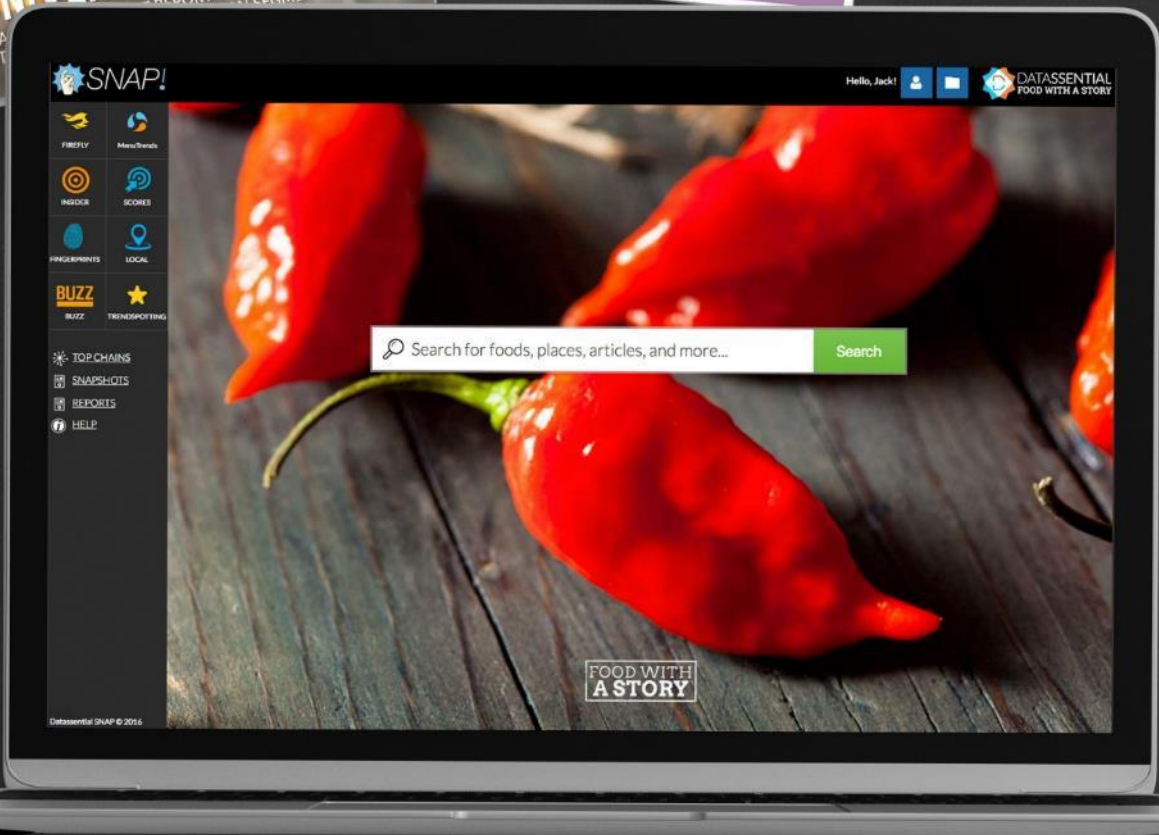
Menus are shrinking and operators continue to drop the “one size fits all” menu featuring hundreds of different options in favor of more focused concepts. Concepts like The Northman and Mezcaleria Las Flores are focusing on a single spirit, allowing them to educate consumers on drink categories they may be unfamiliar with, while restaurants like Monteverde center everything on a single ingredient – now it has become *the* place to visit for pasta in Chicago. Chains could get in the game by focusing on a single spirit on the drink menu, or offering a focused limited-time menu centered on a single regional ingredient or product made in-house.

# WHERE WE'VE BEEN

GOING ON A TRIP? PLANNING AN IMMERSION TOUR?  
CHECK OUT ALL OF THESE PAST ISSUES OF *DINE AROUND IN SNAP*.



- Asheville, NC
- Atlanta, GA
- Austin, TX
- Boston, MA
- Boulder, CO
- Charleston, SC
- Chicago, IL
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- Honolulu, HI
- Houston, TX
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- Kansas City, MO
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- Milwaukee, WI
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# TRENDSPOTTING

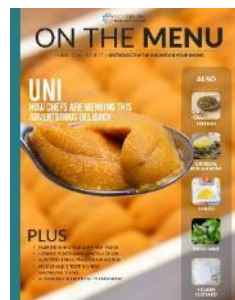
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From Datassential's MenuTrends Keynote Series

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888-556-3687  
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9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Chicago, IL 60603