# SAMPLE ANALYSIS

## CHICAGO'S BEST DOWNTOWN TRENDY, FUN, UPSCALE CONTINENTAL/MEDITERRANEAN/STEAKHOUSE RESTAURANTS WITH A *VIBRANT BAR & SOCIAL SCENE*

9/21/26

**Created by the Downtown Chicago Foodie Group**

## Fine Dining Renaissance & Global Food Destination

Chicago is a diversified economy with numerous strengths. While not facing insolvency today, it has been burdened by crime, decades of fiscal mismanagement, a structural fiscal deficit, powerful unions, high taxes, fees, fines, cost pressures, out migration and teen takeovers. It is also home to **pockets of vibrant growth, expansion and unmatched upscale dining & socializing, including luxurious destination type fine dining.** As you might guess, the living conditions and crime rates vary significantly by neighborhood.

Unlike Chicago and Illinois, the Near South Side, Loop, Near North Side and Near West Side Community Areas are growing rapidly while the Lower West Side, Logan Square and City of Chicago are losing population.

The West Loop population is surging, the River North Population is growing continuously while the stable Gold Coast is growing slowly. The youthful age distribution (65% 25-44) of young professionals in River North and the West Loop is significant. Among the safer, wealthier, desirable and social centric neighborhoods, **River North, the West Loop and Gold Coast are home to Chicago's rapid expansion of downtown luxury dining.** Unlike other downtown restaurant areas, these thriving neighborhoods have not experienced a decline in foot traffic.

While not fully recognized, **the Chicago neighborhoods mentioned above have become the epicenter of an unmatched dining and social scene.** Have no doubt, **River North, West Loop & the Gold Coast are home to Chicago's fine dining renaissance and reinvention as a global food destination.** See more from Food & Wine HERE and HERE.

While there are many options, a single night out could include cocktails at Naia (coastal resort atmosphere on the river), dinner at Gibson's Italia ( pioneer of destination dining), late night cocktails at Tre Dita (one of the world's most beautiful restaurant/bar/lounge combinations) and a people watching brunch the next day at Bellevue (the beating heart of the Gold Coast's Viagra Triangle).

Beyond the transcending dining & social experience offered by some of Chicago's best downtown restaurants, the lake front, cultural institutions, luxury hotels, architecture, the Mag Mile, Millennium Park, 360 Observation Deck, music festivals, neighborhood events, expanded river walk, river boat tours and vibrant neighborhood hot spots are ideal for tourists.

As you can see, downtown Chicago can be a fabulous place to visit if you have a knowledgeable guide. While highly ranked as one of the best cities to visit, **Chicago is 100% about the neighborhood.** As with any large city**,** visitors should stay alert and keep their phones and wallets secure at all times.

The downtown restaurant scene is dynamic, large and constantly changing. Depending on definition, there are over 9,000 independent restaurants in Chicago and about 10% are estimated to be in the downtown area. While it is impossible to track all restaurants in all areas, it can be done if the focus is limited to a target market like upscale restaurants in specific categories and locations.

## Downtown Chicago Foodie Group (DCFG) Target Market

As the nation's most vibrant restaurant area, Chicago's downtown neighborhoods are experiencing a fine dining renaissance and becoming a global food destination**.** In addition to being the **only resource 100% focused on this epicenter of highly social and experience seeking dining, the DCFG has been doing it for fifty years.**

The Downtown Chicago Foodie Group's target market includes trendy, fun, upscale Mediterranean, Continental, Steakhouse type restaurants located in fast growing downtown neighborhoods. Our vibrant target market is known for successful professionals, high income and socially motivated diners seeking experience dining. The adjacent neighborhoods primarily include Chicago's downtown West Loop, River North, Gold Coast and spillover in nearby areas.

Frequenting these restaurants daily, **the DCFG's hands-on experience with our target market has no equal**. Experienced foodies who are highly successful, visible professionals, live & work downtown, benefit from high disposable income and frequently visit multiple locations in one day, have contributed to our analytic commentary and created the DCFG's proprietary restaurant lists.

In sync with Chicago's fine dining renaissance and reinvention as a global food destination, we have targeted the right geographic areas, the right restaurant categories and the right restaurants, both primary and secondary. Having elevated our mission, **the DCFG can put meaningful information and analysis at your fingertips in an organized manner**, thus saving you time, money and freeing you up to make informed decisions and focus on managing your own business.

Creating the most accurate lists of your real competitors, the DCFG provides **rich restaurant specific analytic commentary, marketing observations & recommendations** not available elsewhere. The DCFG's **neighborhood and Community Area crime profiles** (raw & per-capita) are also unique within the industry. The **restaurant ownership** and **proprietary restaurant lists** by category are uniquely insightful, particularly the **detailed commentary applicable to each list**.

Subscriptions also include organized **links to restaurant menus, happy hours, wine lists, photos, restaurant sponsored events** and **upscale restaurant industry news & insights.** Given that social media, socializing and experience dining are driving growth today**, restaurants should know what their successful competitors are doing to fuel growth.** To measure effectiveness and share it with subscribers, the DCFG will attend restaurant sponsored events and host them on the DCFG website and Instagram page.

The Italian restaurant lists are another value-added example. There are 29 restaurants on the primary Italian target market list, 29 on the secondary target market list and 28 on the *outside* target market list, including ten in Little Italy type neighborhoods. After digesting the lists and commentary, you can be sure most of the best Italian Restaurants in Chicagoland are in the DCFG's downtown target market.

A sample of *Chicago's Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Restaurants With A Vibrant Bar & Social Scene* is included in this promotion. See Bar Tutto, Gibsons Italia, La Grande Boucherie, Naia & Tre Dita in this promotion for samples of the analytic commentary and the neighborhood crime profiles.

To join the inner circle**, stay informed, save money and years of work**, see page thirty-two for subscription information. During the introductory promotional period, the **group subscriptions include an unlimited number of key personnel.** Click HERE for a sample restaurant list, HERE to visit the DCFG's Neighborhood Crime page on the gateway website and HERE to subscribe.

## Sample Of Chicago's Best Downtown, Trendy, Fun, Upscale Restaurants With A Vibrant Bar & Social Scene

Have no doubt, **the location, season and weather all play a role in determining where the downtown socially centric frequent**. By creating destinations rather than just a place to dine or socialize, these restaurants provide diners with a transcending experience to remember.

While not alone, restaurants like **Gibsons Italia, Tre Dita, Naia, RPM Seafood** and **Bellevue** have created upscale destinations for fine dining and socializing**.** Located under RPM Seafood, **Portofino Pizza** does not offer fine dining, but it is a prime destination for socializing during the summer months.

Tre Dita is located at the river mouth near Lake Michigan while Bellevue is on Rush Street in the Gold Coast's Viagra Triangle. Naia, RPM Seafood and Portofino Pizza are all in key locations on the north bank of the Main Branch of the downtown Chicago River. Given their north bank location, these restaurants are not accessible from the 1.25 mile east-west riverwalk on the south bank.

Continuing River North's North Bank culinary & social renaissance, the stylish, high-energy nightlife focused **Carlye Club** is expected to open in the fall. Located a few blocks from Naia & RPM Seafood, the all-day outdoor social festivities will no doubt be showing up on social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram and Facebook. Located on Oak Street in the Gold Coast, other upcoming high-profile openings include **ARLA** and **Esquire.**

The riverwalk starts where Lake Street (200 south) meets the river (300 west) and runs east to Lake Shore Drive. Gibsons Italia is not on the main downtown branch of the river or the riverwalk. Located on the west bank (Canal & Lake) where the main stem splits into north and south branches, the riverwalk can be accessed by foot or a short drive.

Given their River North locations, impressive high-end buildouts and liberal happy hour, the **French La Grande Boucherie** and the next-door Italian **Olio e Piu** have also become upscale destinations for dining and socializing. The excellent food and vibrant party type atmosphere at **Siena Tavern** (River North) and **Lyra** (West Loop) make them prime destinations for dining and socializing as well.

While there are restaurants on different branches and both sides of the river, there is a meaningful difference between the branch, riverbank side and those accessible from the riverwalk. These dynamics need to be distinguished because the top tier restaurants opening on the north bank of the riverfront are not on or accessible from the south bank's riverwalk. In other words, riverfront and riverwalk dining are not the same.

The Riverwalk has become one of Chicago's premier destinations. The 1.25-mile uninterrupted pedestrian promenade has truly transformed the main branch of the downtown Chicago River. To grasp the significance of location, Click HERE for a map of River North, HERE for a map of the riverwalk and HERE for killer photos of the riverwalk. A West Loop map may also be helpful.

## Challenging The Vibrant Upscale Dining Powerhouses

Challenging the upscale, vibrant, luxurious, view-centric, powerhouses offering destination dining favored by social media fanatics, the highly successful DineAmic group recently opened **Naia**. Differing in design, location and culinary focus, Tre Dita, Gibsons Italia & Naia all offer energetic, high-end dining with stunning waterfront views and a vibrant social scene.

Located on prime downtown waterfront real estate, **Naia** combines a casual, more relaxed, coastal resort type atmosphere with striking architecture and a multi-purpose waterfront venue. Pivoting from Italian, steakhouse and French-inspired menus, Naia features a well-executed fresh, broad Mediterranean menu. Unlike **Tre Dita** and **Gibson's Italia**, **Naia** offers a happy hour with a good and affordable menu. Like Bellevue, Naia's geographic location is very conducive for socializing.

In contrast, the luxurious **Tre Dita** - one of the world's most beautiful restaurants - is a more intimate, romantic, glamorous, grand, stylized, seriously upscale old-world Italian restaurant with soaring ceilings. Housed in the five-star luxury Lakeshore East St Regis Hotel, Tre Dita has a chef-driven Tuscan-inspired menu and a stunning *shoot the lights out* bar and lounge.

Integrated with the River Point Building, Gibson's Italia is located on the West Bank of the Chicago River, The high grossing, award-winning, **Gibsons Italia** is a sleek, modern luxury, fashion forward, three level vertical buildout above a shared lobby with expansive glass walls and a retractable roof. Offering multi-level outdoor dining, the elegant, but comfortable Gibson's Italia is an Italian American Steakhouse with big Chicago *cojones* and high standards.

Located on the river in the same neighborhood as Naia and RPM Seafood, the soon to open nightlife focused **Carlye Club** could become a member of this high-end, destination/experience driven group. While not in River North, other new high-profile late-summer luxury openings include **ARLA** & the 24,000 sq ft multi-floor **Esquire**, both on the Gold Coast's Oak Street.

The well managed and well capitalized Hospitality Groups like **Lettuce & RPM (6), Gibsons Group (5) DineAmic (3)** and the new to the scene **Hospitality Included (3)** are well represented on the enclosed sample of *Chicago's Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Restaurants With A Vibrant Bar & Social Scene*. Hogsalt and Joe Flamm's Day Off Group are also well represented on many of our other lists.

## Evolving Restaurant Media: Vibrancy, Ambiance, Socializing & Social Media Sharing

The restaurant media coverage of Chicago's downtown restaurant scene is mature, highly competitive & evolving. The media is pivoting to stay relevant, but most still focus on celebrity chefs, awards, new openings, sub-categories and neighborhood specific dining.

The Chicago restaurant media does a good job with new openings and chef coverage. On the other hand, they generally ignore neighborhood crime, vibrancy, ambiance, socializing opportunities, social media centric sharing, happy hour, specific restaurant sponsored events and the evolving consumer wine palate, including less known, lower cost, high-quality wines.

Categorizing lower tier restaurants with the upscale, comparing neighborhood happy hours to downtown Chicago's best and including non-comparable restaurants in their voluminous shotgun blasts may not be the path to staying relevant. While their coverage is helpful, the restaurant media attempts to constantly cover all categories and all areas because their business model depends on volume and ad clicks.

Unlike the restaurant media, we can dive deep into specific restaurant categories and target markets because **the DCFG does not sell advertising.** The media should know that **socializing and experience dining are fueling growth**, but we don't blame them for ignoring crime because it's a nightmare of conflicting data by source. The multi-year, annual, trailing year and YTD crime patterns also look quite different.

Nevertheless, the violent crime in the Near West Side (2 miles west of the West Loop), the robberies & sexual assaults in the Near North Side and Chicago's 132% jump in auto burglaries over last year can't be ignored. As a result, the **DCFG will provide restaurant specific neighborhood crime profiles, ongoing Community Area crime analysis and resources to track crime at the sub-neighborhood level.**

See Bar Tutto, Gibsons Italia, La Grande Boucherie, Naia & Tre Dita in this promotion for samples of the analytic commentary and the neighborhood crime profiles. To build your own crime profiles, click HERE to visit the DCFG's Neighborhood Crime page on our gateway website.

The surge in new downtown luxury restaurant openings validates our observations about the importance of ambiance, socializing and social media sharing. In addition to the blending of world class cuisine, **hospitality, vibrancy, ambiance, socializing and organic social media marketing are becoming key components of the core experience.**

Beyond the world roaming food, the new dynamics include large, vibrant, energetic, highly stylized, theatrical rooms with stage setting bars, tableside showmanship, adjacent lounges and private memberships. The group friendly atmosphere often includes an interactive menu designed for sharing.

In short, the **new luxury restaurants are attempting to provide a *see and be seen,* Instagram centric, destination type experience for upscale dining, socializing and social media marketing.**

## Mega Luxury Buildouts, Capacity Concerns, Intense Competition & Execution

As part of a broad fine dining renaissance, **downtown Chicago is reinventing itself as a global food destination**. The mega luxury buildouts incorporate modern elegance, experimental hospitality, new culinary recognition and global influence.

Reflecting smart decisions, the mega luxury fine dining buildouts with expensive interiors and theatrical concepts are mostly exclusive to the appropriate neighborhoods and corridors, including River North, West Loop, Gold Coast and the North Loop. The neighboring areas all have good demographics, including wealthy residents who are socially motivated & dining centric. In addition to the growing population, the high foot traffic neighborhoods are also a magnet for tourists.

Some of the mega buildouts are using neglected, but expensive, real estate to create amenity anchors, all day venues, hubs of attraction, help solve office vacancy, lure tenants and reshape the river's competitive landscape.

Beyond the bedrock of concept, high-quality food, consistency, *personalized* service, affordability and opportunities to socialize, **success requires ambiance, an accepted high value concept and effective marketing, particularly social media**.

Facing meaningful expansion, intense competition, ongoing increases in existing taxes, new taxes, surging overhead costs, regulatory complexity and escalating consumer pricing, large luxury restaurant buildout success depends on the dynamics listed below:

-Competitive Awareness
    Who, what & where
    Succes or failure
        Why?
-Financial Controls & Management
**-Concept Acceptance & Perceived Value**
-Distinct Identity
-Memorable Destination Experience
**-Integrated Dining, Marketing, Socializing & Sharable Experiences**
-High Flow Corridors
    Wealthy social-centric local population
    Office workers & other non-local residents
    Tourists
-Integrated Tech & Reservations Management
**-Layout & Design**
-Scalable Efficiency
-Competent, Well-Trained & Retained Staff
-Appropriate Menu
**-Affordability**
**-High-Quality Food**
**-Consistency**
**- Elevated & Personalized Service**
-Consistent Volume, & Diversified Revenue
-Positive Reviews
-Good PR
**-Effective Marketing, Social Media Strategy & User Generated Content**
    Designed, incentivized & engineered to catalyze organic marketing
-Good Economy

While other restaurant categories and locations are not faring as well, **the DCFG's target market is currently home to a thriving and highly competitive restaurant business,** particularly the steakhouses. Given the increased competition and rising dining prices, there may, however, be a shake-out on the horizon. The corporate market and wealthy may sustain some high-end restaurants like Tre Dita, Gibsons Italia and the soon to open Esquire but **many restaurants are already pivoting to value promotions like happy hour, a low-cost entrée promotion and less known, lower-cost, high-quality wines**.

In addition to the sticker shock applicable to upscale downtown dining (up over 75% in recent years), **Chicago's 19% hotel tax, 11.75% restaurant tax (food & alcohol), growing surcharges, service fees and Chicago's fiscal imbalance are concerning.** While the tax does not apply to tips, it does apply to surcharges and service fees, which may or may not be shared with staff. In other words, **the confusing service fees may not be in lieu of a tip.**

The Chicago metro dining costs, taxes and non-dining taxes are already among the nation's highest, Given the black hole pension shortfall, current **taxes will continue to increase**. **An endless stream of new taxes are also on the horizon**, including a congestion tax, social media amusement tax, expanded sales tax and too many more to mention here. With no plan to address structural reform, Chicago's leadership continues to rely on increased taxes. More than any other city, **40% of Chicago's budget goes to pensions & debt service.** Because the percentage has failed to decline, the fiscal trajectory is likely to have an eventual day of reckoning without structural change. See 8/24/26 Wall Street Journal article for more.

Financial shocks can't be predicted, but the fraying of historic alliances and US reliability could make a coordinated global response to the next crisis challenging. Stock volatility is rising, momentum is slowing, leadership is shifting, capital is rotating, the oil market is disrupted, rates are rising and risk premiums are dirt cheap. With 30-year Treasury yields rising to 2007 levels, the $40 trillion in national debt and the supply/demand imbalance in the bond market are concerning.

Numerous high-end closures are a reminder that **the mega projects are not without risk.** Among many others, the abrupt closures - less than a year - of Boka's French **Le Select (converted to Wellsley venue)** in River North and the Greek **Nios** in the West Loop are good examples.

After huge hype, Boka's 12,000 square foot Le Select French Brasserie concept failed to resonate with the public. While the DCFG loved it, they were burdened by the early departure of their chef partner, mediocre reviews and inconsistency. The lavish, high profile, Greek/Mediterranean Nios also failed to resonate. Poor reviews, execution gaps and the premium paid for the experience were all contributors to the early closure.

The soon-to-open multi-level Esquire on the Gold Coast's Oak Street is about 24,000 sq ft, much bigger than Gibsons Italia's 16,000 sq ft and the largest downtown Chicago restaurant. Unable to sustain volume, Esquire will be the third restaurant to occupy the space since it was redeveloped a decade ago.

As a Japanese and French inspired luxury steakhouse, the Esquire will occupy two floors and connect them with a 5,000-bottle wine tower filled with French burgundy and Bordeaux depth. The Esquire will also include vintage Hollywood glamour, retractable glass windows with views of Oak Street, the private "58 Club," private dining rooms, a bar, atrium, multiple lounges and the small Club OakSho, a speakeasy providing an intimate Japanese omakase experience.

Opened in mid-June and located a few doors away, the new 8,500 sq ft **ARLA** will feature high end luxury rather than a spectacle type ambiance. Featuring a collaboration of Mediterranean and Japanese cuisine, ARLA will absorb the entire sixth floor, including knockout views and open-air terraces.

## Restaurant Neighborhood Crime Profiles

Among the safer, wealthier, growing and social centric Chicago neighborhoods, River North, West Loop & the Gold Coast have become the epicenter of Chicago's fine dining renaissance and reinvention as a global food destination**.** The neighborhoods are part of Chicago's restaurant rich Core Downtown Community Areas, including the Near North Side and Near West Side.

While there are a few outliers, River North, the West Loop and the Gold Coast **each share about a third of the thirty-nine restaurants on the DCFG's list of *Chicago's Best Downtown, Trendy, Fun, Upscale Restaurants With A Vibrant Bar & Social Scene.***

All three areas are affluent, walkable and heavily trafficked. They are also home to top tier dining and vibrant nightlife. The three areas are adjacent, close to the downtown commercial core and benefit from police presence.

The **three areas have diverse nightlife, crime profiles and appeal to different lifestyles**. As heavenly playgrounds for opportunistic crimes, the traffic heavy entertainment hubs are particularly subject to property crimes, theft, robbery and assaults. The occasional late-night alcohol fueled incidents can be more violent, including sexual assaults.

Chicago reports crime on 77 Community Areas, covering over 250 neighborhoods, within the Community Areas, and 22 Police Districts. Because Chicago doesn't track crime by sub-neighborhood, it can be difficult to analyze. The data variation by official source further complicates the crime analysis.

Chicago's violent crime is concentrated, but other forms of crime are not evenly distributed. *Property crime* is by far the largest category of crime in Chicagoland, including theft/larceny, burglary (includes auto break-ins), motor vehicle theft and property damage.

**The raw volume and per-capita rate of *property crimes* in the Loop, Near West Side and Near North Side Community Areas are among the highest in Chicagoland**.

Fueled by property crime, **the raw volume and per-capita rate of *all crimes* in the Loop, Near West Side and Near North Side Community Areas are also among the highest.**

**The raw and per-capita *violent crimes* and *homicides* in the Loop and Near West Side are clearly the highest of the DCFG's target market.**

While the Near North Side's total violent crime is below average, the ***sexual assaults* in the Loop, Near West Side, Near North Side and Lower West Side are twice the all-Chicago average.**

**Estimated Violent Crime Vs Non-Violent Crime**
**Raw Volume & Per Capita Crime**
**DCFG Target Market Community Areas**
Trailing Year As of 9/6/26

| | Crime Categories | | | | Per Capita Crime | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Community** | **All Crime** | **Violent** | **Homicides** | **Population** | **All** | **Violent** | **Homicides** |
| Lakeview | 5,886 | 305 | 1 | 103,000 | .0571 | .0296 | 1.0 |
| Lincoln Park | 3,798 | 157 | 1 | 68,000 | .0585 | .0231 | 1.5 |
| **Near North Side** | **10,709** | **586** | **5** | **107,000** | **.1000** | **.0548** | **4.7** |
| **Loop** | **8,219** | **487** | **5** | **43,000** | **.1911** | **.1133** | **11.6** |
| **Near West Side** | **10,433** | **709** | **11** | **68,000** | **.1534** | **.1043** | **16.2** |
| Near South Side | 2,247 | 130 | 2 | 30,500 | .0737 | .0426 | 6.6 |
| Logan Square | 4,538 | 211 | 0 | 71,000 | .0639 | .0297 | 0 |
| West Town | 7,141 | 348 | 5 | 83,000 | .0812 | .0419 | 6.0 |
| Lower West Side | 2,764 | 238 | 4 | 33,500 | .0825 | .0710 | 11.9 |
| **Chicago** | **234,331** | **20,016** | **393** | **2,700,000** | **.0868** | **.0741** | **14.5** |

*Population by Chicago Metropolitan Agency For Planning. Community Area violent crime by Violent Crime Summary Statistics at Chicago Police Department Clear Map. All crimes by the Office of the Inspector General.*

Unlike the Near West Side violence, **all categories of *violent crime in* the Near North Side Community Area (Gold Coast & River North) dropped sharply on a YTD August basis.**

Looking at the latest CCJ mid-year update, most categories of crime have been trending lower. Bucking the trend, sexual assaults were only slightly lower during the first half of 2026. **Homicides were up 3%, auto thefts rose 8.5% and nonresidential burglaries (car burglaries) jumped 132%.** Compared to 2019, they increased by more than 400%.

The time period measured is an important dynamic because the multi-year, annual, trailing year and YTD crime patterns look quite different. Looking at the CCJ graphs of annual trends, Gun Assaults, Robbery, Car Jacking and Motor Vehicle Theft have declined significantly from the 2021 high year.

When analyzing crime, it's important to note the variance by definition, official source, preliminary vs official, time period, category, time committed, Community Area and neighborhood. It's also essential to note that crime can vary dramatically by Community Area, neighborhood, sub-neighborhood and micro areas within the neighborhood. Have no doubt, **Chicagoland crime is hyper-localized by block.**

*Chicago's Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Restaurants With A Vibrant Bar & Social Scene* list is included in this promotion**. See Bar Tutto, Gibsons Italia, La Grande Boucherie and Tre Dita for samples of the DCFG's analytic commentary and neighborhood crime profiles**.

To see more detailed crime tables, learn more about neighborhood crime and how to create your own crime profiles, click HERE to visit the DCFG's Neighborhood Crime page on our gateway website.

## Restaurant Marketing & The Growing Importance Of Social Media

As part of the digital evolution, **new restaurant business is being fueled by online platforms, consumer engagement and the social media virality of influencer/creator-driven content.**

Restaurants spend up to 5% of gross revenue on all forms of advertising. About 70% of those advertising today are using social media. Increasingly important**, social media is the most productive marketing channel available to restaurants today.** To the chagrin of print media, **restaurants with an active social media strategy are growing faster.**

Social media has become a digital ecosystem. Far beyond advertising, social media's huge reach fosters discovery, builds brand awareness, trust, credibility and community culture. It also facilitates target marketing, drives website traffic, direct customer engagement, reservations, conversions and most important, shareable content creation.

To maximize return on marketing**, restaurants should consider their physical design for socializing, shareable experiences, provide incentives for diners who publish online content and engineer diner touchpoints to catalyze organic marketing.**

Total ad spending may not be increasing, but **the social media percentage of corporate advertising is increasing rapidly**. Varying by industry, social media accounts for about 25% of the total corporate spending on advertising today.

While each platform has a different purpose, audience and content style, **approximately 50% of the corporate social media budget is allocated to the Meta owned Facebook & Instagram, 25% to TikTok and the balance on the next five,** including Snapchat, Reddit, LinkedIn, Twitter and Pinterest.

To leverage Meta's cross platform ad infrastructure, the vast majority of advertisers combine the different strengths of Facebook and Instagram into a unified campaign. The combination results in expanded reach, budget optimization, lower cost conversions and a higher return.

## BRANDING, KEEPING A LID ON DINING COSTS & UNMATCHED MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES: Affordable, Less Known & High-Quality Wines

The world produces a lot of wine and most of it isn't good. Over 85% of the output and about 70% of the good stuff never reaches the U.S.

The wine industry is and has always been about marketing. The job of the wine trade is to sell domestic production and the wine that reaches the US, including the junk, not find good and affordable wines for consumers.

Adding to the challenge, the cost of wine, review services and distributors are not a reliable indicator of what's in the bottle. While there are thousands available, finding good, low-cost wine is a Herculean task that starts over with each vintage. As you can see, a reliable wine resource has real value, particularly an in-house one.

In search of new direction, **the American wine palate is revolting** against the Robert Parker machine and the Kendall Jackson Chardonnay revolution. Unlike distributors, **restaurants could add real value by helping consumers explore less known, affordable, high-quality wines.**

This is an important dynamic because it is impossible for the average consumer to identify and find the majority of less known, affordable, high-quality wines. Without a dedicated wine staff, restaurants would have the same problem. On the other hand, **a restaurant's wine director could be an invaluable resource for diners looking to explore their evolving palate.**

There are over 10,000 wine varietals on a worldwide basis. Representing an untapped market, **there are thousands of affordable, high-quality undiscovered wine gems across the world**. Beyond vintage, the discovery path includes countries, regions, varietals, producers and availability.

Looking across the world, the less known, affordable, high-quality wines are emanating from lesser-known California AVAs, Spain, Italy, France, Greece, Austria, Germany, Hungary, Island wines, Eastern Mediterranean, South America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. While the wine economics applicable to Chicagoland distributors are challenging for restaurants, some of our favorite less known, affordable, high-quality wines are already starting to show up on restaurant wine lists.

Saddled by archaic laws that impede competition and increase cost, Chicagoland restaurants are required to buy their wine through distributors. There may be over fifty active distributors servicing the downtown Chicago restaurant market, including large broad market distributors, mid-size distributors and boutique distributors. The larger restaurants typically work with multiple distributors.

In addition to meeting the needs of the nation's evolving wine palate and the high value happy hour, **the less known, affordable, high-quality wines can help restaurants differentiate, brand, add value, grow, fuel socializing and help diners keep a lid on the escalating cost of dining out,** a dynamic that is already approaching a major ceiling.

The wine industry is lamenting over the declining trend in wine consumption, but some note that consumers are buying more expensive wine. Going forward, we don't see the validity of those observations**. Once consumers are exposed to the less known, affordable, high-quality wines, they will be drinking more and spending more money on wine.**

To make the differentiating strategy work **restaurants must identify and taste the individual wines they are featuring and/or branding around.** Vendors could certainly man tasting stations and contribute to sponsorship, but only after the restaurant deemed their wines worthy of participating.

To leverage the palate shift and embrace wine exploration while keeping a lid on the cost of dining, restaurants would be wise to **focus on less-known, affordable, high-quality wines from recent vintages.** To encourage socializing, **the paid wine tasting events should be teamed with a social-centric location, mobility, large name tags, stand-up wine stations and paired appetizer stations.**

The handouts, wines, station locations, staff, the wine director's introduction, acoustics and communal seating would have to be worked out in advance. The introduction would obviously encourage diners to interact, share opinions, ask questions and post on social media. While there will always be a market for sit down tastings and oenophiles enamored with the complexity of hydrocarbons, it is not the path to growth.

We would not prioritize expensive wines, old vintages, excessive wine lists and sit-down tasting diners that preclude socializing. We would also avoid free tastings, poor quality wine, reliance on distributors, the pay to play model, inappropriate ambiance and unpleasant and/or arrogant wine staff. While a small cog in the wheel, the wrong staff could sink the ship. One bad wine on the tasting menu could do the same.

While the optimized seating arrangements could be challenging for many restaurants, **the explorative wine initiatives would be popular, profitable, fun, vibrant, encourage socializing and future attendance. It would also provide a powerful opportunity for those eager to learn, socialize and fuel organic social media marketing.** This of course assumes the event was structured properly and promoted effectively.

The energetic program would provide a guest appreciated **branding opportunity for restaurants.** To ice the cake, we would start a **wine club, blog and introduce VERTICAL FLIGHTS OF POURABLE WINE CARAFES FOR SHARING.** To minimize dining space, the vertical element is key.

Like a celebrity chef, the gateway **wine director would be sharing and gifting wine selections personally created for the restaurant's patrons.** Fueled by less known, affordable high-quality wines**, the creative wine sharing positions the restaurant as the go to place for interaction, high value dining and social media sharing.**

## Devil In The Analytic Details

While food quality, service, consistency and affordability are essential, **the prize is the opportunity to dine, socialize and share experiences in a safe, approachable, trendy, fun, upscale, unique environment teamed with happenings.** Basically, a holistic sensory experience.

The restaurants with the most vibrant bar and social scene are trendy, upscale, fun and in close proximity, but many are quite different. Happy hour, small plates, people watching, large bar seating, creativity, happenings and outdoor dining are becoming increasingly popular, particularly during the summer months.

Given the intense competition**, happy hour, a destination type experience and large integrated bars for small plate dining, sharing and people watching have become important dynamics for success.** Some resist it, but **the high value happy hour is increasingly important as a marketing tool and a driver of socializing**. The happy hour dynamic is maturing, but many restaurants that offer it may not promote it, make it visible on their website or provide a happy hour menu unless asked.

Restaurant websites vary dramatically. The information posted may not be accurate or current and different pages may have conflicting information. If you reach out for clarification**, very few restaurants respond to requests for information via their website contact page.** Indeed, Instagram is by far the best way to communicate with restaurants today.

As noted, many of these restaurants are quite different, but they are all upscale, vibrant and among the best of the best. Of the thirty-nine upscale restaurants currently on the DCFG's list of *Chicago's Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Restaurants With A Vibrant Bar & Social Scene*, **all but fourteen feature a happy hour.** While Bellevue and Aba recently eliminated their Happy Hour, il Carciofo added one. At this time, **La Grande Boucherie's Happy Hour is among the most robust in our target market.**

The thirty-nine mentioned above are listed below. The sample copy that follows **includes meaningful analytic commentary, marketing observations, recommendations and neighborhood crime profiles not available from other sources**. Helpful links, including happy hour, are also included.

## CHICAGO'S BEST DOWNTOWN TRENDY, FUN, UPSCALE RESTAURANTS WITH A VIBRANT BAR & SOCIAL SCENE*

(While all are upscale, some are luxury restaurants offering fine dining in stunning settings)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Aba** | Esquire? | Maple & Ash |
| Adalina Italian | Fioretta | Naia |
| Adalina Prime | Gilt Bar | Olio e Piu |
| Alla Vita** | Gibsons Bar & Steak** | Portofino Pizza** |
| Arla** | Gibsons Italia** | RPM Italian |
| Bar Tutto** | Hugo's Frog & Fish | RPM Seafood |
| Bar Mar** | iL Carciofo | Siena Tavern |
| Bavette's ** | Joe's Seafood Prime & Crab | Tavern on Rush |
| Bellevue** | La Grande Boucherie | The Alston |
| Cabra | La Serre | Tre Dita** |
| Carlyle Club? | Le Colonial | Trino |
| Carmine's ** | Luxbar** | Trivoli Tavern |
| Deliz** | Lyra | Ummo |

***** NO Happy Hour***. *Information is dynamic and may not be current. The new **Petite Edith** to be determined. Outstanding French food , happy hour and a bar starting to buzz. The soon to open **Carlyle Club** & **Esquire** links are landing pages. Great for socializing, **Luxbar** and **Portofino Pizza** are not on our Best of the Best upscale lists. Same with the **Loyalist.** Their food is good, but not upscale. Not shown above, **Bar La Rue** is in a similar space. Both owned by Dine Amic, Bar La Rue is under **La Serre** on the street level. While featuring different concepts, the walk-in playful **Bar La Rue** may be siphoning off some of the upscale La Serre bar & happy hour traffic.*

*Happy hour generally includes discounted food, wine & cocktails at the bar, lounge and sometimes outdoor patio. While not part of happy hour, many offer a half off wine night during the week. A few, like Olio e Piu & La Grande Boucherie, feature a no corkage night. Tracking happy hour is becoming more difficult because **the specifics change frequently and restaurants rarely respond to requests for information about anything, including happy hour, surcharges and service fees.***

***The cost of upscale dining in downtown Chicago has increased over 75% in recent years. Given the restaurant sticker shock facing diners today, the discounted happy hour has become an important dynamic. Lowering the escalating cost of dining, the introduction of less known, lower cost, high-quality wine new to the consumer is important.***

*With the exception of the Ladies Night hosted by the Tavern on Rush every Monday - a twenty-five-year legacy - upscale restaurants do not generally feature a weekly or routine Ladies Night. While not routine, some upscale restaurants may participate in periodic special programing that is female centric, including private, ticketed, partner and third-party events. They may also include social, professional, networking and advocacy events. Bar Mar, Fioretta, Gibsons Italia, Lyra and Tre Dita may be among this group.*

*Beyond the safety, ambiance, socializing & destination type experience - often driven by location - liberal happy hour, happenings, events, live music (Fioretta, La Grande Boucherie, Mastros, Trino & UMMO), classic rituals, chef specials, reverse happy hours and global food are all important and becoming more common. Adjacent late-night lounges (Adalina, Trino & Ummo), private memberships (Alston & Esquire) and all-day dining are also popping up, including Bar Tutto, Naia & the new Carlyle Club.*

*Considering the Hoxton Hotel lobby restaurant Cira as well. The Mediterranean Restaurant menu is good, but the food and setting are average.* ***Cira is, however, adjacent to one of the hottest bars in Chicago****. Located under the Cabra Rooftop restaurant, that bar is the demographic friendly Hoxton Hotel Lobby Bar.*

*All relatively new, Adalina Prime, Adalina Italian and Arla are owned/operated by Hospitality Included. Both Arla and the Esquire are on the Gold Coast's Oak Street. Located at State & Walton, Adalina Italian is also in the Gold Coast. While some would no doubt consider adding the high grossing Cindy's Rooftop, reservations are hard to get and it is out of our target market.*

*According to Restaurant Business, Gibsons Italia, Gibson's Bar & Steak and Maple & Ash are the highest grossing downtown independent restaurants in Chicago. The highest grossing Lettuce Restaurants appear to be Joe's Seafood & RPM Steak. Given the check size and capacity, the Lettuce luxury flagship Tre Dita may be grossing similar numbers. Located primarily in Chicagoland, Lettuce seems to have over 100 locations and 60 different concepts. Kudos to Gibsons because their suburban restaurants are also shooting out the revenue lights.*

*Many of these restaurants are steakhouses, Modern Italian and/or globally-inspired. The contemporary Monteverde is, however, widely viewed as one of the best Italian restaurants in Chicago. While Sarah Grueneberg and Bailey Sullivan are masters in the kitchen, Monteverde is excluded because it lacks a vibrant bar & social scene. Lacking a vibrant bar & social scene, other excellent and highly rated fixed menu restaurants with like Alinea, Ever, Oriole, Smyth and others are also excluded.*

*Chicago lost a large percentage of Steakhouse Restaurants during the 2020-2023 Covid period. A new generation of globally inspired Steakhouses started to show up in early 2023.* ***Adalina Prime*** *is globally inspired.* ***Deliz*** *&* ***Fioretta*** *are Italian inspired.* ***The Alston*** *is French inspired.* ***Asador Bastian*** *is Basque inspired.* ***El Che*** *is South American inspired.* ***Trino*** *is broadly inspired by Mexico, Spain & South America. The soon to open* ***Esquire*** *is Japanese inspired. While not new,* ***Bavette's*** *has French inspirations.*

***Large mega-buildouts with spectacle type luxury are a key component of the rapid expansion of downtown luxury dining and reinvention of Chicago as a global food destination.*** *Some of these restaurants have multiple levels, indoor & outdoor dining and private dining/event areas. We aren't sure about some, but the multi-level Esquire (24,000 sq ft), the multi-level Tavern on Rush (16,000 sq ft), the multi-level Gibson's Italia (15,700 sq ft), Hugo's Frog & Fish (14,100 sq ft), Joe's Seafood (14,000 sq ft) and Naia (12,000 sq ft) are among the largest. Home to RPM Seafood, Portofino Pizza and RPM Events, the Lettuce Riverfront Complex is a 35,000 sq ft, four level multiplex.*

*See below for sample highlights of the thirty-nine restaurants on the DCFG's list of Chicago's Best Downtown, Trendy, Fun, Upscale Restaurants With A Vibrant Bar & Social Scene.* ***The sample analytic commentary includes marketing observations and recommendations on Bar Tutto, Naia, Gibsons Italia, La Grande Boucherie & Tre Dita.***

In addition to the meaningful analytic commentary covering all sixty of the restaurants on our master list of ***Chicago's Best of the Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Restaurants***, we provide marketing tips, suggestions on how restaurants can use social media to grow their business.

While some no doubt overlap, restaurants with fixed menus, seasonal restaurants and farm-to-table restaurants can be confusing. The fixed menu category is, however, the most important of the three categories mentioned above. All the fixed menu restaurants in the DCFG's database are dripping with awards by Michelin, Jean Banchet & James Beard, including Alinea, Ever, Oriole, Smyth and others.

## SAMPLE HIGHLIGHTS
## CHICAGO'S BEST DOWNTOWN TRENDY, FUN, UPSCALE RESTAURANTS WITH A *VIBRANT BAR & SOCIAL SCENE*

*(While all are upscale, some are luxury restaurants offering fine dining in stunning settings)*

**ABA** (Lettuce)

***Award Winning, Celebrity Chef-Driven, Spirited, Upscale, Rooftop Dining & Socializing***

**-Mediterranean Rooftop With California Influence**
-302 N. Green.
-Fulton Market/West Loop/Near West Side

**No happy hour**. Closes at 11:00 pm on weekends. Click HERE for happenings & HERE for Yelp (4.4) images.

**ADALINA PRIME** (Hospitality Included/ Phil Siudak & Chef Soo Ahn)

**-Modern Steakhouse Fine Dining With Global-Inspirations**
-360 N. Green.
- Fulton Market /West Loop/Near West Side

Happy Hour Monday-Friday, 4:00-6:00 pm. Discounted food & cocktails ($9) Closes 1:00 am on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (3.8) images & HERE for **Happy Hour.**

**ARLA** (Hospitality Included/Chef Partner Soo Ahn )

**-Modern Mediterranean Fine Dining & Japanese Rooftop**
-15 E. Oak, 6th Floor.
-Gold Coast/Near North Side

**NO happy hour** at this time. Closes 1:00 am on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.0) images.

**ALLA VITA** (Boka/Kevin Boehm, Rob Katz & Levy)

***Multi-Award Winning, Chef-Driven, Upscale Dining & Socializing In A Vibrant , Affordable, Welcoming Location With A Good Vibe***

**-Elevated Italian Comfort Food**
-564 W. Randolph.
- West Loop/Near West Side

**NO happy hour**. Closes 10:00 pm on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.4) images.

**ADALINA ITALIAN** (Hospitality Included/Matt Deich, Phil Siudak, Miles Muslin & Gillespie)

***Destination Fine Dining & Socializing In A Multi-Award Winning, Celebrity Chef-Driven, High-Energy, Opulent, Romantic, Modern Art-Deco Inspired, Luxurious Club Like Atmosphere With Adjacent Late-Night Rose Lounge***

**-Modern Italian Fine Dining**
-912 N. State
-Viagra Triangle/Gold Coast/Near North Side

Happy Hour Monday-Friday, 4:00-6:00 pm. Discounted food, wine ($9), cocktails ($9) & beer ($5). Restaurant bar only. Closes at 11:00 pm on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.1) images & HERE for **Happy Hour.**

Ground floor hidden door entrance to a late night glitzy, intimate, moody **Rose Lounge** speakeasy offering upscale high-end nightlife. Friday 6:00 pm-2:00 am. Saturday, 6:00 pm-3:00 am. Transforms at 10:00 pm into a standing only party space with music. Click HERE for **Rose Lounge**

**BAR MAR** (GRG & Andres )

***Award Winning, Celebrity Chef-Driven, Upscale Dining & Socializing With Loop Professionals In A Bold, Theatrical, Nautical Themed Location***

**-Seafood Focused, Spanish/Mediterranean-Inspired, Restaurant & Bar**
-120 N. Wacker.
-Loop

**NO happy hour.** Happy Hour type Friday Mixers 4:00-7:00 pm. Popular & effective, but no discounts. Wine Monday 40% discount. Closes 12:00 am on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.3) images.

**BAVETTE'S** (Hogsalt/Brendan Sodikoff)

**- American Steakhouse Fine Dining With European Influence & French Flair**
-218 W. Kinzie.
-River North/Near North Side

**NO happy hour.** $50 corkage fee. Closes 11:00 pm on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.5) images.

**BELLEVUE** (FJ Management/Jim Banks & Fred Barbara)

***Destination Fine Dining & Socializing In A Celebrity Chef-Driven, People Watching Location In The Gold Coast's Viagra Triangle***

**-Contemporary American & Timeless Classics**
-1031 N. Rush.
-Viagra Triangle/ Gold Coast/Near North Side

**NO happy hour** (recently discontinued) Closes at 12:00 am on weekends. Click HERE for Happenings and HERE for Yelp (4.0) images.

**BAR TUTTO** (Joe Flamm & Day Off Group/Frank Callero, Kara Callero & Steve Zaleski)

***Celebrity Chef-Driven, All Day, Upscale Dining & Neighborhood Socializing In An Affordable Location***

**-All Day Casual Italian Café, Wine Bar & Restaurant**
-1110 W. Carroll.
-Fulton Market/West Loop/Near West Side

Year Opened: 2025
Size: 4,000 sq ft est
Dining Cost: $$/Surcharge: 4%
Frequent Diner Rewards Program: NO.
Annual Revenue
**Neighborhood Crime Profile:** Fulton Market/West Loop

Fulton Market is a sub-neighborhood of the larger West Loop neighborhood which is part of the Near West Side Community Area. The Near West Side Community Area is the largest Community Area in our target market. Twice the geographic size of the Near North Side Community Area, it has about 40% less population. With a dense population of 29,000 and 2.0 sq miles, the West Loop contains 43% of the population and 35% of the acreage in the Near West Side Community. In addition to one of the youngest age profiles (65% 25-44), it is by far the most affluent neighborhood in the Near West Side Community area. **The raw volume of property crime and violent crime in the Near West Community Area is the highest in our target market.** Because the population is 40% less than the Near North Side, the per-capital crime rate is also high. While high in violent crime, **most of the crime is concentrated in the dangerous far west part of the Community Area that borders East & West Garfield Park, about two miles west of the West Loop**. The highest number of property crimes in the Near West Side are also in the western areas while the southwest areas experience the lowest volume of property crime. The northern sections have the highest per-capital risk while **the northeast (West Loop) is considered the safest.** As a fast developing, industrial chic, urban playground, **some of the West Loop's outlying areas and industrial stretches lack adequate lighting**. Like any booming urban neighborhood pulling in the crowds, the West Loop is **subject to high rates of opportunistic crime, including property crime, car break-ins, vehicle theft and isolated robberies**. The West Loop is a high-energy, constantly busy, culinary row and corporate hub with loft conversions, modern mid-rises and luxury vertical high-rises. The Fulton Market sub-neighborhood is highly commercial, condensed and energetic **Perhaps a bit safer than the generally safe West Loop**, Fulton Market neighborhood is distinguished by its gleaming concentration of high-rise corporate tech HQs and fast paced construction. Sitting in **one of the safest parts of the Near West Side**, Bar Tutto's Fulton Market evening active location is surrounded by new tech offices, Chicago's most dynamic culinary frontier, upscale residential facilities, ongoing construction, redevelopment, high foot traffic and private security. While most categories of Chicago crime have been trending lower, important to note that sexual assaults during the first half of the year were only slightly lower. Auto thefts rose 8.5% during the same period while non -resident burglaries (auto burglaries) jumped 132%. Compared to 2019, auto burglaries increased by more than 400%. Given the big increase in Chicago's auto burglaries, we would **park smart, avoid side streets and dimly lit streets, particularly at night. As with any large city, visitors should stay alert and keep their phones and wallets secure at all times.**

Click HERE for more on neighborhood crime by zip code, block & address.

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Opened in late 2025, the all-day Bar Tutto is probably the smallest of the Day Off Group's four restaurants. Given the spacious outdoor seasonal patio, the mid-sized restaurant may be over 4,000 sq ft. Located on the ground floor of a new high rise building at 1110 West Carroll in the West Loop, Bar Tutto draws inspiration from the casual trattorias and wine bars that line Italy's piazzas.

The new, airy, European-inspired, neighborhood type café/restaurant/wine bar was designed for hanging out, something European Italians of all ages are addicted to. The design dynamics have created a vibrant, comfortable, inviting, warm and cozy atmosphere to facilitate interaction. The high ceilings, bright floor to ceiling windows, brick walls, vintage rugs, millwork, marble tables, open kitchen and chef's counter all contribute to the rustic atmosphere.

*Designed by **celebrity Chef Joe Flamm, Director of the Day Off Group,** the superb menus of the modern Italian café, weekday lunch, weekend brunch and dinner were designed with a bistro mindset. The menus are among the most unique in Chicagoland. Working together, the fresh produce, seafood, crostini, pastas and elevated protein preparations left us longing for more.*

*Everything that came to our table made our toes curl. The three pastas, Bavette steak, lamb strips and pork shank are among the most popular dishes. The prawns, several crostino and numerous salads are also home runs. Making his bones under chef Tony Mantuano (Spiaggia), often called the Godfather of fine Italian dining, Flamm obviously loves being in an Italian kitchen. Click HERE for menus. On a personal level, we found the food and menu at Bar Tutto superior to il Carciofo and Rose Mary.*

Heavy on sparkling wine, the beverage menu focuses on Italian aperitifs, spritzes, Italian Cocktails (Aperol & Campari), and rotating European wines that are not limited to Italy, including many lesser-known wines.

We washed our food down with the lovely, affordable and acclaimed 2024 *Torre Roane Italian Pecorino* white wine. While Pecorino's flavor profile has been rediscovered, the low yielding varietal was approaching extinction a few years ago. Available by the bottle, Flamm's slightly creamier 2024 *Vinchio Vaglio Fruste Roero Arneis* is another high value, white ranking in the upper tier of Arneis wines. Click HERE for wines by the glass and HERE for bottles.

After fifty years of consumption, we have concluded that some of the best and most affordable white wines coming from Italy today include Etna Bianco (volcanic white from Sicily) Arneis, Gavi, Pecorino, Vermentino, the criminally underrated Verdicchio and some of the varietals from Campania. The affordable *Bucci Verdicchio* and the Sicilian *Planeta Chardonnay* are world class white wines. Another high-altitude volcanic soil Sicilian beauty, the red Etna Rosso, is a home run Burgundy/Pinot Noir type gem. The 2022 *Etna Rossa 'A Rina* by Girolamo Russo is a good example of how exceptional the wine can be and why you don't have to spend a fortune on French Burgundies.

Bar Tutto's wine list is good, but in addition to those mentioned above, we would consider the low-cost Northern Italian *DePaolo Pinot Noir,* the best low cost, high value red Italian wine we have discovered. We would also recommend their high-value Pinot Grigio and some of the better whites from Campania, including the *Villa Matilde Greco di Tufo* and *Falanghina.* The micro-terroir Greco and Fiano blends from San Gregorio are also worth exploring.

Like other wine producing areas, the Italian wines vary significantly by vintage and producer, particularly producer. To ensure customer satisfaction, the varietal wines must be well selected by the Flamm team. Distributors and wine review services are not a solution or a substitute for the restaurant's tasting efforts. In addition to the **personal selection differentiation**, a great dynamic to brand around, **the delicious, lower cost and less known wines can reduce the sticker shock of dinning out.**

Leveraging the palate shift, **the creative introduction of varietals new to Americans could grow some marketing legs**. Pairing standup wine tastings, chosen by the Flamm team, with appetizer stations would be popular, fun and encourage socializing, including barn storming interactive social media marketing. **Making wine education & socializing part of the core experience,** the event would highlight the delicious and affordable Italian fare. It would also fill the restaurant with patrons eager to learn and socialize.

All paired with wine tastings, the selection differentiation, ongoing educational initiatives, other happenings, strolling Italian singers and Italian language classes all have marketing potential. Indeed, a little *La Dolce Vita* never hurt anyone. We would, however, avoid expensive wines, sit down wine dinners, wines selected by distributors, the pure pay to play model and vendor sponsored tastings.

Vendor personnel could certainly man their wine stations, but only after the Flamm team deemed their wines worthy of participating in the tasting. To enhance education, we would **start a wine club, blog and offer POURABLE VERTICAL FLIGHTS OF WINE (CARAFES) FOR SHARING that were featured at the different tastings.**

As the evening social scene develops, the bar offers a bird's eye view of the social interface and an ideal place for solo dining as well as casual dates. Teamed with good service, food and atmosphere, Bar Tutto is an ideal place for coffee, unique breakfast food, lunch, brunch, dinner, wine, nightcaps and socializing, all in one place. Weather permitting, outdoor patio seating is available.

Bar Tutto is bucking the trend towards large mega-luxury buildouts like the Carlyle Club and Naia. Like those luxurious amenity anchors, Flamm is, however, capturing the all-day revenue and doing it without the buildout cost. Too soon to estimate revenue, but Flamm and the Day Off Group have a homerun on their hands. Like the beckoning call of a mythical siren, we look forward to going back, hanging around, dining, enjoying wine and socializing without breaking the bank.

While Flamm's il Carciofo has added a Monday-Friday, 4:30-6:30 Happy Hour along with rotating wine pours, **Bar Tutto does not currently offer a happy hour.** Special offerings. Opens 8:00 am & closes at 11:00 pm on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.2) images.

**CABRA** (Boka & Stephanie Izard)

***Multi-Award Winning, Celebrity Chef-Driven, Spirited, Upscale, Regional Rooftop Dining & Socializing***

**-Peruvian Rooftop With Modern Creative Twists, Including World Class Ceviche**
-200 N. Green.
-Hoxton Hotel.
- Fulton Market/West Loop/Near West Side

Happy Hour Monday-Tuesday, 4:00-6:00 & Wednesday-Friday, 3:00-5:00. Discounted food, cocktails ($11-15) & wine ($13). Happenings include Sunday Swim, 12:00-9:00 pm & Industry Nights for Hospitality Professionals, Sunday & Monday, 8:00-10:00 pm. Closes 11:00 pm on weekends. Click HERE for **Happy Hour** & HERE for Yelp (4.2) images.

**CARLYE CLUB** (Group LV Hospitality/Steve Gogolab from Deliz)

**-All Day Classic American Riverfront With Global Influence**
-316 N. Clark.
-Reid Murdoch Building.
-River North/Near North Side
-Riverfront.

Mid-summer opening expected. Happy hour unknown. Click HERE for landing page.

**CARMINE'S** (Rosebud/Alex Dana)

***Upscale Gold Coast Dining & Socializing With Rosebud's Top Chef Serving Large Portions Of The Best Old School Italian Red Sauce Dishes***

**- Large Portion Italian American**
-1037 N. Rush.
-Viagra Triangle/Gold Coast/Near North Side

**NO happy hour**. Closes 11:30 pm on weekends. Remodeled 2nd floor outdoor dining, but no more street level outdoor dining. Click HERE for **Happenings** and HERE for Yelp (3.7) images.

**DELIZ** (Steve Gogolab & Chef Jake Peterson)

**-Italian Wood-Fired Steakhouse**
-1840 W. North Avenue.
-Wicker Park/West Town

**No happy hour.** Closes 12:00 am on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.4) images.

**ESQUIRE** (MStreet Collective/Chris Hyndman)

**-Steakhouse With Japanese & French Inspirations**
-58 E. Oak, 2nd & 3rd Floor
-Viagra Triangle/Gold Coast/Near North Side

Mid-summer opening expected. Happy hour unknown. Click HERE for landing page.

**GIBSONS BAR & STEAKHOUSE** (GRG)

**-Classic American Steakhouse**
-1028 N. Rush
-Viagra Triangle/Gold Coast/Near North Side

**No happy hour.** Closes 12:00 am on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.1) images.

**FIORETTA** (DineAmic)

***Destination Fine Dining & Socializing In An Award Winning, Celebrity Chef-Driven, Glamorous, Mid-Century Atmosphere With Live Music***

**-Italian American Steakhouse Fine Dining With Delicate Italian Flair**
-318 N. Sangamon.
-Fulton Market/West Loop/Near West Side

Daily Happy Hour, 5:00- 6:30. Discounted food, wine ($10) & cocktails ($12). Bar only. Happenings. Closes 1:00 am on weekends. Click HERE for **Happy Hour,** HERE for **Happening**s & HERE for Yelp (4.2) images.

Live music at bar/stage, Monday-Thursday, 6:30-9:00 pm. Friday-Saturday, 8:30-11:00 pm. Click HERE for live music.

**GILT BAR** ( Hogsalt/Brendan Sodikoff)

**il CARCIOFO** ( Joe Flamm & Day Off Group)

**GIBSONS ITALIA** (GRG/Steve Lombardo & Hugo Ralli)

***Destination Fine Dining & Socializing In A Top Grossing, Fashion Forward, Multi-Award Winning, Milan-Inspired, Modern Steakhouse On The River's West Bank***

**-Modern American Italian Riverfront Steakhouse Fine Dining**
-233 N. Canal (Lake & Canal).
-West Bank Where River Splits Into North & South Branches.
-Entrance Via Shared River Point Building Lobby.
-Fulton River District/West Loop/Near West Side
-Riverfront
Year Opened: 2017
Size: 15,700 sq ft
Annual Revenue: $30+ million
Dining Cost $$$/Surcharge: No
Frequent Diner Rewards Program: No.
**Neighborhood Crime Profile:** Fulton River District, West Loop

Located on the edge of downtown and northwest of the Loop, the affluent Fulton Market and Fulton River District are sub-neighborhoods of the West Loop and part of the Near West Side Community Area. The adjacent Fulton River District is just East of Fulton Market and on the river, a short distance from the Chicago Riverwalk, Kinzie street and the East Bank Club. As a transitional border neighborhood, it is quieter, less crowded and less dense than Fulton Market. Being more residential, it lacks the commercial activity and foot traffic of Fulton Market. While Fulton Market is slightly bigger, more congested and more populated than the Fulton River District, their median income and age seem comparable. **Fulton Market and Fulton River District have similar crime profiles and share most of the same general urban safety dynamics.** While both have relatively low nonviolent crime, **the Fulton River District may have a bit less crime** due to the lack of nightlife density, commercial activity and foot traffic patterns. Fulton Market has more private security and camera initiatives while Fulton River District relies primarily on standard multi-tenant security features. While safe overall, **Fulton River District is still subject to property crimes like package thefts, vehicle break-ins, bicycle thefts and the occasional opportunistic crimes**. Working actively with the CPD & local leadership about security and the lack of robust night life congestion, the residential heavy Fulton River District is considered **one of the safer areas in the West Loop** and broader Near West Side Community. While walkable, standard big city awareness is advised, particularly at night and near transit stops. See Bar Tutto for more on the West Loop and Fulton Market.

Click HERE for more on neighborhood crime by zip code, block & address.

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Opening in **2017,** Gibson's Italia was one of the first Chicago restaurants embracing a destination type experience. The Mark Knauer designed Gibson's Italia is a unique, lively, large (**15,700 sq ft**), multi-level, top grossing, award winning, Modern American Italian Steakhouse with legendary standards .

While not on the main downtown branch of the river or the riverwalk, it can be accessed by foot or a short drive. The entrance is through the River Point Building's shared lobby and acts as a non-dedicated vestibule for herding guests into the elevator. While the restaurant sits in its own distinct muti-level glass structure on the north side of the River Point Building, it is structurally integrated as part of the development.

Located above the shared lobby level, the three-level vertical buildout includes sleek modern architecture, multi-level outdoor dining, panoramic views, floor-to-ceiling windows, a prominent art lined staircase and a retractable roof. With nearly every seat benefiting, the layout maximizes the views.

Looking eastward down the river and across the downtown skyline, the epic views are some of the least obstructed in Chicago. The decorative elements include fireplaces, distinctive marble bars, ornate ceilings, high-end finishes and materials.

Adored by the corporate crowd, GRG's flagship is a popular, energetic, refined, contemporarily elegant, but comfortable, Milan-inspired modern Italian American Steakhouse offering waterfront views, upscale destination dining and a vibrant social atmosphere. With Milan the fashion capital of Italy, Gibson's Italia is anything but an old school Italian Restaurant.

Bathed in natural sunlight from large river facing windows, the vibrant, stylish, welcoming **bar and lounge** is on the first floor above the lobby. Offering smaller portions of the main dining room menu, the atmosphere is more casual, but still elegant. The aesthetics include a wood-beamed ceiling, warm colors, a large & sleek black marble counter with a deep bottle wall behind the bartenders, tan leather bar stools, white marble high-top tables with tan leather chairs and dining tables that wrap around the side of the bar.

Lacking a bar, the **main dining room**, including semi-private dining & outdoor seating, is on the second floor above the lobby. It is more formal, classic, elegant and detailed than the bar and lounge, but it still has an urban edge. The gray leather booths, chairs and white marble tables flow in a serpentine manner. Aesthetics include an ornate ceiling, classic millwork, backlit onyx walls, high end finishes, neutral colors, minimalist shelving and abstract wall paintings.

Seamlessly integrated, the third floor is home to a glass enclosed **private event space** with a retractable roof and glass doors that open. The large white marble bar and tan leather stools are complemented with leather sofa seating and a fireplace. With limited wall décor, the east facing panorama is the décor.

*Featuring chef-driven tastes of Italy, the menu is led by a dedicated culinary team currently headed by* ***Executive Chef Drew Keane****. Serving affordable upscale food and wine,* ***the menu balances traditional Italian favorites with classic steakhouse staples.*** *(Former Chef Jose Sosa departed for Ummo in 2023).*

*The rich food is well presented, including gold-extruded pastas, world class steaks, other noteworthy meats & seafood, antipasti,* ***signature risotto,*** *decadent sides and celebrated desserts. Some of the most popular dishes include arancini, crab & avocado parfait, spicy rigatoni, signature risotto, steaks, branzino and spumoni baked Alaska.*

*We dined in the bar area on our most recent visit. Bypassing the 650 selections and the excessive 10,000-bottle inventory, we relaxed with an outstanding choice of low-cost wines by the glass. While they certainly offer more expensive wines by the glass, we opted for the $13 Mohua Sauvignon Blanc and the $15 Baileyana Pinot Noir, both acclaimed, delicious and high value wines.*

*The less than edible chopped salad was the low point of the evening. The rich crab bisque was delightful, but in need of tumbler of dry sherry to top it off. The meatballs and crispy artichokes were perfect. The ravioli carbonara was good, but too rich for us. If you are a meat lover, the fusilli was satisfying. After bringing freshly shaved cheese and a peppermill to top off the Cacio e Pepe, it was the best pasta on the table. The spicy rigatoni was another delight. The soup was late, so our server brought a medley of delicious complimentary desserts. Click HERE for menus.*

Our American born Mexican server, Tenoch, must have gone to Gibson's boot camp for service staff. His pleasant and meticulous attention to detail made us feel like royalty. When the check arrived, we were surprised by the affordability. All in all, a delightful experience.

Given their success, Gibsons doesn't have to do anything different. However, the current Italian dishes don't provide a big incentive to dine there. The signature Risotto is certainly fine, but we would revise the Italian dishes and consider those below. Some could no doubt become signature dishes.

- **Paglia e Fieno**
  Cream sauce, ribbon pasta, peas, mushrooms & pancetta. No bizarre shaped pasta.
- **Osso Buco & Saffron Risotto**
- **Manicotti & Cannelloni**
  Combination with bechamel or marinara
- **Baked Clams Casino**
  Large Fioretta type clams. No dime sized clams
- **Polpo Alla Griglia**
  Cut & served tableside over radicchio with fresh lemon juice & a shot of balsamic

The incentive is important because while Italians in the DCFG love Gibsons Italia, they don't dine there for the Italian food. They may not ever get pasta like the legendary Doro's on Rush served in the 80s, but they still crave pasta like Tre Dita's Linguine Al Limone, La Serre's Caviar Nest Pasta, Piccolo Sogno's Paglia e Fieno (made upon request) and il Porcellino's Pappardelle Alla Porcellino.

While the competition is heating up, Gibson's Italia has always been one of Chicago's top destination type experiences for upscale dining and socializing. The food quality, consistency and service are key components of why Gibson's Italia is the top grossing independent restaurant in Chicago.

Gibson's service model - across all their restaurants - is among the best in the industry. As a destination dining pioneer **grossing more than $30 million annually,** Gibson's Italia has probably earned more awards than any other Chicagoland restaurant.

**NO happy hour.** Closes at 11:00 pm on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.3) images of the highly successful modern Italian American Steakhouse.

**HUGO'S FROG & FISH** (GRG)

**-American Seafood & Steakhouse**
-1024 N. Rush.
- Viagra Triangle/Gold Coast/Near North Side

Happy Hour Sunday-Thursday, 3:00-6:00 pm. Discounted food, wine ½ off bottle & beer ($5). Closes 12:00 am on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.1) images & HERE for **Happy Hour**.

**JOE'S SEAFOOD, PRIME STEAK & STONE CRAB** (Lettuce)

**-Broad High-End Seafood With Diverse Menu**
-60 E. Grand.
North Bridge
-River North/Near North Side

Happy Hour Monday-Friday, 2:00-5:00 pm. Discounted food, wine & cocktails. Both wine & cocktails are half priced. Lounge only. Closes 10:00 pm on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.4) images & HERE for **Happy Hour.**

**LA SERRE** (DineAmic)

**LE COLONIAL** (Rick Walstedt & Joe King)

**LUXBAR** (GRG)

***Upscale Casual Food Dining & Gold Coast Socializing***

**-Elevated All-American Bar & Restaurant**
-18 E. Bellevue.
-Viagra Triangle/Gold Coast/Near North Side

**NO happy hour.** Closes at 12:00 am throughout the week. Click HERE for Yelp (3.9) images

**LA GRANDE BOUCHERIE** (The Group NYC & Emil Stefkov)

***Destination Fine Dining & Socializing In A Multi- Award-Winning Location With Nouveau French & Italian La Dolce Vita Backdrops At The Neighboring Olio e Piu***

**-French Restaurant, Brasserie & Steakhouse Fine Dining**
-431 N. Dearborn.
-River North/Near North Side

Year Opened: 2024
Size: 10,000 sq ft
Annual Revenue:
Dining Cost $$$/Surcharge: 4.0%.
Frequent Diner Rewards Program: No.
**Neighborhood Crime Profile:** River North

Containing 15% of the Near North Side area, 25% of the population and the highest non-vehicle ownership, River North has **the most sprawling late-night bars, mega-clubs, party energy & hotel density** within the Chicagoland area. Relatively safe from violent crime, the raw volume of property crime in the Near North Side Community Area is the highest in Chicagoland. **The highest number of property crimes in the Near North Side area are concentrated in the southeast entertainment areas of River North** while the quieter western residential areas report fewer incidents. Contrasting with low homicides, but like property crime, the Near North Side's raw volume of criminal sexual assaults are among the highest in Chicagoland. While the data is based on reported assaults, most sexual assaults are not reported. On a per capita basis, the crime rate is moderated, but still above average. The assaults generally occur in the heavily trafficked entertainment & late-night areas with dense commercial/transient traffic. The concentration of reports correlates with nightlife dynamics in the entertainment districts rather than systemic neighborhood violence. In summary, homicides and violent crime are low, but **robberies, property crime & criminal sexual assaults require caution, particularly in the late-night party type locations.** While most categories of Chicago crime have been trending lower, important to note that sexual assaults during the first half of the year were only slightly lower. Auto thefts rose 8.5% during the same period while non -resident burglaries (auto burglaries) jumped 132%. Compared to 2019, auto burglaries increased by more than 400%. Because the majority of violent crime is clustered around 2:00 a.m. in the dense nightlife locations, **the daytime crime profile for River North is much safer**. On a positive note, **all categories of violent crime have dropped significantly on a YTD basis through August. The most important thing visitors can do to minimize exposure is to dine and socialize earlier in relatively safe neighborhood areas.** By doing so, they are practicing situational awareness and avoidance. Given the big increase in Chicago's auto burglaries, we would also park smart, avoid side streets and dimly lit streets, particularly at night. As with any large city**,** visitors should stay alert and keep their phones and wallets secure at all times.

Click HERE for more on neighborhood crime by zip code, block & address.

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In addition to installing a new building facade, the two-story Art Nouveau inspired French La Grande Boucherie has a grandiose ground floor, vaulted ceilings, mosaic floors and a century old museum quality French glass mural. The dominant feature is an 82-foot-long oval shaped pewter bar with unique metal working. The bar is lively and popular, particularly on live jazz Wednesday nights.

*Mentored by Charlie Trotter,* ***the menu was designed by the award-winning Executive Chef Michael Taus.*** *The well-organized menu* ***balances core steakhouse food with French classics,*** *including Hors d'Oeuvres, a Raw Bar, Salads, Carpaccio, Piece du Boucher (Steak & Frites), Les Grands Formats (large portions for sharing), Plats Principaux (main courses), Fromage, Charcuterie, Garnitures (sides & toppings) and Desserts.*

*The authentic French menu is classic, large, broad and impressive. Fueled by rich sauces and tableside preparation, some of the starters include Steak Tartare & Foie Gras while some of the mains include Filet Mignon au Poivre and Canard a L'orange. The Les Grands Formats include a 48-ounce Tomahawk Ribeye, Chateaubriand and a large format Signature Plate. While not currently available, we would resurrect the no room for error Grand Marinier*

*Souffle and pour Creme Anglaise over it when presented at the table. Click HERE for menus. Click HERE for wines by the glass and HERE for bottles.*

We were excited when La Grande Boucherie, La Serre, Obelix, Petite Edith and Petit Pomeroy opened. Our enthusiasm was elevated because we miss the great French restaurant pioneers like Jean Banchet, Jovan Trboyevic, Roland Liccioni, Paul Contos and our friend Dominick Trolli. On a personal level, we particularly miss the "Nouvelle Cuisine" & "La Cuisine du Marche" introduced by the Yugoslavian born Jovan Trboyevic (Les Nomades, Jovan's & Le Perroquet).

In addition to the recently closed Les Nomades, Dear Margaret, Marchesa, Chez Moi, La Sardine and Kiki's Bistro, we also miss the one hundred or so legendary Chicago French restaurants that closed in recent decades. See below for some of the closures.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Le Nomades (2025) | Bistro 110 (2011) | Le Bordeaux (1989) |
| Dear Margaret (2025) | Brasserie Jo (2010) | Mon Petit (1988) |
| Marchesa (2024) | Le Francais (2007) | Le Coq Au Vin (1987) |
| Le Select (2023) | Café la Tour (2007) | Café de Paris (1987) |
| Chez Moi (2023) | Ambria (2007) | Jovan's (Original) (1983) |
| Everest (2020) | Le Bastille (1999) | Jacques (1983) |
| La Sardine (2020) | Chez Paul (1995) | Maxim's de Paris (1982) |
| Kiki's Bistro (2020) | Le Perroquet (1994) | L'Escargot (Original) (1980) |
| Tru (2017) | La Tour (1993) | Maison Laffite (1980) |
| Carlos (2012) | L'Auberge (1991) | Le Mignon (1980) |

See Culinary Historians for more exceptional detail and HERE for more on classical French dishes.

French food and the Burgundian wines remain at the top of the culinary food chain. While Le Grande Boucherie has the potential to fill the deep shoes of Chicago's legendary French Restaurants, they need to perfect the kitchen's execution, leverage the ambiance and embrace smart social media marketing.

Q**uality, consistency, service and affordability are bedrock for success**. Beyond the basics, **Chicago's excessive expansion of large luxury restaurants & intense competition demand a meaningful** & **innovative approach to socializing and marketing as part of the core experience**. While the food and execution have improved, La Grande Boucherie's beautiful buildout, romantic vibe, bar design and happy hour are currently the draw.

With one of the best Happy Hours in our target market, including duration, hours, menu ( food & liquor) and pricing, La Grande Boucherie is headed down the right path. Love the $11 a glass French house wines. The live piano music on Sunday, live jazz music on Wednesday and no corkage fee on Tuesday are all smart initiatives.

Given that **large restaurants with expensive buildouts need constant volume to survive,** La Grande Boucherie would be wise to put their socialization initiatives on steroids and promote them with smart social media strategies. While the ambiance is a bit sterile, the recently opened Petite Edith is dishing out some of the best French food in Chicagoland. As a result, we would leverage the ambiance, prioritize the kitchen's execution, the marketing initiatives and turn La Grande Boucherie into the Studio 54 of French cuisine.

We started consuming and collecting the great red French Burgundies in the mid-70s. In addition to being an unmatched heavenly treat, they were widely available in Chicago at that time. Most were priced under $30 a bottle, including wines from: Arlaud, Bouree, Chevalier, Chevillion, Dujac, Gouges, Latour, Lafarge, Leflaive, Marquis d' Angerville, Rousseau and others. Around $5,000 a bottle today, Rousseau's Chambertin was obviously not in that price group. (Napoleon loved his Chambertin while Voltaire favored Volnay) The *Rousseau Clos de la Roche* we were drinking back then for under $25 a bottle is now over $1,000 and unavailable. We also miss the bottles of Echezeaux burgundy and magic tricks waiting for us at our Pump room table when Lettuce was managing it.

There might be some communal type wines bottled under their names, but none of the top French Burgundy producers mentioned above are widely available today. If they were, the prices would be astronomic and beyond most patrons. The Burgundy producers on current menus are mostly unknown to us. After the Burgundy prices went through the roof, we opened the door to California Pinot Noir and started exploring the lesser known, affordable, high-quality French wines. Unknown to most Americans, we found a lot of them and continue to explore them to this day.

While the love of French food and wine hasn't changed, the restaurant should position as a personal differentiator. To reduce the cost of dining out, **the La Grand Boucherie staff should educate their patrons about the quality and affordability of French wines from less-known areas**, including Alsace, Languedoc-Roussillon, Loire Valley, Macon, Provence and others. The Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris from Emile Beyer (Alsace) are good examples of these wines. Same with the Macon whites from Lafon and Latour. The Lafon Macon is currently on the Obelix menu for $66.

To engage patrons beyond their already highly successful Happy Hour, we would consider live French music and other interactive social events like:

-Stand up wine tastings featuring lesser-known high value French wines
Paired with appetizer stations to drive interaction & socialization
-Classes on less known, affordable, high-quality French wines
-French language classes
-French fashion classes
-How French women stay slim without dieting
-Themed holiday events, including Le Bastille Day

In addition to a Frequent Rewards Diner Program, we would consider periodic special programs that are female centric, including private, ticketed, partners and third-party events. They could also include social celebrations, professional networking and advocacy events.

Have no doubt**, location, good high value food, wine, ambiance, layout and happenings are the fuel for successful socializing and increased restaurant revenue.**

While the Italian restaurants in the DCFG's database are five times greater than the French restaurants today, the graveyard of Chicago's closed French Restaurants is far bigger. In our minds, there is **a huge untapped market today for all things French in Chicagoland**. As the world's fashion capital, there are reasons why consumers are paying Ferrari type prices for French handbags and perfumes.

The Happy Hour stretches from Monday-Friday, 4:00-7:00 pm. Discounted food, wine ($11) & cocktails ($12). Bar & patio only. No corkage Tuesday. Live Piano Sunday, 6:00-9:00 pm. Live Jazz Wednesday, 6:00-9:00 pm. Closes at 11:30 pm on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp images of the high- stakes commitment to Chicago & HERE for **Happy Hour**.

**LYRA** (DineAmic)

***Fine Dining & Destination Socializing In An Award Winning, Celebrity Chef-Driven, Party Type Location***

-**Modern Greek & Mediterranean**
-905 W. Fulton Market.
- Fulton Market/West Loop/Near West Side

Happy Hour Monday-Saturday, 5:00-6:30 pm & Sunday, all day. Discounted food, wine ($9) & cocktails ($9) Bar only. Closes at 1:00 am on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.1) images, HERE for **Happy Hour**, HERE for the **Weekend Ritual** & HERE for **Happenings.**

**MAPLE & ASH** (Maple Hospitality Group/Jim Lasky, Chef Danny Grant & Matt Win)

**-Upscale Modern Wood-Fired Steakhouse Fine Dining**
-8 W. Maple.
-Viagra Triangle/Gold Coast/Near North Side

Tower Hour Sunday-Thursday, 5:00-6:00 pm. Friday-Saturday 4:30-6:00 pm. Seafood Tower ($45), house red ($15) & cocktails ( $15). Bar & Lounge. Thursday Nightcap, 10:00 pm -Late, Bar & Lounge. Closes 11:00 pm on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.2) images, HERE for Tower Hour & HERE for **Happenings.**

**NAIA** (DineAmic/Luke Stoioff & David Rekhson)

***All Day Destination Fine Dining & Socializing In A New, Celebrity Chef-Driven, Premier Coastal Resort Type Location On The River***

**-All Day Mediterranean/Greek/Levantine Riverfront Restaurant & Bar Fine Dinng**
-300 N. La Salle.
-River North/Near North Side
-River Front.
North Bank, Main Branch.
LaSalle Street Entrance & Boat Docking.
Year Opened: 2026
Size: 12,000 sq ft
Annual Revenue:
Dining Cost: $$/Surcharge: 3.95% (Removeable)
Frequent Diner Rewards Program: Yes
**Neighborhood Crime Profile**: River North

**See La Grande Boucherie Crime Profile**. Located a few blocks apart, both restaurant locations are within the CPD's 18th District (Near North) and the Near Northside Community Area. Both experience high commercial density, bustling nightlife and active pedestrian traffic along the river and main corridors. While neither location suffers from high rates of violent crime, both are subject to opportunistic thefts, property crimes and occasional late-night entertainment district incidents common to high-profile, downtown dining and entertainment zones. On a positive note, **all categories of Near North Side violent crime have dropped significantly on a YTD basis through August.**

Click HERE for more on neighborhood crime by zip code, block & address

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Perhaps the most important new *see-and-be-seen* opening of the year, DineAmic ( Bar Siena, Fioretta, Lyra, Prime & Provisions & Siena Tavern) opened the 12,000 sq ft Naia in June of 2026. Challenging the Tre Dita and Gibsons Italia powerhouses, Naia is a broad Mediterranean, Greek, Levantine restaurant and bar providing upscale destination dining & socializing in a coastal resort like setting,

Like RPM Seafood and Portofino Pizza, Naia is located on the north bank of the Chicago River's downtown Main Branch. Naia is directly on the river, below the Chicago Cut Steakhouse. Visitors can enter via LaSalle Street and boat docking.

After descending an exterior staircase from LaSalle, visitors will see the150 seat patio area, a mix of tables, large pergola covered tan leather booths facing the river and patio greenery. A large rectangular bar anchors the inside front space. Seating up to 250, the main dining room is only a few feet away.

The ambiance enhances the experience, including earth tones, twisted rope, two tone marble floors and a hand carved stone wall sculpture. The multi-level architecture, operable window walls, heated/louvered pergolas and main dining room allow the space to transform with the season. The Mediterranean type of backdrop ensures views of the river, boat traffic/docking and skyline from every seat.

Covering an entire river level city block, the sprawling Naia is expected to offer all-day, all-season breakfast, lunch, brunch, dinner, cocktails and happy hour. In addition to indoor and outdoor seating, the complex includes an event venue. Using design elements of glamorous Mediterranean waterfront destinations, the menu and décor work together to enhance the destination experience.

*Winner of Top Chef Greece and known for work in Mykonos, the* ***Naia menu is helmed by internationally renowned chef Athenagoras Kostakos****. Rather than focus on a single region, the menu highlights* ***foods from Southern France, Spain, Italy, Greece, Israel, Lebanon, Turkey and the Eastern Mediterranean.***

*The menu consists of tableside hummus, spreads, fresh raw bar, crispy rice, mezze, mains (chicken, fish, lamb & beef), salads, house-made pasta, skewers, sauces, sides and delectable desserts.*

*Our first experience was a knockout. Everything on the table was good. The entire table loved the shareables and the Santorini Limoni Pasta. While expensive, the whole Branzino split fish with dual seasoning was so fresh and delicious, we don't have words to describe it, particularly after quaffing a bottle of the Almyra Greek Chardonnay by Skouras. Click HERE for menus. Click HERE for wines by the glass and HERE for bottles.*

At $58 a bottle, the crisp and clean Almyra mentioned above was good and a value bargain as well. A good choice of affordable Italian whites are also offered, including Arneis, Greco di Tufo and Vermentino. Beyond what you would expect, the wine list includes some interesting reds from Greece, Lebanon, Israel, Portugal and Spain.

Fueled by a new generation of winemakers returning to Greece, the showcasing of indigenous varietals, EU investments, formalization of wine laws, modern techniques and a huge increase in wineries, **the Greek Wine Industry experienced a renaissance in quality and focus** that picked up steam in the 1990s. Moving beyond bulk production and the traditional retsina style, the industry is producing more higher value, small batch wines today.

After studying oenology in France, the returning George Skouras started making wine in his father's garage in the mid-1980s. As an early exporter of Greek Wines, he became one of the most respected names in the modern Greek Wine Industry today. Like Italy's Diego Planeta, Bruno Giacosa and Andrea Franchetti, Skouras could approach legendary status.

The boom in fine Greek restaurants and the seductively simple food has elevated the profile of Greek wines. Offering high-quality wines with value, the Skouras wines are a good starting point for Naia to introduce the evolving American palate to non-traditional wines. Moving beyond Greece, we would continue that journey with the wines from Portugal, Lebanon, Israel and select Mediterranean Islands. While not currently on the menu, we would add well selected high value whites from Cyprus.

Ironically, Nia, an unrelated Mediterranean Wine Bar on the West Loop's Restaurant Row (between Halsted & Ogden), has been offering Wine Discovery Wednesdays that feature five rotating Mediterranean Wines ( Spain, Greek Islands, Italian Coast & Mediterranean Rose) paired with five Mediterranean tapas.

Few realize it, but wine consumers are benefiting from numerous headwinds facing the global wine industry, including increased competition and four years of declining consumption. In addition to keeping a lid on prices, the less known wines are free from the markups that apply to prestigious regions like Tuscany. **The less known, affordable, high-quality wines have become essential because they help keep a lid on the rising cost of dining out.**

Unlike Tre Dita and Gibsons Italia, Naia offers a Happy Hour stretching from Monday-Friday, 4:00-5:30 pm. Bar only. Good choice of affordable food, wine ($9) & cocktails ($11). Like Bellevue, Naia's location is ideal for

socializing. Closes 11:00 pm on Friday & 12:00 am on Saturday. Click HERE for **Happy Hour**, HERE for **Happenings** & HERE for Yelp (3.9) images.

**OLIO e PIU** (The Group NYC & Emil Stefkov)

**-Authentic Italian Trattoria & Enoteca**
-445 N. Dearborn.
River North/Near North Side
Next Door To La Grande Boucherie

The extended Happy Hour stretches from Tuesday-Saturday, 4:00-7:00 pm at bar & 4:00-6:00 on patio. Discounted food, wine ($10) & cocktails ($10). No corkage Tuesday. Closes at 11:00 pm on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.3) images & HERE for **Happy Hour.**

**PORTOFINO PIZZA** (Lettuce/RJ Mellman, Jerrod Mellman, Giuliana Rancic & Bill Rancic)

**-Casual, Social, Riviera Inspired Italian Riverfront Restaurant**
The full menu is far more than a pizzeria
-317 N. Clark.
-River North/Near North Side
-Riverfront.
North Bank, Main Branch, Chicago Riverfront.
Clark Street Entrance & Boat Docking

**NO happy hour**. Closes at 11:00 pm on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.0) images. Click HERE for Happenings, HERE for all the Lettuce **Happy Hours** & HERE for a full list of the Lettuce restaurants.

**RPM ITALIAN** (Lettuce/RJ Mellman, Jerrod Mellman, Giuliana Rancic & Bill Rancic)

**-Chic, Modern, Upscale Italian**
-52 W. Illinois.
- River North/Near North Side

Happy Hour Monday-Friday, 4:00-6:00 pm. Discounted food, cocktails ($8), wine ($8) & beer ($7). Bar Only. Closes 10:30 pm on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.1) images & HERE for **Happy Hour.**

**RPM SEAFOOD** (Lettuce/RJ Mellman, Jerrod Mellman, Giuliana Rancic & Bill Rancic)

***Destination Fine Dining & Socializing In A Multi- Award Winning, Celebrity Chef-Driven, Yacht Like, Trendy Riverfront Location***

**-Seafood-Based Riverfront Fine Dining**
-317 N. Clark.
-River North/Near North Side
-Riverfront.
North Bank, Main Branch, Chicago Riverfront.
Clark Street Entrance & Boat Docking

Happy Hour Monday-Friday, 4:00-5:30 pm. Discounted food, wine ($10), cocktails ($10) & beer ($5). Bar only. Closes at 10:00 pm on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.0) images & HERE for **Happy Hour.**

**SIENA TAVERN** (DineAmic)

***Upscale Dining & Destination Socializing In An Award Winning, Celebrity Chef-Driven Location In The Heart Of River North***

**-Modern Italian**
-51 W. Kinzie.
- River North/Near North Side
Kinzie & Dearborn

Happy Hour Every Day, 3:00-6:00 pm. Discounted food & cocktails ($9). Main bar only. Closes at 12:00 am on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.2) images, HERE for **Happenings** & HERE for **Happy Hour.**

**TAVERN ON RUSH** (Stefani Restaurant Group/Phil, Karen, Gina, Stephani & Anthony Stephani)

**-Upscale, Contemporary Steakhouse**
-1015 N. Rush.
-Viagra Triangle/Gold Coast/Near North Side

Rush Hour Sunday-Thursday, 3:00-6:00 pm. Discounted food, cocktails ($10), wine ($10) & beer ($6). Bar area only. Click HERE for Yelp (3.8) images & HERE for **Rush Hour**

Ladies Night, every Monday, 7:00 -10:00 pm. Live DJ, drink specials & luxury giveaways. Raffle prize announcements 9:30-10:00 pm. 1st place prize is a pair of Christian Louboutin shoes. Happenings. Closes 12:00 am on weekends. Click HERE for **Ladies Night.**

**THE ALSTON** (Jenner Tomaska & The Fifty/50 Restaurant Group/Scott Weiner & Greg Mohr)

***Destination Fine Dining & Socializing In An Award Winning, Celebrity Chef-Driven, High Energy, Opulent, Romantic, 1920s French Inspired, Luxurious Club Like Atmosphere***

**-French-Inspired Midwestern Steakhouse Fine Dining**
-750 N. State, 3rd Floor.
-Gold Coast/Near North Side
Between Chicago & Superior.

Happy Hour, Monday -Friday, 4:30-5:30, Bar, Lounge & Terrace. Discounted food, wine ($10) and cocktails ($12). Closes 11:00 pm on weekends. No corkage fee on Sunday. No corkage option Thursday-Saturday. Click HERE for Yelp (3.9) images & HERE for **Happy Hour.**

Private memberships, Private Events & Ticketed Hosting.

**TRIVOLI TAVERN** (Hogsalt Hospitality)

**-Upscale American Tavern & Steakhouse**
-114 N. Green
-Fulton Market/West Loop/Near West Side

**TRE DITA** (Lettuce/R. Mellman, R.J. Melman & Molly Melman)

***Destination Fine Dining & Socializing In One Of the Worlds's Most Glamorous, Tuscan -Inspired, Multi-Award Winning, Celebrity Chef- Driven, Old-World Restaurants***

-**Tuscan-Inspired Modern Steakhouse River & Lakefront Fine Dining**
-401 E. Wacker, 2nd Floor St. Regis Chicago Hotel
Lakeshore East/New East Side/Loop
River Mouth & Lake Michigan.
Year Opened: 2024
Size: 8,600 sq ft
Annual Revenue: $20 million+ est
Dining Cost: $$$$. Surcharge 3.5% (Removeable)
Frequent Diner Rewards Program: Yes.
**Neighborhood Crime Profile**: Lakeshore East/New East Side/ Loop

A few steps from Navy Pier and a short walk for Millennium Park, Lakeshore East is a sub-district of the New East Side and part of the Loop Community Area. While the Loop Community Area is the smallest of the Community Areas in our target market, it is truly distinguished by the huge amount of non-resident traffic. The **Near East Side** is a small area, densely populated (12,000), average individual income ($112,000), median age (41) and an age distribution of 50% 25-44. As a master planned sub-neighborhood of the Loop's Near East Side, Lakeshore East is a residential enclave shielded from heavy arterial trough-traffic. The quiet, isolated area is home to dense, luxury high rise living with controlled building access, sophisticated cameras and private security. Unlike the Loop, it is not security burdened by commercial activity, retail outlets, transit hubs, foot traffic, shoppers and commuters. Being outside the Loop's heavy non-resident traffic is a very positive dynamic because the Loop's infrastructure acts as a magnet for both economic & criminal activity. The dense concentration provides a high volume of anonymous targets for opportunistic crime while the commuter transit options make it easy for non-residents to enter, commit crime and quickly escape. As a result, the somewhat remote **Lakeshore East is one of the safest neighborhoods in the entire loop area.** Crime leans toward **non-violent, low level, property crimes of opportunity, including bicycles, lobby packages, occasional car break-ins and auto theft from parking structures.**

Click HERE for more on neighborhood crime by zip code, block & address.

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Crowned one of the world's most beautiful restaurants, the Tuscan inspired Tre Dita steakhouse is located on the 2nd floor of the ultra-luxury St. Regis Hotel. Designed by award winning architect Jeanne Gang, the hotel occupies the first 11 floors of the striking 101 story skyscraper currently known as the St Regis Chicago (formerly the Vista Tower). The upper levels house private luxury condominiums. While less conveniently located on East Wacker Drive, the 5-star hotel is situated in Lakeshore East where the river meets Lake Michigan.

Opened in **2024** and designed by the David Collins Studio**,** Lettuce's luxury anchor has **8,600 sq ft**, including the main dining room, a large bar area, an open kitchen pasta lab and five private dining rooms. The private dining rooms are named after horses that competed in Siena's biannual horse race.

Blending contemporary architectural elements with classic Italian glamour, the main dining room is quiet, elegant and more formal than the bar area. While the main dining room is renowned for forty-foot windows, exposed architectural columns and angled wooden beams, the adjacent bar is more lounge-like.

The main **Tre Dita Dining Room** floors are dark wood, the tablecloths are white, the curtains are sun bleached and structured leather booths are positioned around the open kitchen pasta lab and lake views. The natural light, chandeliers, wall sconces, accent lamps, wrought iron details and open space give the dining room a grand, dramatic, monumental, architectural type feeling. The expansive views are unobstructed and capture the Chicago River, Lake Michigan and the Chicago skyline. Enhanced with European detail, the combined dining room and bar create a sophisticated, but romantic atmosphere of theatrical intimacy.

Adjacent to the dining room, the **Tre Dita Bar** is lively, social and more intimate with its own vibe. The bar area is a glamorous fusion of detailed Italian elegance & modern luxury, including rich looking checkerboard marble floors, brass & bronze accents, walnut paneling, moody lighting, honey type colors and a massive hand painted mural hanging from the ceiling. The luxurious marble bar and leather stools are flanked by lounge and table seating. Relying on the mural rather than the forty-foot windows for ambiance, the views angle toward Navy Pier and the city. The full menu is available to the tables while the bar features a smaller menu

*In partnership with Lettuce, the award-winning* ***celebrity chef Evan Funke has created an upscale traditional Tuscan menu centered around hand crafted pastas and heavy woodfired steaks****. The all-Italian wine list of over 700 labels is also Tuscan focused. The menu is organized like a traditional Italian meal, including bakery, small plates, insalata, antipasti, pasta, the main (fish, meats & steaks) and sides.*

*Tre Dita means three fingers in Italian, the traditional thickness of their signature* ***Bistecca alla Fiorentina****. The large, 42-ounce Porterhouse is expertly charred, wood-fired and sliced for the table to share. Priced at $290, the dish is not cheap.*

*Anchoring the dining room with a temperate and humidity controlled open kitchen pasta lab, Tre Dita is equally famous for their twelve (12) handmade pastas, particularly the over-the-top delicious Linguine al Limone. The most popular and perhaps signature pastas are the Pici Cacio e Pepe, Strozzapreti all Vaccinarra (twisted pasta with heavy oxtail ragu) and our favorite, the Linguine al Limone. The Branzino, Gamberi in Salsa Verde (shrimp in vibrant green sauce) and Sciacciata Bianca (focaccia) are also popular. Click HERE for menus.*

While Tre Dita does not offer outdoor dining, the Lettuce owned Japanese -inspired Miru on the 11th floor offers seasonal outdoor terrace dining with stunning views of Lake Michigan, Navy Pier - including summer fireworks -and the Chicago River**.** Given the capacity and average check size, Tre Dita is no doubt grossing more than $15 million annually. For more on Miru, see DCFG's rooftop review.

The only Chicago restaurant as luxurious as Tre Dita was Spiaggia. Closed in 2021 after almost four decades, it was a partnership between Levy Restaurants and Chef Tony Mantuano, mentor for Joe Flamm and Monteverde's Sarah Gruenberg.

**NO happy hour.** Restaurant & bar close at 10:30 pm & 1:00 am on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.3) images.

**TRINO** (Cinco Suenos/Chef Stephen Sandoval, Oscar Sotelo & Henry Mizhquiri )

**-Latin Inspired Steakhouse**
-738 W. Randolph.
West Loop/Near West Side

Happy Hour, Tuesday-Sunday, 4:30-6:00 pm. Discounted food, cocktails ($9) and wine ($6). Live jazz Sunday, 5:30-8:30 pm. Closes ll:00 pm on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (4.7) images & HERE for **Happy Hour.**

Lower-level intimate speakeasy **Laberinto**. Thursday-Saturday, 6:00-1:30 am. No cover, 25 guest limit, tickets recommended. Restaurant host/server guides guests past main dining room, through kitchen & down candlelit stairwell to secret door. Global inspired cocktails with Mexican roots. Late night food Friday-Saturday, 11:00-12:30 am. Click HERE for Laberinto.

**UMMO** (SOMOS Hospitality Group/German Gonzales, Chef Jose Sosa & Chef Carlos Gaytan)

**-Upscale Contemporary Italian Restaurant & Lounge**
-22 W. Hubbard**.**
-River North/Near North Side

Happy hour, Monday-Saturday, 5:00-6:30 pm. Discounted food, wine ($8), cocktails ($10) & beer ($5). Closes 11:00 pm on weekends. Click HERE for Yelp (3.8) images & HERE for **Happy Hour.**

Live Jazz on Thursday, 6:00-10:00 pm, Atrium level. The 2nd floor Loft 22 features vinyl sessions, DJ's & live music. Friday, 10:00-2:00 am & Saturday, 10:00-3:00 am. Click HERE for Loft 22.

## SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

### WHO, WHAT & WHY

As the nation's most vibrant restaurant area, Chicago's downtown neighborhoods are experiencing a fine dining renaissance and becoming a global food destination**.** In addition to being the **only resource 100% focused on this epicenter of highly social and experience seeking dining, the DCFG has been doing it for fifty years.**

The Downtown Chicago Foodie Group's target market includes trendy, fun, upscale Mediterranean, Continental, Steakhouse type restaurants located in fast growing downtown neighborhoods. Our vibrant target market is known for successful professionals, high income and socially motivated diners seeking experience dining. The adjacent neighborhoods primarily include Chicago's downtown West Loop, River North, Gold Coast and spillover in nearby areas.

Frequenting these restaurants daily, **the DCFG's hands-on experience with this target market has no equal**. Experienced foodies who are highly successful, visible professionals, live & work downtown, benefit from high disposable income and frequently visit multiple locations in one day, have contributed to our analytic commentary and created the DCFG's proprietary restaurant lists, including primary and tiered secondary lists.

In sync with Chicago's fine dining renaissance and reinvention as a global food destination, we have targeted the right geographic areas, the right restaurant categories and the right restaurants, both primary and secondary. Having elevated our mission, **the DCFG can put meaningful information and analysis at your fingertips in an organized manner and cost-effective manner**, thus saving you time, money and freeing you up to make informed decisions and focus on managing your own business.

The DCFG competitive analysis is not only **time saving**, it is **cost effective**. Indeed, it **reduces cost** because the cost of visiting and dining at hundreds of restaurants would be far more expensive. Even then, they would not have our competitive analysis or our low cost per data point. The DCFG competitive analysis could also help owners **avoid fatal mistakes**. For hospitality groups with a sizable number of qualifying key personnel, **the cost per person is trivial.**

### WHAT YOUR DCFG SUBSCRIPTION INCLUDES

Creating the most accurate lists of your real competitors, the DCFG provides **rich restaurant specific analytic commentary** (60 restaurants on the Best of the Best list), **marketing observations & recommendations** not available elsewhere. The DCFG's **neighborhood and Community Area crime profiles** (raw & per-capita) are also unique within the industry.

The **restaurant ownership** and **proprietary restaurant lists** by category are uniquely insightful, particularly the **detailed commentary applicable to the lists.** Subscriptions also include organized **links to restaurant menus, happy hours, wine lists, photos, restaurant sponsored events** and **downtown upscale restaurant industry news & insights.**

**Socialization & Event Experiences Are The Path To Growth:**
At odds with industry surveys, DCFG's target market seems to be thriving, but it is intensely competitive. While not fully understood, social media, socializing and experience dining are driving today's restaurant growth. Chicago is a restaurant event heavy city, but it is difficult to stay current.

Rarely posting on their websites, restaurants rely heavily on Instagram, Reservation Platforms & Third-Party Aggregators to market their events. Reservation Platforms like Open Table, Resy & Tock have evolved into powerful marketing engines. Third Party Aggregators include Discovery Aggregators (Eventbrite) and Delivery Aggregators (DoorDash & Uber Eats). Local Media & City Guides are also used to reach audiences not actively looking at reservation sites. Unfortunately for diners, platform fragmentation, decentralization and short-notice pop-ups make it very difficult to stay current on Chicago's voluminous restaurant events.

Given that social media, socializing and experience dining are driving growth today, it is imperative for restaurants to **know what successful competitors are doing to fuel growth.** To measure effectiveness and share it with subscribers, the DCFG will attend many of the upscale, target market restaurant sponsored events, host them on the DCFG website, our new Instagram page @downtownchicagofoodie and highlight upcoming events. To ensure coverage, upscale restaurants in the DCFG's target market should forward details about their ongoing restaurant sponsored events to DCFG@DowntownChicagoFoodie.com.

Both August 2026 events, **Trino's** *Anniversary Patio Party (*8/6) and **Ummo's** sold-out *La Vita e Bella Anniversary Party* (8/29) were good examples of these events. While quite different, both were successful high value events. While dynamic, see below for some of the September events.

**Provare**: *5th Anniversary Casino Ball (9/6)*
**The Wit**: *White on the Wit (9/7)*
**Avec West Loop**: *Farmer's Market Dinner (9/13*)
**Summer House Santa Monica:** *Crab Dinner (9/16)*
**Adalina Italina:** *A Night In Capri (9/16)*
**Deliz:** *Frog's Leap Wine Dinner* **(**9/16)
**Miru:** *Bluefin Butcher & Chef's Dinner (9/16)*
**Acanto:** *The Most Important Italian Wine (9/16)*
**Cabra:** *Annual Rooftop Cookout (9/17)*
**The Alston***: Ode To The Midwest Harvest (9/18)*
**Eataly**: *Septemberfest (9/18)*
**Portofino Pizzeria**: *Pink on the River* (*9/18)*
**Assador Bastian:** *Champion Nagi Beef Dinner (9/22***)**
**Aba:** *September Cellar Tasting Series: Spain (9/22))*
**RPM Seafood:** *Billecart-Salmon Rose Champagne Event (9/23)*
**Mano a Mano:** *Classic Dinner: Puglia (9/24)*
**Avec River North**: *The Great Chef's Table (9/23)*
**Adalina Italian:** *SOMM Sessions (9/25)*
**Maxwells Trading:** *Chuseok Dining Event (9/27)*
**Carlyle Club:** *Private Creator Night (9/28)*
**ESME:** *One Night At Esme (9/29)*
**Petite Edith:** *An Ode To American Bistronomy (9/29)*

The **Illinois Restaurant Association** *Annual Chefs Table (4/23*) and the premier *Chicago Gourmet Culinary Festival (9/23-9/27*) are notable events, but they are **not** restaurant specific sponsored events. Some components of the multi-event Chicago Gourmet include the *Global Stage Dinner, Grand Cru* upscale wine tasting and the *Dine Around Series*, featuring eighty different restaurants. The **Green City Market** *Annual Chef BBQ (9/10)* is another event that brings many chefs, restaurants and others together, but it is **not** a restaurant specific sponsored event.

In short, your DCFG subscription includes:

- **Restaurant Neighborhood & Community Area Crime Analysis**
- **Monitoring & Measuring The Effectiveness Of Restaurant Events**

- **Target Market Restaurant Category Lists & Commentary**
- **Target Market Restaurant Analytic Commentary, Marketing Observations & Recommendations** (60 restaurants on the Best of the Best list)
- **Downtown Upscale Restaurant Industry News & Insights.**
- **Organized Target Market Restaurant Ownership History**
- **Organized Target Market Links To Menus, Happy Hours, Wine Lists, Happenings, Events, Private Clubs, Lounges & Images**

## PROPRIETARY RESTAURANT LISTS

The DCFG currently maintains the primary and secondary restaurant lists shown below. Many of restaurants on the secondary lists are excellent and candidates for the primary lists. All lists are dynamic, subject to ongoing change and included in the subscription price. Many of the lists include valuable, detailed commentary. The detailed list commentary is independent from the rich restaurant specific analytical commentary.

- ***Chicago's Best of the Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Restaurants*** *(63)*
- ***Chicago's Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Restaurants With A Vibrant Bar & Social Scene*** *(40)*
- ***Chicago's Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Restaurants With A Happy Hour*** *(35)*
- ***Chicago's Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Luxurious, Fine Dining Restaurants*** *(19)*
- ***Chicago's Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Primary Italian Restaurants*** *(29)*
- ***Chicago's Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Secondary Target Market Italian Restaurants*** *(30)*
- ***Chicago's Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Secondary "Outside" Target Market Italian*** *(28)*
- ***Chicago's Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Primary Steakhouse Restaurants*** *(19)*
- ***Chicago's Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Secondary Target Market Steakhouse Restaurants*** *(16)*
- ***Chicago's Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Primary French Restaurants*** *(29)*
- ***Chicago's Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Pizzerias*** *(7)*
- ***Chicago's Best Downtown Upscale Fixed Tasting Menu Restaurants*** *(17)*
- ***Chicago's Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Rooftops*** *(19)*

*While the DCFG maintains a list of the Prix Fixe restaurants with fixed tasting menus & price, the category is not currently included in our Best of the Best Downtown Trendy, Fun, Upscale Restaurants list. Given that the Prix Fixe (fixed menu/pricing) category includes some of Chicago's most highly rated restaurants like Alinea, Ever, Oriole & Smyth, a* ***new Best of the Best list including the Prix Fixe, Seasonal & Farm-to-Table restaurants will be available later in the year.***

## SUBSCRIBE & JOIN THE INNER CIRCLE

To join the inner circle, save time and money, *individual subscriptions* are available for $5,000 per year. *Group subscriptions* are available for $7,500 year. Individual and the currently unlimited group subscriptions are available to Hospitality Groups, Investors, Real Estate Developers, Restaurants and others in the restaurant trade.

For a limited time, **the group subscriptions will include an UNLIMITED number of owners, executives and other key personnel that have a corporate group email address**. Contact DCFG for exceptions to the corporate email requirement. While *Group Hospitality subscriptions* include all key personnel, they do *not* include the restaurant personnel they have a stake in. If you want and/or need a group subscription, suggest you process it now.

*Group restaurant subscriptions* include key personnel and multiple locations, but they do *not* include Hospitality Groups that own, manage or invest in them unless their restaurant ownership is limited to the restaurant subscriber.

The analysis is ongoing and distributed throughout the year by email as components are updated, added or deleted. While subscriptions may be cancelled at any time, annual refunds are not available after distribution starts.

Subscriptions can be processed online or by check**. Subscription checks should be payable and mailed to the Downtown Chicago Foodie LLC, PO Box 8, Western Springs, IL 60558**. To expedite the process, **those paying by check and Group Subscribers should include or email the name, title and corporate email address of those on their subscription list.** Corporations that need an EIN for a subscription by check should use 42-3818718.

Click HERE to subscribe and HERE to view a sample restaurant list. Contact the DCFG for more information at DCFG@DowntownChicagoFoodie.com

*While our analysis has been drawn from multiple sources believed to be accurate, the accuracy and completeness cannot be guaranteed. The information is also dynamic and may not be current. Subject to meaningful penalty,* ***the DCFG subscription analysis may not be copied or redistributed under any circumstances. The sample analysis and sample restaurant list may, however, be distributed and quoted at will without restriction, cost, penalty or permission, assuming the DCFG is noted as the source.***

***The DCFG analysis is trade exclusive and does not accept advertising.*** *It is not available to the public, restaurant critics, review services, Substack and individual newsletters.*

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*The DCFG is not part of the Chicago Foodie Meeting Group, the Chicago Foodies Facebook Group or the r/Chicago Reddit Community*

***"Buon Cibo. Buon Vino. Buon Amici"***

# APPENDIX

**Estimated Violent Crime & Per Capita Homicide**
**Chicago Police Department CLEARMAP**
**DCFG Target Market Community Areas**
Trailing Year As of 9/6/26

| Community | Robbery | Sexual Assault | Aggravated Battery | Aggravated Assault | Homicide | All Violent | Per Capita Homicide |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lakeview | 102 | 63 | 88 | 51 | 1 | 305 | 1.0 |
| Lincoln Park | 59 | 25 | 37 | 35 | 1 | 157 | 1.5 |
| **Near North Side** | **217** | **127** | **126** | **111** | **5** | **586** | **4.7** |
| **Loop** | **195** | **56** | **137** | **94** | **5** | **487** | **11.6** |
| **Near West Side** | **188** | **82** | **218** | **210** | **11** | **709** | **16.2** |
| Near South Side | 36 | 6 | 40 | 39 | 2 | 130 | 6.6 |
| Logan Square | 74 | 14 | 63 | 60 | 0 | 211 | 0 |
| West Town | 93 | 46 | 106 | 98 | 5 | 348 | 6.0 |
| Lower West Side | 83 | 37 | 75 | 59 | 4 | 238 | 11.9 |
| **Chicago** | **4,750** | **1,729** | **6,943** | **6,201** | **393** | **20,016** | **14.5** |

***Aggravated assault*** *does not require touching the victim.* ***Aggravated Battery*** *requires physical contact. Community Area violent crime by Violent Crime Summary Statistics at Chicago Police Department Clear Map. Alternative link for Shootings, Homicides & Violent Crime at Chicago Public Safety Data Hub. Reported crime data can and does vary by different official Chicago sources. Because the Data Hub includes thousands of "non-index" violent offenses like simple battery simple assault and domestic battery, their numbers are vastly inflated. The Violent Crime Summary Statistics are limited to official index violent crime , including homicide, criminal sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault & aggravated battery.*

*To track violent crime by Community Area & Zip code for multiple time periods, including the trailing week, month, YTD and annual periods, see the Violence Reduction Dashboard. Trailing year data is not available.*

**Estimated All Crime & Non-Violent Crime**
**Raw Volume & Per Capita Crime**
**DCFG Target Market Community Areas**
Trailing Year As of 9/6/26

| Community | All Crime | Violent | Larceny Theft | Population | Per Capita Crime All | Violent | Larceny/Theft |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lakeview | 5,886 | 305 | 2,592 | 103,000 | .0571 | .0296 | 2.5 |
| Lincoln Park | 3,798 | 157 | 1,753 | 68,000 | .0585 | .0231 | 2.6 |
| **Near North Side** | **10,709** | **586** | **4,700** | **107,000** | **.1000** | **.0548** | **4.4** |
| **Loop** | **8,219** | **487** | **3,300** | **43,000** | **.1911** | **.1133** | **7.7** |
| **Near West Side** | **10,433** | **709** | **3,459** | **68,000** | **.1534** | **.1043** | **5.1** |
| Near South Side | 2,247 | 130 | 2,247 | 30,500 | .0737 | .0426 | 7.4 |
| Logan Square | 4,538 | 211 | 1,876 | 71,000 | .0639 | .0297 | 2.6 |
| West Town | 7,141 | 348 | 2,749 | 83,000 | .0812 | .0419 | 3.3 |
| Lower West Side | 2,764 | 238 | 755 | 33,500 | .0710 | .0710 | 2.3 |
| **Chicago** | **234,331** | **20,016** | **58,394** | **2,700,000** | **.0868** | **.0741** | **2.2** |

*Population by Chicago Metropolitan Agency For Planning. Community Area violent crime by Violent Crime Summary Statistics at Chicago Police Department Clear Map. All crimes by the Office of the Inspector General.* ***Larceny/Theft is the biggest component of property crime****. It includes shoplifting, stealing bicycles, taking car parts from a vehicle, pickpocketing, purse snatching, stealing items from inside buildings & motor vehicles. It does not include burglary, motor vehicle theft or the force/threat of violence.*

*See the CCJ for all Chicago mid-year violent crime updates & multi-year comparative graphs dating back to 2018.*