

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

9/9/26

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.**

While not fully recognized, **Chicago's downtown area has become the epicenter of an unmatched dining and social scene.** Part of the Near North Community Area, **River North, West Loop & the Gold Coast neighborhoods 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 and socialization 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 restaurant events will be hosted on the DCFG gateway website. DCFG foodies will also attend the restaurant sponsored events, feature them on our upcoming Instagram page & highlight the upcoming restaurant sponsored events.

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-five 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 patrons 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, dining trends and chef coverage. On the other hand, they generally ignore neighborhood crime, vibrancy, ambiance, socializing opportunities, social media centric sharing, happy hour, 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 **socialization 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.** Given the variance by official source, we will use multiple sources to track the Community Area crime.

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 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 may not be 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 alliances and reduced faith in US reliability could make a coordinated global response to the next crisis challenging. While the stock market can't be predicted, volatility is rising, momentum is slowing, leadership is shifting, capital is rotating, the oil market is disrupted and interest rates are rising. Pushing 30-year [Treasury yields](#) to 2007 levels, the \$40 trillion in [national debt](#) and the huge 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** 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 multi-year, annual, trailing year and YTD crime patterns can look quite different. **The raw volume of all crimes in the Loop, Near West Side and Near North Side Community Areas is, however, among the highest.** As you can see from the trailing year table below, it may align with typical urban commercial density profiles, but **the all-crimes category on a per capita basis is well above the Chicago average.**

The raw and per-capita Loop and Near West Side violent crime and homicides 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. As you might guess, the Loop's crime rate is heavily impacted by the high volume of non-resident traffic. 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.**

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

Community	Crime Categories			Population	Per Capita Crime		
	All Crime	Violent	Homicides		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](#).

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.**

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%.

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.

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 learn 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 patrons 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 socialization and help patrons 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.**

While distributors do not have an economic incentive to help restaurants find affordable, high-quality wines, particularly the less well-known wines, some may be helpful.

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, restaurant tastings should **focus on less-known, affordable, high-quality wines from recent vintages.** To encourage socialization, **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, number & selection of wines featured, the station locations & staff, the roaming wine director's introduction, acoustics and other details would have to be worked out in advance. The introduction would obviously encourage patrons to interact, share opinions, ask questions and post on social media.

We would avoid expensive wines, old vintages, excessive wine lists, BORING SIT-DOWN TASTING DINERS THAT PRECLUDE SOCIALIZATION, 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.

Assuming it was promoted properly, **the ongoing wine explorative initiative would be popular, profitable, fun, vibrant, encourage socialization, future attendance and provide a powerful opportunity for those eager to learn, socialize and fuel organic social media marketing.**

The energetic program would also provide a unique and patron appreciated **branding opportunity for restaurants.** To ice the cake, we would start a **wine club, blog** and introduce **VERTICAL FLIGHTS OF POURABLE WINES FOR SHARING.**

After years of experience the gateway **wine director would be sharing and gifting wine selections personally created for the restaurant's patrons, just like a celebrity chef.** 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 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 that is 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 programming 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](#) and [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.

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.

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.

After fifty years of consumption, we have concluded that some of the best and most affordable white wines coming from Italy today include Aetna Bianco, Arneis, Gavi, Pecorino, Vermentino, the criminally underrated Verdicchio and some of the varietals from Campania. The Bucci Verdicchio and the mid-priced Sicilian Chardonnays from Planeta and Passopisciaro are world class white wines while their red Nerello Mascalese is another homerun Pinot Noir type gem. At this time, very few Americans are aware of these wines.

While Planeta focuses on wines across Sicily, Franchetti's visionary efforts (Passopisciaro) were limited to Mt Etna. By pioneering the mapping of individual lava flows, he proved how the different mineral flows changed the grape's flavor profile. Creating some of Tuscany's most expensive Super Tuscan cult wines, Franchetti's efforts were not limited to Sicily. Click [HERE](#) for wines by the glass and [HERE](#) for bottles.

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. The Greco di Tufo and Falanghina from Matilde and San Gregorio are a good place to start.

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 WINES 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.

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.

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 **Happenings** & [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.

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 multi-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 Umno 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.

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.

Quality, 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, Chevallion, 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 socialization 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 Dining

-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

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 the 150 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 Athinagoras 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. The whole Branzino Fish 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 (restaurant price), 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. 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 through-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.

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 11:00 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**.

The DCFG's target market is thriving, but it is intensely competitive. While not fully understood, social media and socialization are driving today's restaurant growth. Chicago is a restaurant event heavy city, but it is difficult to stay current because the aggregators and AI both miss the majority of the specific restaurant sponsored events. It is, however, **imperative for Restaurants to know what successful competitors are doing to fuel growth**.

Included in the subscription, **the DCFG is the only resource that tracks ALL the upscale individual restaurant sponsored events in our target market**. To measure effectiveness and share it with subscribers, the events will be hosted on the DCFG gateway website. The **DCFG's foodies will also attend the restaurant sponsored events, feature them on our upcoming Instagram page and highlight all the 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. 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)

Adalina Italian: *A Night in Capri* (9/16)

Deliz: *Frog's Leap Wine Dinner* (9/16)

Miru: *Bluefin Butcher & Chef's Dinner* (9/16)

Cabra: *Annual Rooftop Cookout* (9/17)

Acanto: *The Most Important Italian Wine* (9/16)

Eataly: *Septemberfest* (9/18)

Portofino Pizzeria: *Pink on the River* (9/18)

Aba: *Spanish Cellar Wine Tasting Series* (9/23)

Avec River North: *The Great Chefs Table* (9/23)

Adalina Italian: *SOMM Sessions* (9/25)

Trino: *Live Spanish Guitars* (9/27)

ESME: *One Night At Esme* (9/28)

Carlyle Club: *Private Creator Night* (9/28)

Petite Edith: *American Bistronomy Collaborative Dinner* (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 similar event that brings many chefs, restaurants and others together, but it is **not** a restaurant specific sponsored event.

In short, your DCFG subscription includes:

- **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.***

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“Buon Cibo. Buon Vino. Buon Amici”

“Buon Cibo. Buon Vino. Buon Amici”

“Buon Cibo. Buon Vino. Buon Amici”

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APPENDIX

Estimated Violent Crime 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	All	Violent	Per Capita Crime 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.

CHICAGOLAND RESOURCES FOR VISITORS, DINERS & RESTAURANTS

Chicagoland Restaurant/Hospitality Groups:

[16" on Center](#), [Acurio International](#), [Bravo Restaurants](#),
[B. Hospitality Co.](#), [Ballyhoo Hospitality](#), [Boka Restaurant Group](#), [Bonhomme](#), [Cornerstone Restaurant Group](#), [Day Off Group](#), [DineAmic](#), [Doughboy Restaurant Group](#),
[Eat Well Hospitality](#), [Forte Hospitality Group](#), [Gage Hospitality](#), [Gibsons Restaurant Group](#), [Hey Che Hospitality](#),
[Hogsalt Restaurant Group](#), [Hospitality Included](#), [Landry's](#),
[Lettuce Entertain You Restaurants](#),
[Lettuce Entertain Your Partners](#),
[Maple Hospitality Group](#),
[One Off Hospitality](#),
[Phil Stephani Restaurants](#),
[Rosebud Group](#),
[RPM Restaurants](#),
[Scott Harris Hospitality Group](#),
[Somos Hospitality Group](#), [The Alinea Group](#), [The Good Plate Hospitality Group](#),
[The Fifty/50 Group](#), [The Group](#), [Two By Five Hospitality](#), [Underscore Hospitality](#) .

Fulton Market Vs West Loop:

[Adrien Bellagio](#), [Downtown Apartment Complex](#), [Fulton Grace Realty](#), [West Loop Vibe](#).

Chicago Restaurant & Review Services:

[Block Club Chicago](#), [Chicago Magazine](#), [Chicago Food Magazine](#), [Chicago Reader](#), [Chicago Tribune](#), [Crain's Chicago](#), [Culinary Historians](#),
[Eater](#), [Food & Wine](#),
[Infatuation](#), [Michelin Guide](#), [Modern Luxury](#), [Modern Luxury Chicago](#), [OpenTable](#), [RESY](#), [Timeout](#), [Thrillist](#),
[Tripadvisor](#),
[Understanding Hospitality](#), [West Suburban Living](#), [Yelp](#).

Culinary Award Services:

[Jean Banchet](#), [James Beard](#), [Michelin](#), [North America's 50 Best Restaurants](#)

City of Chicago Visitor Resources:

[Chicago Metropolitan Agency For Planning](#),
[Chicago Loop Alliance](#), [City of Chicago](#), [Chicago Events & Festivals](#), [Choose Chicago](#),
[Choose Chicago's Visitor Guide](#), [National Geographic](#)

Restaurant Trade Resources:

[Chaine Chicago](#), [Chicago Hospitality Alliance](#), [Chicago Gourmet](#), [Chicagoland Food & Beverage Network](#),
[Food & Beverage Magazine](#),
[Illinois Restaurant Association](#),
[SEO Design](#),
[National Restaurant Association](#), [Restaurant Business](#), [TouchBistro](#)

Wine Resources For Restaurant Industry:

[Drink Distro](#), [GustoWebzine](#), [Restaurant Wine Magazine](#), [SommelierX](#),
[The Restaurant HQ](#), [Top Food App](#), [Uncorkd](#)

**CHICAGO'S BEST OF THE
BEST DOWNTOWN TRENDY, FUN, UPSCALE RESTAURANTS, PRIMARILY
CONTINENTAL, MEDITERRANEAN & STEAKHOUSE**

7/30/26

(*Vibrant Bar & Social Scene)

- **3 Arts Club Café** (Skylit Inner Garden Courtyard) (John Asbaty, Alain Uy & Brendan Sodikoff)
- **Aba*** (Rooftop)
- **Adalina Italian***
- **Adalina Prime***
- **Alla Vita***
- **Arla***
- **Avec River North** (Seasonal Rooftop) (One Off Hospitality/Paul Kahan & Donnie Madia)
- **Bar Mar***
- **Bar Tutto***
- **Bavette's***
- **Bellevue***
- **Boka** (Boka/Kevin Boehm, Rob Katz & Levy)
- **Brasero** (Hey Che Hospitality/Chef John Manion)
- **Cabra*** (Rooftop)
- **Carlyle Club?** (Riverfront) (To be determined)
- **Carmine's***
- **Ciccio Mio** (Hogsalt/Brendan Sodikoff)
- **Creepies** (To be determined) (David & Anna Posey/West Loop)
- **Deliz***
- **Dimmi Dimmi Corner Italian** (To be determined) (Cornerstone Restaurant Group & Matt Eckfeld)
- **Divan Steakhouse & Supper Club** (Closed)
- **Esquire?** (To be determined)
- **Etta** (Closed) (Replaced by Deliz Steakhouse)
- **Fioretta***
- **Gibson's Bar & Steakhouse***
- **Gibson's Italia*** (Riverfront & Private Rooftop)
- **Gilt Bar*** (Hogsalt/Brendan Sodikoff)
- **Gingie** (Temporarily closed) (Chef Brian Lockwood & Boka)
- **Hugo's Frog & Fish***
- **iL Carciofo***
- **IL Porcellino** (Lettuce/(RJ Mellman, Jerrod Mellman, Molly Mellman & Chef Doug Psaltis)
- **Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak & Stone Crab***
- **La Grande Boucherie***
- **La Serre***
- **Le Colonial***
- **Le Select** (Closed) (Boka)
- **Luxbar*** (Upscale comfort food & small steaks)
- **Lyra***
- **Maple & Ash***

- **Mastro's** (Landry's/Tilman Fertitta)
- **Maxwell's Trading** (To be determined) (Underscore Hospitality/Josh Tilden & Erling Wu-Bower)
- **Monteverde** (Chef Sarah Grueneberg & Meg Sahs)
- **Naia*** (River Front)
- **Nico Osteria (Closed)** (Replaced by the new Tavern On Rush)
- **Nora's** (Phil Siddu)
- **Obelix** (Oliver & Nicolas Poilevey)
- **Olio e Piu***
- **Petit Pomeroy** (Ballyhoo)
- **Petite Edith*** (Two By Five Hospitality/Chef Jenner Tomaska & Katrina Bravo)
- **Rose Mary** (Joe Flamm & Day Off Group/Frank Callero, Kara Callero & Steve Zaleski)
- **RPM Italian***
- **RPM Steak** (Lettuce/RJ Mellman, Jerrod Mellman, Giuliana Rancic & Bill Rancic)
- **RPM Seafood*** (Riverfront)
- **Siena Tavern***
- **Tanta** (Acurio International/ Jesus Delgado & TPE Chicago LLC/Brian Denicolo & Vincent Beckman)
- **Old Tavern On Rush (Closed)** (Replaced by Bellevue)
- **Tavern On Rush***
- **Tre Dita*** (Riverfront & Lakefront)
- **The Alston***
- **The Ives** (To be determined) (Boka)
- **Trino***
- **Trivoli Tavern***
- **Umno*** .

(? The) [Carlyle Club](#) & [Esquire](#) shown above are not yet open. Also shown above, [Creepies](#) & [Dimmi Dimmi Corner Italian](#), [Maxwell's Trading](#) & [The Ives](#) are to be determined.

The master list currently excludes restaurants with a fixed menu, pizzerias, most of the rooftops and all those on the secondary lists. While the analytic commentary does not apply to these categories, other detailed information is included.

Given that the Prix Fixe (fixed menu/pricing) category includes some of Chicago's highly rated restaurants like [Alinea](#), [Oriole](#), [Smyth](#) and others, a new best of the best category covering the Prix Fixe, Seasonal & Farm-to-Table restaurants will be available later in the year, including the rich analytic commentary.

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

7/30/26

(*Vibrant Bar & Social Scene)

- **Aba*** X (Rooftop)
- **Adalina Italian***
- **Adalina Prime***
- **Alla Vita*** X
- **Arla*** X
- **Bar Mar*** X
- **Bar Tutto*** X
- **Bavette's*** X
- **Bellevue*** X
- **Cabra*** (Rooftop)
- **Carlyle Club?** (Riverfront) (To be determined)
- **Carmine's*** X
- **Deliz*** X
- **Esquire?** (To be determined)
- **Fioretta***
- **Gibson's Bar & Steakhouse*** X
- **Gibson's Italia*** X (Riverfront & Private Rooftop)
- **Gilt Bar***
- **Hugo's Frog & Fish***
- **iL Carciofo***
- **Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak & Stone Crab***
- **La Grande Boucherie***
- **La Serre***
- **Le Colonial***
- **Luxbar*** X (Upscale comfort food & small steaks)
- **Lyra***
- **Maple & Ash***
- **Naia*** (Riverfront)
- **Olio e Piu***
- **Petite Edith*** (New restaurant bar scene starting to become vibrant)
- **Portofino Pizza*** X (Riverfront)
- **RPM Italian***
- **RPM Seafood*** (Riverfront)
- **Siena Tavern***
- **Tavern On Rush***
- **Tre Dita*** X (Riverfront & Lakefront)
- **The Alston***
- **Trino***
- **Trivioli Tavern***
- **Ummo***

(X) **No happy hour.** Fourteen of the upscale restaurants above with a vibrant bar & social scene do not currently feature a happy hour. (?) [Carlyle Club](#) & [Esquire](#) not yet open. While the DCGF foodies love the vibrant French **Petit Pomeroy** restaurant & bar, the bar is too small to be considered here.

CHICAGO'S BEST DOWNTOWN TRENDY, FUN, UPSCALE RESTAURANTS WITH **HAPPY HOUR**

7/30/26

(*Vibrant Bar & Social Scene)

- **Adalina Italian***
- **Adalina Prime***
- **Avec River North** (Seasonal Rooftop) (One Off Hospitality)
- **Brasero** (John Manion. Also owns El Che Steakhouse)
- **Cabra*** (Rooftop)
- **Carlyle Club*?** (To be determined) (Riverfront)
- **Esquire?** (To be determined)
- **Fioretta***
- **Gilt Bar***
- **Hugo's Frog & Fish***
- **iL Carciofo***
- **iL Porcellino** (Lettuce)
- **Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak & Stone Crab***
- **La Grande Boucherie***
- **La Serre*** (No official happy hour, but bar menu offers discounted drinks & small bites)
- **Le Colonial***
- **Lyra***
- **Maple & Ash***
- **Mastro's** (Landry's Inc/Tilman Fertitta)
- **Monteverde**
- **Nora's** (Sarah Grueneberg)
- **Naia*** (River Front)
- **Olio e Piu***
- **Petite Edith*** (New restaurant bar starting to become more vibrant)
- **Petit Pomeroy**
- **RPM Italian***
- **RPM Seafood*** (Riverfront)
- **RPM Steak**
- **Siena Tavern***
- **Tanta**
- **Tavern On Rush***
- **The Alston***
- **Trino***
- **Trivoli Tavern***
- **Ummo***

(?) [Carlyle Club](#) & [Esquire](#) not yet open.

CHICAGO'S BEST DOWNTOWN TRENDY, FUN, RESTAURANTS WITH *LUXURIOUS, FINE DINING*

7/30/26

(*Vibrant Bar & Social Scene)

- **Adalina Italian***
- **Adalina Prime***
- **Arla* X**
- **Bavette's* X**
- **Boka X** (To be determined) (Boka/Kevin Boehm, Rob Katz & Levy)
- **Carlyle Club?** (Riverfront) (To be determined)
- **Esquire?** (To be determined)
- **Fioretta***
- **Gibson's Italia* X** (Riverfront & Private Rooftop)
- **La Grande Boucherie***
- **La Serre***
- **Les Nomades** (Closed)
- **Le Colonial***
- **Maple & Ash***
- **Naia*** (Riverfront)
- **Petite Edith*** (New restaurant bar scene starting to become vibrant)
- **RPM Seafood*** (Riverfront)
- **Tre Dita* X** (Riverfront & Lakefront)
- **The Alston***

(X) *No happy hour.*

[Boka](#) to be determined.

(?) [Carlyle Club](#) & [Esquire](#) not yet open.

The master list currently **excludes expensive restaurants with a fixed menu**, pizzerias, most of the rooftops and all those on the secondary lists. While the analytic commentary does not apply to these categories, other detailed information is included.

Not shown above, **restaurants with Prix Fixe (fixed menu/pricing) menus include some of Chicago's top high-end fine dining restaurants like Alinea, Oriole & Smyth**. As a result, a new **Best of the Best** category covering the **Prix Fixe, Seasonal & Farm-to-Table** restaurants will be available later in the year, including analytic commentary. See the DCFG list of restaurants with fixed tasting menus for more on fine dining.

With the exception of the legendary **Les Nomades** above, the DCFG does not currently include restaurants with fixed menus on the master lists. The recently closed **Les Nomades** was an exclusive, intimate, elegant, quiet, formal, acclaimed restaurant known for serving award winning classical French cuisine via Prix fixe tasting menus.

Located in a town home setting on East Ontario, the restaurant offered an expensive but fixed multi-course menu. Opened in 1978 as a private club by the legendary Jovan Trbojevic, Mary Beth Liccioni assumed ownership of the restaurant upon his retirement. The new owner made it available to the public in 1996. Roland Liccioni, formerly with Carlos & Le Francais, was the last head chef and former husband of Mary Beth Liccioni. The building housing

the restaurant sold in 2025 and triggered the end of the restaurant's five-decade presence. Click [HERE](#) for classic French dishes.

CHICAGO'S BEST DOWNTOWN TRENDY, FUN, UPSCALE PIZZERIAS

7/30/26

- **Coda Di Volpe** (Bill Lawless/Gage Hospitality & Ryan O'Donnell Ballyhoo)
Southport Corridor/Lakeview
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.4) images
- **Forno Rosso** (Nick Nitti)
West Loop/Near West Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.2) images
- **Gallucci Pizzeria & Food*** (Closed)
Old Town/Near North Side/Lincoln Park
- **Portofino Pizza *** (Lettuce/RJ Mellman, J Mellman, Giuliana & Bill Rancie)
River North/Near North Side
Riverfront
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.0) images
- **Roberts Pizza & Dough Company** (Robert Garvey & Dana Hokin)
Streeterville/Near North Side
Riverfront & Lakefront
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.4) images
- **Spacca Napoli Pizzeria** (Jonathan Goldsmith & Ginny Skykes)
Ravenswood/Lincoln Square (Way out of target market)
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.2) images
- **Zarella Pizzeria & Tavern** (Boka Restaurant Group)
River North/Near North Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.5) images

Given the full menu of wraparound food, **Portofino Pizza** is also on the primary Italian restaurant list. While the vibrant bar & seasonal social scene is among the best, some feel the wraparound food at Portofino may not be up to Lettuce standards.

While not in our downtown target market the city vibing **Ella's Italian Pub** in Western Springs & **Piccolo Buco** in Oak Brook are among the best of the Pizzerias in all Chicagoland. More than a Pizzeria, both serve distinguishing wraparound Italian food. **Piccolo's** bar is also a well-integrated city vibing beauty. Owned and operated by Chris & Mary Spagnola, the time capsule **Milkstop Café** in the downtown LaGrange area, a stone's throw from downtown Western Springs, may have the most underrated kitchen in Chicagoland.

Operating under Cooper's Hawk corporate umbrella, **Piccolo Buco** is a collaborative partnership with chef Luca Issa, owner & chef of the original **Piccolo Buco** in Rome. While we are not fans of the Cooper's Hawk wines, **Piccolo Buco** offers a well selected, but limited, menu of imported wraparound Italian wines. It should, however, be noted that **the flights of wine strategy offered by both concepts has been wildly successful**, including the vertical presentation.

While highly recommended by the DCFG, **other Italian restaurants throughout Chicagoland have failed to recognize the marketing & socialization potential of integrating pourable vertical flights of wine for sharing into their beverage program**, particularly the less known, affordable, high-quality wines well chosen for their own restaurant selected wine tastings.

CHICAGO'S BEST DOWNTOWN TRENDY, FUN, UPSCALE PRIMARY **ITALIAN** RESTAURANTS

8/12/26

(*Vibrant Bar & Social Scene. See Second Tier Lists For 50+ More)

- **Adalina Italian*** (Hospitality Included/Matt Deich, Phil Siudak, Miles Muslin & Gillespie)
Gold Coast/Near North Side
- **Alla Vita*** (Boka/Kevin Boehm, Rob Katz & Levy)
West Loop/Near West Side
- **Avec** (Seasonal Rooftop) (One Off Hospitality/Donnie Madia, Paul Kahan & Eduard Seitan)
River North/Near North Side
- **Bar Siena*** (DineAmic)
West Loop/Near West Side
- **Bar Tutto*** (Joe Flamm & Day Off Group/Frank Callero, Kara Callero & Steve Zaleski)
Fulton Market/West Loop/Near West Side
- **Carmine's*** (Rosebud/Alex Dana)
Gold Coast/Near North Side
- **Ciccio Mio** (Hogsalt)
River North/Near North Side
- **Deliz*** (Steve Gogolab & Chef Jake Peterson)
Wicker Park/West Town
- **Dimmi Dimmi Corner Italian** (To be determined) (Cornerstone Restaurant Group & Matt Eckfeld)
Lincoln Park
- **Elina's** (Ian Rusnak & Eric Saffin)
River West/West Town
- **Etta(Closed)** (Replaced by Deliz Steakhouse)
Wicker Park/West Town
- **Ema's** (Mediterranean) (Lettuce/R. Mellman, R.J. Melman, Molly Melman & Chef CJ Jacobson)
River North/Near North Side
- **Fioretta*** (DineAmic)
Fulton Market/West Loop
- **Gibson's Italia*** (Private Rooftop) (GRG/Steve Lombardo & Hugo Ralli)
Fulton River District/West Loop/Riverfront
- **il Carciofo*** (Joe Flamm & Day Off Group)
West Loop/Near West Side
- **IL Porcellino** (Lettuce/R. Mellman, R.J. Melman & Molly Melman)
River North/Near North Side
- **Monteverde** (Sarah Grueneberg)
West Loop
- **Nico Osteria* (Closed)** (Replaced by the new Tavern On Rush)
Gold Coast/Near North Side
- **Nora's** (Benny & Phil Siddu)
Streeterville/Near North Side
- **Olio e Piu*** (The Group NYC & Emil Stefkov)
River North/Near North Side
- **Piccolo Sogno** (Tony Priolo & Ciro Longobardo)
River West/West Town
- **Portofino Pizza*** (Lettuce/RJ Mellman, Jerrod Mellman, Giuliana Rancic & Bill Rancic)

River North/Near North Side/Riverfront

- **Riccardo Trattoria** (Owned & operated by Riccardo & Veronica Michi since 2006)
Lincoln Park
- **Rose Mary** (Joe Flamm & Day Off Group)
West Loop/Near West Side
- **RPM Italian*** (Lettuce/RJ Mellman, Jerrod Mellman, Giuliana Rancic & Bill Rancic)
River North/Near North Side
- **Siena Tavern*** (DineAmic)
River North/Near North Side
- **Tre Dita*** (Lettuce/R. Mellman, R.J. Melman & Molly Melman)
Lakeshore East/Riverfront & Lakefront
- **Trivoli Tavern*** (Hogsalt Hospitality)
Fulton Market/West Loop
- **Umno*** (SOMOS Hospitality Group/German Gonzales, Chef Jose Sosa & Chef Carlos Gaytan)
River North/Near North Side

Deliz and Fioretta are Italian inspired steakhouses. As a result, they appear on the Primary Italian list & the Primary Steakhouse list.

*Given the full menu of wraparound food, **Portofino Pizza** is listed on the Primary Italian restaurant list above & the Pizzeria list. While the vibrant bar & seasonal social scene is among the best, some feel the wraparound food at Portofino may not be up to Lettuce standards. In other words, it may be better placed on the secondary list.*

[Dimmi Dimmi Corner Italian](#) is to be determined.

*While not in our target market and not shown above, the pasta-focused **Daisies** in Logan Square is highly rated.*

***Riccardo Trattoria, Riccardo Enoteca & Riccardo Osteria** are all family owned and operated by the same team. Dating back to 2006, Riccardo Trattoria was the first to open. Enoteca followed in 2007 and Osteria in 2019. Riccardo Trattoria & Enoteca are located in Lincoln Park while Osteria is on the quiet side of the West Loop.*

***Alinea, Adalina (Prime & Italian), Alla Vita & Elina's** are a tongue twister and often confused. **Alinea** is a very expensive, exclusive, acclaimed, non-vibrant, Lincoln Park restaurant with a chef-driven multi-course fixed menu. **Elina's** is a small, cozy, cute, non-vibrant Italian restaurant with excellent food in West Town.*

***Adalina Italian** is located on the second floor of a Gold Coast building. **Alla Vita** in the West Loop is owned by the Boka Group. Both restaurants are popular, busy and near the top of the Italian restaurant food chain. While their audiences are somewhat different, they are both vibrant restaurants with outdoor summer dining, noteworthy service and good food served seven days a week. Both restaurants are ambiance strong and make customers feel special, but their individual appeal is quite different.*

*A good choice for special occasions, **Adalina Italian** is a beautiful, elegant, stylish, upscale, formal and romantic restaurant, but it is not stuffy. It is also expensive, expensive, busy & loud. With live music a DJ and club-like atmosphere, it appeals to a younger crowd that likes to go out. Less formal than Adalina Italian, **Alla Vita** somewhat contemporary, rustic, warm and welcoming. Like Adalina, it is busy, but less expensive. Appealing to all ages, the vibe is good, the customers are attractive and seem happy.*

**CHICAGO'S BEST DOWNTOWN TRENDY, FUN, UPSCALE
SECONDARY TARGET MARKET ITALIAN RESTAURANTS**

7/30/26

- Acanto** (Gage Hospitality/Billy Lawless)
Loop
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.3) images
- Alpana** (Alpana Singh)
Gold Coast/Near North Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.30) images
- Bella Note** (Closed) (Ramon Aguirre Family)
Noble Square/River West/West Town
- Club Lago** (Gian Carlo & Guido Nardini)
River North/Near North Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.0) images
- Coco Pazzo** (Jack, Tamra & Sam Weiss)
River North/Near North Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.0) images
- Eataly** (Invest Industrial & Oscar Farinetti Family)
River North/Near North Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.9) images
- Eduardo's Enoteca** (Bravo Restaurants/Himmel Family)
Gold Coast/Near North Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.4) Images
- Formento's** (B Hospitality Co/John Ross, Phillip Walters)
West Loop/Near West Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.0) images
- Francesca's On Chestnut** (Scott Harris Hospitality/Scott Harris)
Gold Coast/Near North Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.0) images
- Gioia Ristorante E Pastificio** (Learco Restaurant Group/Frederico Comacchio)
West Loop/Near West Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.7) images
- Gussie's** (David Thate)
Old Town/Near North/Lincoln Park
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.3) images
- Italian Village** (Four generations of Capitanini Family owned & operated since 1927)
Loop
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.7) images
- Labriola Chicago** (Doughboy Restaurant Group/Rich Labriola)
Near North/Mag Mile
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.9) images
- La Scarola** (Owned & operated by Tequila shooting Armando Vasquez & Joey Mondelli since 1998)
River West/West Town
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.2) images
- La Storia** (Top Nosh Hospitality)
Gold Coast/Near North Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.5) images
- Lucia's** (Lucia & Domenico Mancini)

Wicker Park/West Town
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.2) images

Nonnina (The Good Plate Hospitality Group & Friedman Properties)

River North/Near North Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.1) images

Macello (Joe Demonte & Giovanni DeNigris)

West Loop/Near West Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.2) images

Mart Anthony (John Campo & Sons)

River West/Borders West Town & Near West Side (1.3 miles)
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.1) images

Oggi Trattoria (Padilla Family)

Noble Square/West Town (1.8 miles)
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.2) images

Orso's (Frank Milito)

Old Town/Near North/Lincoln Park
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.7) images

Osteria Via Stato (Lettuce & Chef David DiGregorio)

River North/Near North Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.1) images

Prosecco (Mark Sparacino)

River North/Near North Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.1) images

Provare (Chef Jourdan Higgs & Michael Williams)

Noble Square/East Village/West Town (1.8 miles)
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.3) images

Quartino (GRG)

River North/Near North Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.2) images

Riccardo Osteria (Closed)

Fulton Market/West Loop

Topo Gigio (Tom Reda & Frank Reda Jr)

Old Town/Near North Side/Lincoln Park
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.1) images

Torchio Pasta Bar (Bill & Janice Varley)

River North/Near North Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.5) images

Viaggio (Tom & Lori Slavin)

West Loop/Near West Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.4) images

Volare (Owned & operated by Benny Siddu since 1997)

Streeterville/Near North Side
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.3) images

*Restaurants less than 2.0 miles from River North are included in the secondary Italian target market list above, including **Mart Anthony** (1.2), **Oggi Trattoria** (1.8) and **Provare** (1.8).*

*While included in the outside Italian target market list not shown above, **Riccardo Enoteca** (2.1), **DeNucci's** (2.2), **Tortello** (2.3), **Nettare** (2.4) and **A Tavolla** (2.6) are reasonably close to the target market. As a result, some might consider them in the target market.*

This distinction important because most of the best Italian Restaurants in Chicagoland are in the DCFG's target market, primarily River North, the West Loop and adjacent areas.

**CHICAGO'S BEST DOWNTOWN TRENDY, FUN, UPSCALE
PRIMARY *STEAKHOUSES***

7/30/26

(*Vibrant Bar & Social Scene. See Second Tier List For Seventeen More)

- **Asador Bastian** (Doug Psaltis, Hsing Chen (Eatwell Hospitality) & Mason Plumlee)
River North/Near North Side
- **Adalina Prime*** (Phil Siudak & Chef Soo Ahn)
Fulton Market/West Loop
- **Arla*** (Hospitality Included)
Gold Coast/Near North Side
- **Bavette's*** (Hogsalt Hospitality)
River North/Near North Side
- **Deliz Italian Steakhouse*** (Steve Gogolab & Jakob Peterson)
Wicker Park/Wet Town
- **Divan Steakhouse & Supper Club (Closed)**
River North/Near North Side
- **El Che** (Hey Che Hospitality/ John Manion & Alexander Cuper)
West Loop/Near West Side
- **Esquire?** (To be determined) (M Street Collective & Chris Hyndman)
Gold Coast/Near North Side
- **Fioretta*** (DineAmic)
Fulton Market/West Loop
- **Gibson's Bar & Steakhouse*** (GRG)
Gold Coast/Near North Side
- **Gibson's Italia*** (GRG)
Fulton River District/West Loop/Near West Side
Riverfront
- **GT Prime (Closed)** (Boka replaced it with Gingie))
River North/Near North Side
- **Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak & Stone Crab*** (Lettuce & Sawitz/Weiss Family)
Streeterville/Near North Side
- **Maple & Ash*** (Maple Hospitality/Jim Lasky & Chef Danny Grant)
Gold Coast/Near North Side
- **Mastro's** (Landry's Inc/Tilman Fertitta)
River North/Near North Side
- **RPM Steak** (Lettuce/RJ Mellman, Jerrod Mellman, Giuliana Rancic & Bill Rancic)
River North/Near North Side
- **Swift & Sons Steakhouse** (Boka, B. Hospitality Co, & Sterling Bay)
Fulton Market/West Loop
- **Trino*** (Chef Stephen Sandoval, Oscar Sotelo & Henry Mizhquiri)
West Loop/Near West Side
- **The Alston*** (The Fifty/50 Group/Jenner Tomaska, Scott Weiner & Greg Mohr)
Gold Coast/Near North Side

(?) [Esquire](#) not yet open.

Deliz & Fioretta are Italian inspired steakhouses. As a result, they appear on the primary Italian & Steakhouse lists. Similarly, the French inspired *Alston* appears on the Steakhouse & French primary lists.

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.

Fioretta, Mastro's & Trino feature live music. *Adalina Prime & Trino* have adjacent late-night lounges. *The Alston* and soon-to-open *Esquire* both offer private memberships. The *Alston* private membership is by invitation only while the *Esquire's* "58 Club" is exclusive to members.

Arla opened in 2026 and *Esquire* is expected to open in the months ahead. *Delitz Italian Steakhouse, Adalina Prime, Trino* and *The Alston* all opened in 2025. While not new, *El Che* was subject to updated interior design and a refreshed menu in 2025, including their meat program. *Tre Dita* and *Perilla Korean American Steakhouse* opened in 2024. *Asador Bastian* and *Fioretta* opened in 2023. Opening in 2017, *Gibson's Italia* is not new, but it is still the top grossing downtown restaurant.

The soon-to-open multi-level *Esquire* on the Gold Coast's Oak Street is about 24,000 sq ft, much bigger than *Gibson's Italia's* 16,000 sq ft and **the largest upscale 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.

Both on the Gold Coast's Oak Street, the 8,500 sq ft *Arla* opened a few doors away from *Arla*. Unlike *Esquire* the *Arla* will feature high end luxury rather than a spectacle type ambiance. Absorbing the entire 6th floor, *Arla* will feature a collaboration of Mediterranean and Japanese cuisine,

Another large luxury steakhouse buildout that opened in 2025, the 10,500 sq ft *Adalina Prime* is also located on the Gold Coast, but not Oak Street. The popular *Adalina Prime* is a beautiful, elegant, stylish, upscale, formal, romantic and expensive restaurant, but it is not stuffy. Appealing to a younger audience, the vibrant & ambiance strong restaurant is busy, loud and features live DJ music in a club-like atmosphere,

The US leads the world in global beef consumption. Chicago is historically and culturally a major beef consuming and meat-loving city. Ranging from old school classics to the modern steakhouse, Chicago may have more steakhouses and varieties than any other city. They keep coming because **the demand is there and the beef margins are high**.

The new arrivals have modernized the concept with global inspirations and varying strategies, including luxurious ambiance, enhanced socialization, tasting menus, sharables, vibrant night life energy and table side theatrics. In spite of the newcomers, **demand has not slowed at the traditional steakhouses**.

Regardless of the approach, **success requires diners to feel appreciated, well serviced at a personal level, resonate with the experience and sense a value proposition**.

With over seventy downtown choices and varieties of Steakhouses, Chicago's Steakhouse boom may seem excessive. While other restaurant categories and locations may not be faring as well, **the DCFG's target market is currently home to a thriving and highly competitive restaurant business**.

**CHICAGO'S BEST DOWNTOWN TRENDY, FUN, UPSCALE
SECONDARY TARGET MARKET STEAKHOUSES**

7/30/26

Bazaar Meat (Jose Andres Group & Gibsons Group)

2nd floor above Bar Mar

Loop

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.3) images

Blvd Steakhouse (Joe Flamm/Day Off Group)

West Loop/Near West Side

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.8) images

Bonyeon (Chef Sangtae & Kate Park)

West Loop/Near West Side

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.7) images

Chicago Chop House (Chop Hospitality/Phil Martin, Adam Will & Pete Hodo)

River North/Near North Side

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.6) images

Chicago Cut Steakhouse (David Flom & Matt Moore)

Above Naia

River North/Near North Side/Riverfront

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.8) images

Fogo de Chao (Bain Capital Private Equity)

River North/Near North Side

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.1) images

Gene & Georgetti (Michelle Durpetti, Collin Pierson & Marion Durpetti)

River North/Near North Side

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.7) images

Hawksmoor (Hawksmoor Restaurant Group/Will Beckett & Huw Gott)

River North/Near North Side

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.1) images

Kinzie Chophouse (Nicole & Andreas Tsakonas)

River North/Near North Side

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.9) images

Perilla Korean Steakhouse (Andrew Lim, Thomas Oh & Alvin Kang)

Fulton River District/West Loop/Near West Side

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.2) images

Prime & Provisions (DineAmic)

Loop

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.2) images

Roka Akor (Dr. John Kapoor)

River North/Near North Side

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.2) images

Steak 48 (Mastro Family & Scott Troilo)

River North/Near North Side

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.2) images

Tavern On Rush (Stephani Restaurant Group)

Viagra Triangle/Gold Coast/Near North Side

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.4) images

The Capital Grille (Darden Restaurants)

Streeterville/Near North Side

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.4) images

The Palm (Landry's Inc)

Swisshotel

Lakeshore East/Loop

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.4) images

There are nineteen steakhouses on our primary target market list, sixteen on our secondary list above and another twenty-six to consider.

Seven of the twenty-six are outside our target market, including **Boeufhas** (1012 N. Western), **Butcher & The Bear** (2721 N. Halsted), **Chubby Cattle** (2162 S. Archer), **Folkore** (2100 W. Division), **Tango Sur** (3763 N. Southport), **The Bull Moose** (2020 N. Halsted) and **The Exchange** (224 S. Michigan).

That leaves the nineteen below for further consideration:

Erie Café

Harry Caray's

Kindling

Michael Jordan's

Morton's

Ocean Prime

Remington's

Ron of Japan

Rosebud

Smith & Wollensky

Sofia Steak

STK Steakhouse

Stetson's Modern

Susu

The Evie

The Grillroom

The L Station

Weber Grill

Wildfire

**CHICAGO'S BEST DOWNTOWN TRENDY, FUN, UPSCALE
PRIMARY *FRENCH* RESTAURANTS**

7/30/26

(*Vibrant Bar & Social Scene)

- **Bar La Rue*** (DineAmic)
Fulton Market/West Loop/Near West Side
- **Brindille** (Carrie & Michael Nahabedian)
River North/Near North Side
- **Bistronomic** (Martial & Lawrence Noguier)
Gold Coast/Near North Side
- **Bistro Monadnock** (UNA Hospitality/ John, Karl & Graeme Fehr)
South Loop/Loop
- **Brass Tack** (Waldorf Astoria Chicago)
Waldorf Astoria (3rd Floor)
Gold Coast/Near North Side
- **Chez Joel** (Joel & Ahmed Kazouini)
Taylor Steet/Little Italy/Near West Side
- **Coquette** (Bonhomme Hospitality)
West Loop/Near West Side
- **Creepies** (David & Anna Posey)
West Loop/Near West Side
- **Dear Margaret (Closed)** (Lacy Irby & Executive Chef Ryan Brosseau)
Lakeview
- **Francois Frankie** (Well Done Hospitality Group)
Loop
- **Gavroche** (Jason Chan)
Old Town/Near North/Lincoln Park
- **La Grande Boucherie*** (The Group NYC & Emil Stefkov)
River North/Near North
- **La Serre*** (DineAmic)
Fulton Market/West Loop/Near West Side
- **Le Bouchon** (Oliver & Nicolas Poilevey)
Bucktown/Logan Square
- **Le Colonial*** (Rick Walstedt & Joe King)
Gold Coast/Near North
- **Le Petit Marcel** (Avi De Yparraguirre)
Lakeview East/Lakeview
- **Le Select (Closed)** (Boka)
River North/Near North Side
- **Les Nomades (Closed)**
Streeterville/Near North Side
- **Moni Ami Gabi (Lettuce)**
Lincoln Park
- **NoMI** (Hyatt Hotels)
Park Hyatt Hotel
Gold Coast/Near North Side
- **North Pond** (Richard Mott)
Lincoln Park

- **Obelix** (Oliver & Nicolas Poilevey)
River North/Near North Side
- **Petit Pomeroy** (Ballyhoo Hospitality)
River North/Gold Coast Crossroads/Near North Side
- **Petite Edith*** (Chef Jenner Tomaska & Katrina Bravo)
River North/Near North Side
- **Pierrot Gourmet** (Hongkong & Shanghai Hotels, Limited (HSH)
Peninsula Hotel
Mag Mile/Near North Side
- **Taureaux Tavern** (Well Done Hospitality Group)
Loop
- **The Alston*** (Jenner Tomaska & The Fifty/50 Restaurant Group/Scott Weiner & Greg Mohr)
Gold Coast/Near North Side
- **The Loyalist*** (Chef John Shields & Pastry Chef Karen Shields)
Below Co-owned Smyth
West Loop/Near West Side
- **Venteux Brasserie, Café & Oyster Bar** (Clique Hospitality)\
Pendry Hotel
Loop

*Restaurants with fixed menus, seasonal menus, farm-to-table menus, specific regions & those with overall menu influence can be confusing. Indeed, some no doubt overlap. As a result, the **North Pond** is included on the Fixed Tasting Menu list and the French Restaurant list above. As a French inspired Steakhouse, **The Alston** is included on the Primary Steakhouse list and the French Restaurant list above. The recently closed **Les Nomades** offered a fixed tasting menu of French cuisine. As a result, it is included on the French Restaurant list above and the Fixed Tasting Menu list. Click [HERE](#) for more on traditional French dishes.*

*Numerous high-end closures are a reminder that the current mega project buildouts are not without risk. Among others, the abrupt closures - less than a year - of Boka's French **Le Select** 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.*

*Following a building fire, the celebrated **Dear Margaret** restaurant closed permanently in late 2025. Owners of the acclaimed and popular French-Canadian Restaurant, Lacey Irby & Executive Chef Ryan Brosseau, are hoping to [reopen](#) in a new location that appears unknown at this time.*

Reeling from one hundred or so legendary French Restaurant closures in recent decades, generational retirements, shifting culinary tastes, competition and higher operating costs all took their toll on Chicago's best French Restaurants.

*Recent closures include **Les Nomades** (Streeterville), **Dear Margaret** (Lakeview), **Marchesa** (West Loop), **Chez Moi** (Lincoln Park), **The 95th** (Mag Mile), **La Sardine** (West Loop) and **Kiki's Bistro** (River North). See below for some of the closures. Some of the dates are estimated because the original restaurants were closed and then re-opened, resulting in varying closure dates.*

Le Nomades (2025)
Dear Margaret (2025)
Marchesa (2024)
Le Select (2023)
Chez Moi (2023)
Everest (2020)
La Sardine (2020)
Kiki's Bistro (2020)
Tru (2017)

Bistro 110 (2011)
Brasserie Jo (2010)
Le Francais (2007)
Café la Tour (2007)
Ambria (2007)
Le Bastille (1999)
Chez Paul (1995)
Le Perroquet (1994)
La Tour (1993)

Le Bordeaux (1989)
Mon Petit (1988)
Le Coq Au Vin (1987)
Café de Paris (1987)
Jovan's (Original) (1983)
Jacques (1983)
Maxim's de Paris (1982)
L'Escargot (Original) (1980)
Maison Laffite (1980)

Carlos (2012)

L'Auberge (1991)

Le Mignon (1980)

See [Culinary Historians](#) for more detail,

Older foodies in the DCFG have dined at most of the legendary restaurants above. One got married at Jacques and served the just introduced, but now legendary, Italian Tiganello at his wedding. His ex-wife dislikes it to this day because he consumed so much, they had to postpone their honeymoon trip.

Another got engaged at Mon Petit (Pheasant au Vin) and fondly remembers the rabbit & cream of watercress soup served at Jovan's. The senior foodie loved the Duckling a la Belasco at Café de Paris and bought cases of the Grivelet Pommard when Nancy Goldberg closed the neighboring Maxim's de Paris. Still another had an altercation at Le Perroquet when the notoriously pretentious staff refused to let his wife off the elevator. Fortunately, the Grand Marnier Souffle saved the day.

Unanimously, they all loved the "La cuisine du Marche" and the "Nouvelle Cuisine" introduced by the legendary Yugoslavian born Jovan Trboyevic (Les Nomades, Jovan's & Le Perroquet). While we aren't sure when his last restaurant closed, the Cuban born Ray Castro (Chico Ray) Group was involved with at least a dozen of these French restaurants. On a final note, we miss the highly skilled & gracious French-Moroccan waiters so prevalent in that era, including Mon Petit's Atif, Leon from Le Coq Au Vin and Alex from Café de Paris & Biggs.

CHICAGO'S BEST DOWNTOWN UPSCALE, FINE DINING RESTAURANTS WITH *FIXED TASTING MENUS*

7/30/26

- **Alinea** (Chef Grant Achatz & Jason Weingarten)
Lincoln Park
New American/Experimental
- **All Well** (16" on Center/Chef Larry Feldmeier & Chef Noah Sandoval)
West Loop
New American
- **Carino** (Chef Norman Fenton & Karen Young)
Uptown Neighborhood/Uptown
Latin/Mexican
- **Elske** (David & Anna Posey)
West Loop/Near West Side
Scandinavian
- **Esme** (Chef Jenner Tomaska & Katrina Bravo)
Lincoln Park
Experimental
- **Ever** (Curtis Duffy)
Fulton Market/West Loop/Near West Side
Experimental
- **Feld** (Chef Jacob Potashnick)
Ukrainian Village/West Town
American
- **Fire (Closed)**
Fulton Market/West Loop/Near West Side
- **Indienne** (Sujan Sarkar)
River North/Near North Side
South Asian
- **Kasama** (Tim Flores & Genie Kwon)
East Ukrainian Village/West Town
Filipino
- **Les Nomades (Closed)**
Streeterville
- **Next** (Chef Grant Achatz & Nick Kokonas)
West Loop/Near West Side
Rotating Cuisine
- **North Pond** (John Arents)
Lincoln Park
Contemporary American/Hyper-Seasonal
- **Oriole** (Executive Chef Noah Sandoval)
West Loop/Near West Side
American/Japanese
- **Schwa** (Michael Carlson)
Wicker Park/West Town
Experimental
- **Sepia** (Emmanuel Nony)
West Loop/Near West Side
American
- **Smyth** (Chef John Shields & Pastry Chef Karen Shields)

West Loop/Near West Side
American

- **Valhalla** (Stephen Gillanders)
Wicker Park/West Town
American

Restaurants with fixed menus, seasonal menus, farm-to-table menus, specific regions & those with overall menu influence can be confusing. Indeed, some no doubt overlap. Click [HERE](#) for more on this category of fine dining restaurants.

*The recently closed **Les Nomades** offered a fixed tasting menu of French cuisine. As a result, it is included on the Fixed Tasting Menu list above and the French Restaurant list.*

*Specializing in French cuisine, the **North Pond** is included on the Fixed Tasting Menu list above and the French Restaurant list.*

To the DCFG, the fixed menu category is among the most important. Virtually all the fixed menu restaurants above are dripping with awards by [Michelin](#), [Jean Banchet](#) & [James Beard](#). Smyth also earned the number one rating on the [North America's 50 Best Restaurants](#) list by William Reed. See Choose Chicago for more on [Michelin](#) ratings.

The DCFG master list currently excludes expensive restaurants with a fixed menu, pizzerias, most of the rooftops and all those on the secondary lists. While the analytic commentary does not apply to these categories, other detailed information is included.

*As noted above, the DCFG maintains a list of the Prix Fixe restaurants with fixed tasting menus & price, but they are 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.***

*Serving non-traditional food combinations rather than specific regional cuisine, **Alinea** is often recognized as Chicago's most renowned fixed tasting menu restaurant today. The recently closed **Les Nomades** was, however, a legendary, exclusive, intimate, elegant, quiet, formal, acclaimed restaurant known for serving award winning classical French cuisine via Prix fixe tasting menus.*

Located in a town home setting on East Ontario, Les Nomades offered an expensive but fixed multi-course menu. Opened in 1978 as a private club by the legendary Jovan Trbojevic, Mary Beth Liccioni assumed ownership of the restaurant upon his retirement.

The new owner made it available to the public in 1996. Roland Liccioni, formerly with Carlos & Le Francais, was the last head chef and former husband of Mary Beth Liccioni. The building housing the restaurant sold in 2025 and triggered the end of the restaurant's five-decade presence.

CHICAGO'S BEST DOWNTOWN TRENDY, FUN, UPSCALE ROOFTOP TYPE BARS & RESTAURANTS

7/30/26

(Includes All Season Outdoor Seating, Seasonal Outdoor Seating & No Outdoor Seating)

(Includes Bars, Lounges, Upscale Comfort Food & Full Dining)

Chateau Carbide

Located on top of the Pendry Hotel - the former art deco Carbide & Carbon building - Chateau Carbide is an enclosed, mid-size, **upscale** rooftop bar & lounge with an *all-season uncovered open-air terrace*. The outdoor summer element includes a *Cote d'Azur* garden setting and lush greenery that transitions in the winter to heated, private wooden lodges with fireplaces and cozy seating. The indoor atmosphere is **trendy, relaxed & somewhat chic**. The crowd includes a mix of smart casually attired locals, hotel guests, post work loop professionals, date night couples, weekend celebraters and nightlife lovers. The menu includes elevated lite bites, sushi, seasonal small plates, a picnic basket package & expensive curated cocktails, including Aperol Spritz, icy signature cocktails and absinthe-inspired creations. Spritz Social Hour from Friday-Saturday, 2:00-5:00 pm. Live music and DJ sounds on Friday & Saturday from 7:00-10:00 pm.

Pendry Hotel (24th Floor)

Loop

Enclosed speakeasy type bar & lounge

All-season, chic, outdoor, uncovered open-air terrace

Transitions in the winter

3,000 sq ft

Menu includes elevated lite bites, sushi, seasonal small plates & a picnic basket

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.6) images

Cindy's

Large, **upscale casual** enclosed restaurant with a full central bar and lounge under a bright glass atrium with an *all-season uncovered open-air terrace*. While dining & cocktails are available throughout the year, the terrace is still weather dependent. The sophisticated beach house atmosphere is **vibrant, lively, energetic, highly social, stylish and scenic**. Crowd includes a mix of well-dressed locals, after work professionals, couples on dates, media creators and curious tourists. Serving breakfast, lunch, brunch & dinner, the full menu restaurant focuses on seasonal contemporary American fare and seafood. As a highly popular destination, reservations are hard to get.

Chicago Athletic Association (Managed by Hyatt) (13th Floor)

Loop

Lakefront

Enclosed glass atrium indoor bar, lounge & restaurant

All-season, airy, outdoor, uncovered open-air terrace

Transitions in the winter

3,000 sq ft. 80-seating & 150 reception

Outdoor dining throughout the season

Full contemporary menu

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.1) images

Nationally recognized & award winning

East Bank Club (Members only)

Large, 60,000 sq ft, open air rooftop, bar stations sun deck & two pools The just starting renovations include structured pergolas, shade areas & all-season dining. **The private EBC members are highly social, upwardly mobile & trendy professionals.** The EBC also hosts Chicago's best and biggest upscale, blowout summer pool party

EBC Building (4th Floor)

River North/Near North Side

Riverfront (Very few activities on their riverfront area)

60,000 sq ft

Seasonal

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.0) images

IO Godfrey

Chicago's largest **upscale** retractable rooftop bar & lounge with a dining component featuring elevated bar bites, small plates & sushi. The atmosphere blends hotel styling with comfortable communal booths. The *additional uncovered open-air rooftop space has a video wall and dining throughout the season via doomed, heated, transparent igloos and fire pits.* The atmosphere is **highly social, energetic & nightlife leaning with a club vibe.** The trendy crowd includes the fashion forward, young professionals, socialites, hotel guests, tourists & those seeking high energy nightlife and day drinking.

Godfrey Hotel (4th Floor)

River North/Near North Side

Enclosed indoor bar, lounge & restaurant

Retractable rooftop with temperature control

Additional all season, modern luxury, outdoor, uncovered open-air terrace

Transitions in the winter

15,000 sq ft

Full upscale casual menu

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.4) images

LH Rooftop

Depending on the level, the large, **high-end**, tri-level venue features an enclosed rooftop bar, restaurant, lounge on 21 and a chic, crowded, modern outdoor terrace on 22. The enclosed area on 21 is modern, sleek, contemporary and elegantly minimalist. *The outdoor terrace features a mix of uncovered areas, seasonal structures & a new weather canopy. The terrace transitions in the colder months via private, heated, Rudolph's Rooftop winter igloos and holiday décor.* With upbeat background music, the atmosphere is **highly social, energetic, polished & filled with those seeking a photo-centric experience**, including tourists. Both floors, 21 & 22, appear to feature the same upscale casual dining, including sharable small bites, along with comfortable lounge seating, a bar and floral canopy. The enclosed cupola dome on 23 is for private dining

London House Hotel (Hilton Hotel) Floors 21-23)

Loop

Riverfront

Enclosed indoor glass bar, lounge & restaurant on 21

All-season, vibrant, chic, outdoor terrace featuring uncovered areas, seasonal structures & canopy

Transitions in the winter

Enclosed cupola dome on 23 for private dining

25,000 sq ft

Tapas heavy full upscale casual menu

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.1) images

Nationally recognized & award winning

Miru

Enclosed, **high-end**, modern, sleek, elegant Japanese restaurant with an integrated bar, lounge & several outdoor terraces. The atmosphere blends modernism with minimalist Japanese style. *The dual open-air terraces offer seasonal dining, including Wednesday & Friday fireworks from May-September.* The luxurious dining room features floor to ceiling windows, a **sophisticated vibe** & panoramic vistas of the Chicago River, Lake Michigan, Navy Pier and Chicago skyline. The fashion centric, contemporary Japanese restaurant features a full menu, including a broad selection of sushi and seafood of specialties. Providing a polished, premium experience, the refined Miru is a **vibrant, social hotspot** catering to a mixed crowd of fashionable people watchers. With more of a **cosmopolitan buzz**, the Miru is not a chaotic party scene

St Regis Hotel (11th Floor)

Lakeshore East/Loop

Lakefront & Riverfront

High-end restaurant

Modern, serene, uncovered, outdoor, open-air terraces (May-September Fireworks)

Seasonal

? sq ft

Full Fine Dining Menu

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.3) images

Nobu Rooftop

Enclosed, **upscale**, indoor rooftop functions primarily as a bar and lounge with an outdoor seasonal terrace. The enclosed atmosphere blends Japanese inspired design with modern luxury. *While the outdoor terrace terrace is primarily uncovered, there is some limited protected outside overhang with heaters. Using natural materials, architectural greenery and wooden furniture, some might consider the terrace borderline luxurious, but in a minimalist way.* Differing from the Japanese-Peruvian inspired full menu restaurant on the lower level, the rooftop serves a curated subset of signature hot & cold small plates, select sushi items and specialized bar bites. The **socially vibrant atmosphere** attracts a trendy, accomplished, fashion forward crowd, including couples on dates, those celebrating special events, groups enjoying cocktails, West Loop professionals looking for a sophisticated lounge experience and visitors. With background music or a live DJ cranking out the tunes, the NOBU oozes **relaxed sophistication & refined nightlife** rather than the LH Rooftop/IO Godfrey party type atmosphere

Nobu Hotel (11th Floor)

West Loop/Near West Side

Enclosed rooftop bar, lounge & dining area

Primarily uncovered, outdoor, modern, open-air terrace

Some limited protected overhang with heaters

Seasonal

100 seated, 120 full buyout

Meaningful menu includes signature hot & cold plates, select sushi items & specialized bar bites

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.4) images

NoMI

Enclosed, indoor, **luxurious**, refined restaurant with a sophisticated lounge and a seasonal open-air rooftop terrace. *The outdoor open-air terrace serves as a sanctuary that feels like a stylish garden with parasols, greenery & a large ivory marble bar.* The stylish indoor lounge has a vibrant sushi bar fueled by **after work socializing**. The elegant dining room combines modern elegance with polished hotel service and midwestern classic food rooted in French techniques. While not pretentious, the overall atmosphere feels **polite, upbeat and celebratory**. Diners include a well-heeled mix of luxury travelers, stylish locals and professionals.

Park Hyatt (7th Floor)

Streeterville/Near North Side

Enclosed high-end restaurant with sophisticated lounge

Stylish, Outdoor, uncovered, open-air terrace

Seasonal

Full Fine Dining Menu
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.9) images

Pandan

Enclosed indoor rooftop bar & lounge with outdoor poolside terrace. *The outdoor terrace is open air, i.e., uncovered, but still seasonal with heaters and fire pits.* The enclosed bar & lounge is modern and somewhat lush. The casual elegance includes greenery, architectural lighting and a prominent central bar. The three seating areas include a spatial layout, eclectic seating, low cocktail tables, leather couches and velvet chairs. The atmosphere is **sophisticated and somewhat intimate with a vibrant social under-current**. The popular rooftop attracts casually dressed patrons, trendy groups, date night couples and those seeking a calm night out. The curated menu includes Southeast Asian inspired small plates & bites.

Viceroy Hotel (18th Floor)
Gold Coast/Near North Side
Enclosed bar & lounge
Outdoor, uncovered, somewhat intimate, open-air terrace
While seasonal, heaters & fire pits may be available
Rooftop pool
Seasonal
1,500 sq ft
Asian inspired small plates & bites.
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.3) images.

Raised

Enclosed indoor rooftop bar & lounge with additional all-season, outdoor, open-air terrace with firepits and heaters. Blending an industrial chic aesthetic with raw finishes, low lighting and smooth background music, the indoor combination emanates **a welcoming feeling** for a mix of **upscale casual** hotel guests after work professionals and locals. Basically a popular, social and energetic vibe **without feeling pretentious** or clubby. *The outdoor terrace has dark gray stone communal surfaces, comfortable cabana style seating low lounge sofas and tabletop firepits.* The menu includes high-end shareable plates with twists on American classics.

Renaissance Hotel (3rd Floor)
Loop
Riverfront
Enclosed bar & lounge
All season, comfortable, outdoor, uncovered, open-air terrace
2,500 sq ft
High-end shareable small plates
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.6) images

Roof On The Wit

The Wit Hotel (27th Floor)
Theatre District/Loop
Enclosed bar, restaurant & lounge
Upscale, high-end, luxurious & vibrant rooftop

Retractable roof with temperature control
--

Additional all season, outdoor uncovered, open-air terrace
7,000 sq ft
Shareable plates, tavern style pizza, brunch favorites & light bites
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp(3.2) images

Selva (Closed)

Emily Hotel (7th Floor)
West Loop/Near West Side

Shanghai Terrace

Peninsula Hotel (4th Floor)

Mag Mile/Gold Coast/Near North Side

Enclosed, glamorous, upscale Chinese restaurant with adjacent bar

Lush outdoor, uncovered, open air terrace

Seasonal

2,700 sq ft

Full Fine Dining Menu of elevated Cantonese, Shanghainese & Sichuanese dishes.

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.2) images

Nationally recognized

Streeterville Social

Lowes Hotel (3rd Floor)

Streeterville/Near North Side

Combination bar, lounge & restaurant

No enclosed winter area

Casual, outdoor, uncovered, open air terrace

Divided into bistro dining & lounging area

Seasonal

9,000 sq ft

Full menu, including small bites, sharables & main dishes

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.3) images

Travelle Lounge: Fully Enclosed Rooftop Alternative

Langham Hotel (2nd Floor)

River North/Near North Side

Riverfront

Fully enclosed, upscale, contemporary, full-service restaurant

Adjoining Travelle bar & lounge

Large floor-to-ceiling windows

Mid-century modernism blended with glamorous touches & building's architecture

Distinctive lighting, rich leather, glowing marble & artistic touches

Phenomenal views that rival rooftop

Lower vantage, front row seat rather than a high altitude look down

Panoramic views of Chicago River, city skyline, historic architecture & passing boats

No outdoor terrace

121 seat main dining room & 81 seat separate bar/lounge

Restaurant is a culinary jewel nestled within the luxurious Langham Hotel

Sleek atmosphere

Refined seasonal American dining

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.1) images

Nationally recognized/Highly Rated

Terrace 16

Trump Int'l Hotel & Bar (16th Floor)

River North/Near North Side

Riverfront

Enclosed, large, luxurious, bustling rooftop restaurant bar & lounge with additional outdoor *seasonal* seating

Lush, upscale, chic, green, lively, outdoor, uncovered, open air terrace

Seasonal

70-seat main dining room & 200-seat outdoor terrace

Tower Room restaurant & adjacent bar

Rich, warm, opulent with floor-to-ceiling windows

Full menu (indoor & outdoor) features seasonal new American cuisine

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.4) images

Nationally recognized.

The J Parker

Hotel Lincoln (13th Floor)

Old Town Triangle/Lincoln Park

Retractable rooftop with heat elements

Upstairs At The Gwen

Gwen Hotel (5th Floor)

River North/Near North Side

Z Bar Rooftop

Peninsula Hotel (6th Floor)

Mag Mile/Gold Coast/Near North Side

Enclosed rooftop bar & dining with additional outdoor *seasonal* seating.

Outdoor is a broad term for any location that is not indoors, including a covered area or terrace with a retractable roof. **Open air** is defined as **no walls, roof, overhang or partially covered areas**

Offering a full menu, the *seasonal Avec*, the all-season **Aba & Cabra** and the private **Gibsons Italia** rooftops are not shown above, but they are included in our Best of the Best downtown restaurant list. While not a rooftop, the luxurious **3Arts Club Café** set in the RH Chicago central atrium includes a glass-and-steel skylit inner garden courtyard. All five are included on the DCFG's Best of the Best list. Excluding the 3Arts Club Café, the other four have vibrant bar & social scenes. While the DCFG foodies love the stunning 3Arts Club Café, the local restaurant media rarely mentions it because it is not an independent restaurant, but rather an in-store amenity for a national furniture retailer.

Most of the hotels above are luxury hotels. **The six in Green are five-star luxury hotels, including two locations in the Peninsula.** Other downtown five-star hotels in Chicago include: **Four Seasons, Ritz Carlton & the Waldorf Astoria.** All Chicago's luxury hotels are located in the vibrant central downtown area, mostly the Loop, River North & Mag Mile.

The vast majority of the rooftops above offer upscale and/or high-end experiences. A few would also be considered luxurious.

National Recognition:

Cindy's, LH Rooftop at the London House, Travelle at the Langham, Z Bar at the Peninsula & the Trump International have all received bar, rooftop & or restaurant national recognition.

High End Full Menu Fine Dining:

While most offer elevated food, including small bites, the full high-end fine dining menu appears limited to the Miru, NoMI, Shanghai Terrace and Terrace 16.

Seasonal: (Outdoor vs Open Air)

The outdoor areas at the EBC, Miru, NoMI, Pandan, Shanghai Terrace, Streeterville Social and Terrace 16 are open air, i.e., no roof, overhang or partially covered areas. The Nobu outdoor terrace is seasonal, but it does have some area protected by an overhang.

No Outdoor Area:

The enclosed Travelle Lounge does not offer an outdoor area.

Retractable Rooftops:

The IO Godfrey, Roof on the Wit and The J Parker all have retractable roofs. The IO Godfrey & Roof on the Wit are temperature controlled while the J. Parker offers heating elements.

Active Winter Transition Programs:

The Chateau Carbide, Cindy's, IO Godfrey, LH Rooftop, Raised, The J Parker & Upstairs at the Gwen all have active outdoor winter programs on their rooftops.

Swimming Pools:

The Pandan Rooftop above the Viceroy Hotel is the only rooftop shown here with a swimming pool. While not shown here, the ABA (Hoxton Hotel) has an enclosed rooftop pool while The Robey has an open-air rooftop pool. The Soho House, Radisson Blue Aqua Hotel and the DoubleTree Hilton also have outdoor rooftop pools.

AIRE Rooftop, Joy District, Offshore Rooftop & Bar (Navy Pier), RIU, SKY Terrace (Ivy Hotel), Soho House (Private), Tetto, Utopian Tailgate & 101 SKY Terrace are candidates for a secondary list.

The Kennedy Rooftop, The Robey, VU Rooftop, Homestead and Lonesome Rose are outside our target market.

See the [Rooftop Guide](#) & [Conde Nest Traveler](#) for more on Chicago's Rooftop Bars & Restaurants, including images. See [Time Out](#) and [Choose Chicago](#) for more on winter rooftops.

**CHICAGO'S BEST DOWNTOWN TRENDY, FUN, UPSCALE
SECONDARY "OUTSIDE" TARGET MARKET ITALIAN RESTAURANTS**

8/29/26

(Parentheses () After Neighborhood In Red Indicates Distance From River North Target Market)

A Tavola (Daniel Bocik family owned & operated since 1995)

Ukrainian Village/West Town (2.6 miles)

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.2) images

Andros Tavern (Greek) (Eat Well Hospitality/Doug Psaltis & Hsing Chen)

Bucktown/Logan Square (5.7 miles)

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.2) images

Antico (Brad Schlieder)

Bucktown/Logan Square (3.9 miles)

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.4) images

Bacchanalia (Multi-generational Pieri Family owned & operated for 47 years)

Pilsen/Lower West Side (7.0 miles) (Heart of Italy Neighborhood, S. Oakley)

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.2) images

Bruna's (Opened in 1933 by Bella Bruna Cani. Luciano Silvestri has owned & operated the restaurant since purchasing it from original owner in 1980)

Pilsen/Lower West Side (7.0 miles) (Heart of Italy Neighborhood, S. Oakley)

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.8) images

Club Lucky (Jim Higgins & Robert Paladino owned & operated in family spirit since 1990)

Bucktown/Wicker Park/West Town (3.0 miles)

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.9) images

Coda di Volpe (Billy Lawless of Gage Hospitality & Ryan O'Donnel of Ballyhoo)

Southport Corridor/Lakeview (5.5 miles)

Click [Here](#) for Yelp (4.4) images

DeNucci's (Ballyhoo Hospitality)

Lincoln Park (2.2 miles)

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.3) images

Enoteca Roma (Sorano family owned & operated since 2004)

Wicker Park/West Town (3.3 miles)

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.0) images

Febo's Closed (Opened in 1929. Multi-generational family owned & operated by Duke Sorini & Leo Cecchio until closing in 2000, Duke passed a few years before the closing. Miss that bartender shtick).

Pilsen/Lower West Side (7.0 miles) (Heart of Italy Neighborhood, S. Oakley)

Franco's Ristorante (Multi-generational Ruffolo Family owned & operated since 1989)

Bridgeport (Unified Community Area) (6.0 miles)

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.4) images

Ignotz (Multi-generational Wroblewski family owned & operated since 2004)

Pilsen/Lower West Side (7.0 miles) (Heart of Italy Neighborhood, S. Oakley)

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.5) images

iL Milanese (Riccardo Michi, Massimo Di Vuolo & Carlo Maggi)
Lincoln Square/North Center (Two Community Areas) (7.5 miles)
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.4) images

La Fontanella (Closed) (Opened by the Mannone family in 1971. Later owned & managed by Franco & Maria Gamberale for 34 years before closing in 2020.
Pilsen/Lower West Side (7.0 miles) (Heart of Italy Neighborhood, S. Oakley)

La Gondola (Closed) Opened in 1984 by Dominic Amodeo & Luciano Libreri and purchased by Christi & Andy McGuire in 2005, the Lakeview neighborhood significant restaurant closed in 2024.

Mano a Mano (Doug Psaltis & Hsing Chen, the same team behind Andros Taverna & Asador Bastian)
Logan Square (5.8 miles)
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.3) images

Nettare (Conner O'Byrne)
Ukrainian Village/West Town (2.4 miles)
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.3) images

Osteria Langhe (Aldo Zaninotto)
Logan Square (4.5 miles)
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.3) images

Peanut Park Trattoria (Dave Bonomi & Anthony Fiasche)
University Village/Near West Side (3.5 miles) (Little Italy Neighborhood, Taylor Street)
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.1) images

Pompei (Originally opened as a bakery, Multi-generational Davino family owned & operated since 1909)
University Village/Near West Side (3.5 miles) (Little Italy Neighborhood, Taylor Street)
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp images

Riccardo Enoteca (Riccardo & Veronica Michi. Same team behind Riccardo Enoteca and Riccardo Osteria)
Lincoln Park (2.1 miles)
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.3) images

Rosebud on Taylor (Multi-generational family owned since 1976 by Alex Dana/Rosebud Group)
University Village/Near West Side (3.5 miles) (Little Italy Neighborhood, Taylor Street)
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (3.9) images

Sal's Trattoria (Joseph Arnold, Preston Owen & Dakota Neckvatl)
West Lakeview/Lakeview (4.1 miles)
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.5) images

Sapori Trattoria (Kosti Demos/Forte Hospitality Group)
Lincoln Park/Lakeview & Lincoln Park Border (3.2 miles)
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.4) images

Segnatore Closed (The Orbit Group/Kristina Magro, Ben Fasman & Matt Troost)
Humboldt Park (3.7 miles)
Click [HERE](#) for Yelp images

Tortello (Dario Monni & Jill Gray)
Wicker Park/West Town (2.3 miles)

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.3) images

Tufano's Vernon Park Tap(Multi-generational family owned & operated since 1930, Currently managed by grandson Joey DiBuona)

University Village Area/ Near West Side (3.5 miles) (Little Italy Neighborhood, Taylor Street)

[Click HERE for Yelp \(3.9\) images](#)

Tuscany on Taylor (Multi-generational family owned & operated by Phil Stephan & family since 1990)

University Village/Near West Side (3.5 miles) (Little Italy Neighborhood, Taylor Street)

Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.0) images

While included in the DCFG's "outside" secondary Italian target market restaurant list above, **Riccardo Enoteca (2.1)**, **DeNucci's (2.2)**, **Tortello (2.3)**, **Nettare (2.4)** and **A Tavolla (2.6)** are reasonably close to the target market. As a result, some might consider them in the target market.

Restaurants less than 2.0 miles from River North are included in the secondary Italian target market list, including **Mart Anthony (1.2)**, **Oggi Trattoria (1.8)** and **Provare (1.8)**. As a result, they are not shown above

Riccardo Trattoria, Riccardo Enoteca & Riccardo Osteria are all family owned and operated by the same team. Dating back to 2006, Riccardo Trattoria was the first to open. Enoteca followed in 2007 and Osteria in 2019. Riccardo Trattoria & Enoteca are located in Lincoln Park while Osteria is on the quiet side of the West Loop.

Of the twenty-seven restaurants on the secondary outside target market Italian list above, **ten are in Little Italy type neighborhoods**, including five in the Taylor Street area (Near West Side) and five in the S. Oakley Street area.(Lower West Side). The two areas are about three miles apart. As you can see, many of these restaurants are multi-generational family owned & operated.

Following the demise of Big Jim Colosimo, the closure of his restaurant and the repeal of prohibition, "Bella" Bruna Cani opened Bruna's in The Heart Of Little Italy on Oakley in 1933. Febo's was opened a few years earlier.

Having made our culinary bones in the 70s with handsome Italian barbers that just arrived from Italy at places like Bruna's and La Fontanella (the little fountain), we were surprised and shocked. We were surprised because we couldn't believe how good the food was and shocked because we didn't know the restaurants existed. This was the same period when Tony Accardo's house in River Forest was burglarized. Following a movie script, those allegedly connected with the Big Tuna's burglary were found in the trunk of a car with parts of their anatomy missing

The Oakley restaurants were generally viewed as more authentic, cozy and less pretentious neighborhood time capsules. Alternatively, Little Italy on Taylor was viewed as the larger, higher profile, commercial and political epicenter of Italian dining in Chicago, drawing celebrities, politicians, tourist and larger crowds. In reality, both areas dished out fabulous food at their high point.

Beyond Bruna's and La Fontanella, we dined at Rosebud and Tuscany on Taylor in Little Italy for many years, but stopped dining there more than a decade ago. We stopped dining at those restaurants because the quality of the food fell off the roof. Like the Italian Village after the second generation retired, we were disheartened by the fall from grace. In all fairness, we haven't revisited Rosebud since it reopened.

If you truly crave large portions of world class old school Italian red sauce dishes, the reopened Carmine's on Rush is at the top of the food chain. If you want upscale Italian food, there is no reason to leave the wide variety of choices in the Near North Side and the West Loop.

Most Recognized Historic Italian Neighborhoods.

Chicago's most recognized historic Italian neighborhoods include Little Italy on Taylor Street and the less known Heart of Italy (Little Tuscany) on Oakley Street in the lower West Side.

Heavily populated by Southern Italians and Sicilians, Little Italy was established in the late 19th century, peaking from 1900-1950. The urban renewal projects like the UIC, disrupted and downsized the neighborhood in the 1960s.

The Heart of Italy was mostly populated by Northern Italian immigrants, primarily Tuscans, that came to work in nearby industries. Reflecting on the neighborhood, the Tuscans brought their culinary and cultural traditions with them.

Oakley remained more stable and tight knit than Taylor because it wasn't swallowed up by institutional expansion. While the resident demographics have shifted, the name rebranding was designed to emphasize its status as a premier dining destination.

Lost Identity

Little Italy on Taylor lost its core identity and deteriorated as an ethnic enclave much faster than the Heart of Italy on Oakley. While both neighborhoods experienced a decline in the Italian population, the time and forces behind their transformation were different.

The demise of Taylor Street's identity was not a gradual shift, but rather a swift byproduct of mid-century urban renewal. In the early 1960s Mayor Daley used eminent domain to clear large parts of the neighborhood to build the UIC campus. The infrastructure displaced many Italian families and bulldozed many local businesses in short order. The simultaneous construction of the Eisenhower and Dan Ryan also played a role in chopping up the neighborhood.

Given the Loop proximity and the UIC, Taylor Street rapidly transformed into a college-centric neighborhood dominated by students and medical professionals. By the late 20th century, Taylor street was largely Italian in name only, functioning as a community strip of restaurants rather than a living ethnic community.

The much smaller Heart of Italy on Oakley preserved its authentic enclave identity decades longer than Taylor Street. Not subject to government sponsored urban renewal or campus expansion, its decline was a slow generational shift. As older Italian residents passed away and moved to the suburbs, the neighborhood integrated into the surrounding working class Mexican neighborhood of Pilsen.

*In summary, Little Italy and the Heart Of Italy are both experiencing cultural and structural shifts due to the changing neighborhood dynamics. Somewhat different by neighborhood, both are experiencing urban renewal, demographic change and gentrification. The evolving dynamics have also **eroded the deep-rooted traditions and cohesive culture.***

Little Italy is experiencing meaningful gentrification, institutional expansion and cultural dilution. The Heart of Italy is struggling with geographic isolation, an aging population and commercial pressure from surrounding redevelopments. The shrinking of "Ristorante Row" is another challenge for the neighborhood.

*Given the generational retirement, shrinking margins and changing neighborhood dynamics, **the landmark Heart of Italy restaurants may be facing permanent closure. Febo's and La Fontanella have already closed.** The well regarded Segnatore in Humboldt Park closed in May of 2026. After 70 years, the changing neighborhood dynamics at Grand, Milwaukee & Halsted intersections fueled the closure of the iconic family-owned Como Inn in 2001. After twenty-five plus years, neighborhood dynamics and Chicago's anti-business practices were responsible for the closing of the family-owned Bella Note on Grande Avenue in 2023.*

*Have no doubt, **location, demographics, crime rates, and neighborhood dynamics are critical to a restaurant's success, including foot traffic, parking, brand safety, staff retention and overall financial viability.***

Italian Restaurants & Population

Chinese, Italian and Mexican are the most popular cuisines in the US today. As you can see from the DCFG lists, there are a boat load of Italian restaurants in the Chicagoland area.

Excluding pizzerias and casual spots, there are at least **800 or so dedicated Italian restaurants across Chicagoland**. The large number of Italian restaurants is no doubt partially due to the deep historical immigration patterns and a love for the comfortable red sauce.

Most of the Italian population has moved out of traditional city neighborhoods and into the northwest side and western suburbs. The highest concentrations include Elmwood Park, the neighboring Norridge area and western suburbs like Melrose Park, Addison and Westchester. Click [HERE](#) for a percentage of Italian population by Zip Code.

The “Chicago Outfit” used the corrupted Cicero as their safe haven and headquarters for strategic management of citywide corruption in the mid-1920s. The “Hole in the Wall Gang” also operated out of Cicero in 70s and 80s. Ironically, there are no noteworthy Italian restaurants in Cicero today and the neighborhood Italian population is among the lowest.

Mob movie fans should note that the Godfather scene where Michael excuses himself for a bathroom trip and returns to execute his vendetta with Sollozzo and McCluskey at a small Italian restaurant in the Bronx, was allegedly based on a real life 1931 incident. To seize control, Lucky Luciano (Salvatore Lucania) set up a meeting with Joe the Boss Masseria at Nuova Villa Tammaro, a small Coney Island Italian restaurant in Brooklyn. Making another bathroom trip, Bugsy Siegel, Albert Anastasia, Vito Genovese & Joe Adonis allegedly stepped from the shadows - interrupted the seafood linguine consumption - and accelerated Masseria's trip to the next life. Closed in the late 1950s, the restaurant sold souvenirs and survived long after the historic underworld event. Ironically, Luciano didn't like coming to Chicago, he thought it was too violent.

With a 2025 **statewide Italian population of about 686,000**, Illinois is ranked 8th and well below New York's 2.1 million. On a per capita state basis, Illinois doesn't rank in the top ten. On a county basis, **Cook County is home to 265,000 Italians**, second to NY's Suffolk's 310,000, but again, not listed in the top ten on a per capita county basis.

Getting granular, **the Chicago MSA has 573,000 Italians**, third behind Philadelphia and NY. **On a big city MSA per capita basis, Chicago ranks seventh with 6.2%.**

Looking at these demographics in simple language, **Cook County contains 39% of the Italians in Illinois while the larger MSA (14 counties) contains 84% of the Italians in Illinois.** Illinois is the nation's largest soybean producer and second largest corn producer. As you can see, there aren't a lot of Italians farming in Southern Illinois.

Pennsylvania's largest cities are dominant on the Big City Per Capita MSA list on the following page. We always wanted to know why American Bandstand was produced in Philadelphia and now we know why. Frankie Avalon (Avallone), Fabian (Forte), Bobby Rydell (Ridarelli) & Al Martino (Jasper Cini).

See [Intravartolo](#) below for the big US cities with the highest per capita Italian population.

Big City US MSAs (2M+) With The Highest Percentage Of Italian Americans On A Per Capita Basis

1. Pittsburgh MSA- 14.9%
2. Philadelphia MSA- 11.9%
3. Boston MSA- 11.6%
4. New York City MSA- 10.8%
5. Cleveland MSA- 9.1%
6. Tampa MSA- 7.3%
- 7. Chicago MSA- 6.2%**
8. Detroit MSA- 5.8%
9. Baltimore MSA- 5.5%
10. Denver MSA- 5.3%

US MSAs with the Highest Number of Italian Americans

1. New York City MSA- 2,099,109
2. Philadelphia MSA- 741,529
- 3. Chicago MSA- 573,170**
4. Boston MSA- 572,197
5. Pittsburgh MSA- 361,276
6. Los Angeles MSA- 334,258
7. Miami MSA- 306,918
8. Detroit MSA- 250,813
9. Washington, DC MSA- 249,721
10. Tampa MSA- 242,896

U.S. Counties with the Highest Number of Italian Americans

1. Suffolk County, New York- 309,456
- 2. Cook County, Illinois- 264,220**
3. Nassau County, New York- 228,354
4. Los Angeles County, California- 224,380
5. Maricopa County, Arizona- 206,865
6. Middlesex County, Massachusetts- 194,786
7. Allegheny County, Pennsylvania- 181,684
8. Monmouth County, New Jersey- 148,079
9. San Diego County, California- 142,249
10. Bergen County, New Jersey- 140,023

U.S. States with the Highest Number of Italian Americans

1. New York- 2,116,020
2. Pennsylvania- 1,360,949
3. Florida- 1,297,929
4. New Jersey- 1,271,419
5. California- 1,268,906
6. Massachusetts- 757,451
7. Ohio- 692,235
- 8. Illinois- 685,600**
9. Texas- 594,355
10. Connecticut- 549,410

See next page for more on Chicago's Historic Italian Neighborhoods.

Taylor & Oakley During Prohibition

Chicago's gangsters were far more involved with Little Italy than the Heart of Italy during prohibition. While both areas were Italian-American enclaves, they had different demographics, geographic purposes and criminal footprints.

The Genna crime family, allied with Torrio & Capone, controlled the Taylor Street neighborhood.

Their industrial scale bootlegging turned the entire neighborhood into a decentralized alcohol factory. In short, Taylor Street was high ground for the "Beer Wars" in the 1920s. Anyone attempting to sell alcohol from rival factions was dealt with fatally, which resulted in many casualties, including some of the Genna brothers.

Taylor Street was also a gang breeding ground and home to the notorious "42 Gang," ultimately producing mob kingpins like Sam Giancana.

The Heart of Italy had a different cultural and economic makeup that kept it largely insulated from the high-profile crime activity during that era. Unlike Taylor Street, it was primarily populated by Northern Italians and known as a quiet and stable neighborhood.

The Prohibition era organized crime was heavily rooted in Sicilian and Neapolitan syndicates, like the Genna Brothers & Capone. As a result, the Outfit did not have a natural fit with the Oakley neighborhood.

As a community of food, it was known for tradesman, handcrafted markets and family-owned restaurants.

Other Historic Neighborhoods

Chicago's history features distinct eras of localized crime, exemplified by the 20th Century locations known as "Dead Man's Corner" (Bloody Maxwell) and "Murderers Row."

The notorious locations were known for violence and high body counts. They also evoke the era of impoverished immigrant enclaves, corrupt policed districts and pre-prohibition gang wars.

These areas are unrecognized today because their physical structures were demolished, their geographic layouts changed and the unique historical elements that fueled the violence no longer exists.

Dead Man's Corner

*Behind the notoriously corrupt Bloody Maxwell Police Station at 14th & Sangamon, the intersection earned the name as the original "**Dead Man's Corner**" during the 1880-1920 era.*

*As the heart of a neighborhood referred to as "**Bloody Maxwell**" by the Chicago Tribune in 1906, the dense, impoverished melting pot for waves of newly arrived immigrants and street gang rivalries was a frequent site of the most violent and relentless gun battles between police and local criminals in all Chicago.*

Overlapping with Taylor Street, Italians, Greeks and Jewish immigrants lived in the crowded neighborhood which was influenced by organized crime during the prohibition era.

Completely absorbed and transformed by the UIC campus, the ramshackle tenements, saloons and notoriety are a distant memory.

Death Corner/Murder Corner

*Populated after Taylor and Oakley Street, but before Capone rose to power, the area also known as “**Little Scilly** & “**Little Hell**” was dubbed the most dangerous neighborhood in Chicago.*

Located at the intersection of West Oak & Milton (now Cleveland Ave) on the Near North Side, the neighborhood became the epicenter of “Black Hand” extortion and early syndicate vendettas.

*Between 1905-1920, the corner functioned as a real “**Murderers’ Row.**” Fearing retaliation, residents adhered to omerta, leaving the police unable to resolve the execution style killings.*

The impoverished tenement heavy neighborhood was demolished in the 1940s-1950s to make way for public housing later known as Cabrini Green. After decades of poverty, gang violence and structural decay, it was also demolished in stages between 2000-2010 to make way for modern development, leaving the history of the area less than a distant memory.

See [Wikipedia](#) for more on Chicago’s Historic Italian Neighborhoods,

See [ZIPAtlas](#) for Zip Codes with the highest percentage of Italians.

See [World Population Review](#) for a map of Italian population by state.

“Buon Cibo. Buon Vino. Buon Amici”

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STOP

OAKLEY STREET ITALIAN RESTAURANTS: (Once a historic Italian area, it is primarily Hispanic today). Little Italy on Taylor Street is also much more diverse today. To this author, few if any of the old Italian neighborhoods currently offer distinguished Italian dining today.

See [Wikipedia](#) for more on Chicago's historic Italian neighborhoods.

<https://medium.com/religion-ethnicity-and-race-in-chicago-neighborhoo/italian-neighborhoods-in-chicago-4b75f8e655c1>

<https://zipatlas.com/us/il/chicago/zip-code-comparison/percentage-italian-population.htm>

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/italian-population-by-state>

<https://intravartolo.wine/2023/10/the-top-10-most-italian-states-counties-and-cities-in-america/>

La Scarola (Owned & operated by Joey Mondelli & Armando Vasquez since 1998. La Scarola is a popular, small, crowded old school Italian American time capsule on West Grand Ave. Lots of red sauce, big portions & Sinatra ambiance. Cool place for those eating Italian food for the first time & interested in shots of Tequila with Armando, but **overrated & inundated with smoke from Richard's Bar, a well-maintained neighboring dive bar**)

Italian Village (

Alfredo Capitanini left Tuscany for Chicago in 1924. After working in a kitchen next door, he opened the Italian Village in 1927. He subsequently bought the building in 1945. The second generation kept the ball rolling in the 60s and 70s. Like the tuxedo clad Italian waiters from Italy (Lorenzo, Frank S, Val, Oscar (Mexican), Frank D & others), the heavenly old school food was truly phenomenal.

Sitting in a booth next to the waiter call wall button on the third floor, we can still taste the big baked Clams Casino (served with the ice-cold Lowenbrau in small white wine glasses) , baked Stuffed Squid, Manicotti & Cannelloni combinations, large Agnolotti, unmatched Veal Saltimbocca Alla Romana cooked in sherry and the huge antipasti trays.

Washed the appetizers down with Jermann's white Vintage Tunina and La Scola's Gavi di Gavi Black Label. The pioneering Super Tuscan Tignanello was consumed with the meat dishes. Influenced by wine consultant Tom Abruzzini and his breakneck tasting sessions, The Village wine list may have been the best in the city at that time, including French Burgundies imported by Wildman and Schoonmaker.

Fueled by three martini lunches, a bustling location on Monroe Street and the most consistent, high quality, classic Italian food in the loop, business was booming. The place was full of commodity traders, DCFG foodies, lawyers, theatergoers and other regulars. Inebriated, some of the late lunch crowd tumbled down the third-floor stairs on the way out.

After the third generation took over in the 80s, everything changed. Still sitting on valuable real estate, the 4th generation may be involved now. *Serving mediocre food to tourists today, the legendary kitchen & staff are now a distant memory.*

<https://www.italianvillage-chicago.com/our-story>

Chicago's [Italian Village](#) is managed today by the **fourth generation** of the Capitanini family, alongside third-generation owner Gina Capitanini. Siblings Jonathan and Giovanna Capitanini represent this newest generation taking the reins and modernizing the historic Loop establishment.

Family Leadership

- **Third Generation:** Gina Capitanini
- **Fourth Generation:** Jonathan Capitanini and Giovanna Capitanini

Modern Updates

- Operating the landmark multi-level restaurant space on Monroe Street.
- Launching newer basement and street-level concepts like Sotto, Bar Sotto, and Café Pisolino.

La Scarola (Owned & operated by Joey Mondelli & Armando Vasquez since 1998. La Scarola is a popular, small, crowded old school Italian American time capsule on West Grand Ave. Lots of red sauce, big portions & Sinatra ambiance. Cool place for those eating Italian food for the first time & interested in shots of Tequila with Armando, but overrated & inundated with smoke from Richard's Bar, a well-maintained neighboring dive bar)

LOST ITALIAN RESTAURANTS:

Hundreds of Chicagoland's French & Italian Restaurants have closed in recent decades. Some of the more noteworthy Italian closures include:

Agostino's 2023

Armando's 1984

Como Inn 2001

Doro's 1986

Febo's

Gianotti's

La Fontanella 2020

La Gondola 2024

Sabatino's 2018

Scoozi 2014

Spiaggia 2021

Trattoria 10 2020

LOST FRENCH RESTAURANTS:

STOP

Founded in 1971 by Rich Melman (RJ Grunts), the Chicago-based Lettuce has become one of the nation's largest. By launching independent brands like RPM, Wildfire & Aba, Lettuce created specialized dining concepts that distinguish them from the rest of the group's restaurants. Focusing on the upscale and location, the RPM brand (Italian, Steak & Seafood) was designed to symbolize luxury, high-end fine dining.

While Gibson's Italia and RPM Seafood both have presence on Chicago's Riverfront, the locations, viewing angles, aesthetics and atmosphere are different. Gibson's offers dramatic, direct-facing, skyscraper views. Capturing the riverfront energy, RPM Seafood boasts a broad, multi-angle view that stretches East down the river & north over the skyline. As a result, the RPM Seafood and the lower level Portofino dining experience is more integrated with the social river scene.

Located in the trendy River North along the iconic Chicago River, RPM Seafood, RPM Events and Portofino Pizza are all housed in the same four-level riverfront complex at 317 N. Clark. The Multi-level vertical layout includes Portofino pizza at the bottom river level, allowing boat dock access. RPM events is on the level above while RPM Seafood is on the main floor and mezzanine, two levels above.

RPM Seafood is a premier fine dining destination in a unique location shared with Portofino Pizza on the north bank of the Chicago River's downtown Main Branch. The picturesque views are also shared by both restaurants. The restaurant is popular, busy and vibrant. The somewhat formal glitter dressed crowd includes professionals, tourists, celebrities and those celebrating special occasions.

The airy layout spans two floors and includes a large outdoor patio, second floor mezzanine terraces and a lively bar. Anchored with large booths, floor to ceiling windows and modern luxurious décor, including neutral colors, rich wood & brass finishes, some feel it is yacht-inspired. While expensive, the service and food are good.

The menu features upscale, global-influenced seafood, including premium raw bars, towers, whole fish, prime steaks, signature pasta and other coastal classics. The most popular and well executed dishes seem to be the Grand Tower, Yellowfin Tuna Crispy Rice, RPM Crab Cake, Bluefin Tuna & Avocado Sushi Roll, Miso Black Cod and Wild Alaskan Halibut.

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

Portofino Pizza is a sun-drenched, casual and more affordable restaurant sharing the same vibrant riverfront address with RPM Seafood, but they are located on the lower level, directly on the river. Screaming summertime appeal, the less glitzy Portofino Pizza is busy, crowded, crazy popular and more socially-centric, including yoga classes on the outdoor patio. The people watching, scene-stealing location is popular for power lunches, dates, after work cocktails and celebrations. The crowd consists of upscale 20-40 somethings, including professionals, tourists and other locals.

Less formal than RPM, the social media driven attire is smart, casual and resort like. Like a European beach club, the Riviera inspired décor is tasteful, airy, yacht like and transporting. The décor includes low whitewashed wood ceilings, neutral tones, lemon themed elements, hanging greenery, panoramic windows and large doors that swing open during warm weather.

The menu includes hand-stretched pizza and a well-developed menu of wraparound Italian food. While some feel the mostly average food may be below Lettuce standards, the real appeal is the location, killer views, expansive all-weather patio directly above the water, vibe and the social element.

NO happy hour. Closes at 11:00 pm on weekends. Click [HERE](#) for Yelp images. Click [HERE](#) for all the Lettuce happy hours.

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. Gold Coast. Viagra Triangle.

After a 25-year run, Bellevue took over the space previously occupied by the very popular Tavern on Rush in May of 2023. Moving a few blocks south, the Tavern on Rush reopened in September of 2024.

Picking up the torch, Bellevue is home to the best people watching bar, lounge and street level outdoor summertime dining in the storied Gold Coast's Viagra Triangle. Located at 1031 N. Rush in the heart of the Gold Coast, Bellevue is next door to Carmine's, across the street from Gibson's steakhouse and around the corner from the Luxbar on E. Bellevue Street.

The facilities include a restaurant, bar, lounge and street level outdoor dining. The two-story building has an additional bar & open kitchen on the second floor.

The service, great location, high standards and vibe are excellent at all levels. *The sophisticated, timeless, classic food and menu are also excellent, well executed and underrated. The most popular dishes are the classics, seafood and pastas.* The popular, trendy, elegant, upscale and vibrant ambiance is simply awesome. Bellevue's inside bar is also one of Chicago's best year-round bars for socializing.

Neighborhood Social Club Happy Hour Monday-Thursday, 3:00-6:00 pm. Discounted wine, cocktails & food. Lounge only. Closes at 12:00 am on weekends. Click [HERE](#) for Yelp (4.0) images and [HERE](#) for **Happy Hour**.

The next-door **Olio e Piu's** Italian La Dolce Vita atmosphere includes soaring ceilings, old looking lime washed walls, antique chandeliers, lush greenery, flower motifs and large windows. The 360-degree pewter

topped island bar provides rustic elegance with a lively social atmosphere, all-around seating and a full menu.

Both traditional and innovative, the authentic Italian menu spans the country. While the menu includes fresh seafood, rustic meats and scratch pasta, it seems pasta driven. The fritti primavera is also popular and the heavenly panna cotta is divine. After a soft opening, the food is much improved and more consistent. In addition to the unique and glowing ambiance, both neighboring restaurants offer outdoor street level dining.

Stretching from Tuesday-Saturday, 4:00-7:00 pm, the popular and extended Happy Hour is featured at both restaurants (bar & outdoor dining). Discounted wine, cocktails & food. No corkage Tuesday. Closes at 11:00 pm on weekends. Click [HERE](#) for Yelp images and [HERE](#) for **Happy Hour**.

LUXBAR (Gibsons): Upscale Casual Food Dining & Gold Coast Socializing

-Elevated All-American Bar & Restaurant

-18 E. Bellevue. Gold Coast. Viagra Triangle

Located around the corner from Bellevue, the Luxbar is another popular, trendy, vibrant Gold Coast staple. Opened in 2005, the more affordable entry is a core component of the Gibson's Group.

In addition to the bar, lounge and outdoor seating, the second-floor features private dining and event hosting.

Catering to a well-dressed, trendy crowd younger than the Bellevue scene, the more casual atmosphere features an *impressively broad menu*. While Gibsons *high quality American feel good food is dominant, smaller steaks are available. The Grass-Fed Australian Steak Frite, a staple of European Bistros, is the most popular item ordered for delivery.*

The elevated casual food is consistently good, but the bar fare takes a back seat to the location, lively atmosphere and people watching. The Luxbar is not destination dining, but the social atmosphere is noteworthy.

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

LYRA (DineAmic:) Fine Dining & Destination Socializing In An Award Winning, Celebrity Chef-Driven, Party Type Location

-Modern Greek & Mediterranean

-905 W. Fulton Market. West Loop.

Appealing to the overdressed and perhaps affluent, Lyra is a large, popular, upscale, high-energy, party centric Greek Restaurant in the West Loop. Located at 925 W. Fulton (Peoria & Fulton), a main artery of Restaurant Row, DineAmic opened Lyra in 2022. The similar Greek Nios was opened nearby in 2022, but closed abruptly in 2023.

The spacious Lyra is home to a large circular bar surrounded by high cocktail tables & bar stools, the visual anchor of the venue. It also has a semi-private lounge above the main dining area, an open kitchen perched above the dining tables, a popular outdoor patio and private event spaces.

Teamed with an acclaimed chef, *the modern Greek & Mediterranean food is wood-fired and meant to be shared family-style*. The food is fine and while a few dishes stand out, like the grilled octopus, lamb chops & spanakopita, the festive atmosphere is the driving force behind Lyra's success.

A trendy spot for after work cocktails, Lyra transitions to a vibrant Mykonos type supper club on weekend evenings. The energy shifts dramatically on Friday & Saturday around 11:00 pm. The lights dim, the DJ takes over and the Greek club music starts, dynamics that turn the space into a club like party with sparklers, table dancing and napkin waiving.

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. Heart Of River North. Kinzie & Dearborn

The restaurant is located at a few blocks east of the Alta K building, the East Bank Club, Guilt Bar, Ciccio Mio and Bavette's, all in the heart of River North. Not to be confused with the more casual Bar Siena in the W. Loop, Siena Tavern opened in 2013. The two-story Bar Siena followed a few years later, including the street level walk-up BomboBar. The DineAmic group is owned by Lucas Stioff & David Rekhson in partnership with celebrity chef Fabio Viviani.

The upscale Siena Tavern is popular, trendy, vibrant, loud and fun. The polished sleek hotspot attracts a stylish *see-and-be-seen* crowd. The large main oval bar is surrounded by additional seating and is the heart of the spacious Bar Siena. While reservations are difficult, the adjacent dining room is stuffed with large semi-circle booths, Edison lights and formal touches.

Influenced by La Taverna in Siena Italy, Siena Tavern is a culinary staple within the group's brand. Offering *sophisticated classic Italian dining with a modern twist*, Siena Tavern fuses a rustic approach with glitz & glam. Offering all day dining, the scratch farm to fork food and service are excellent. Indeed, hard to believe a restaurant that includes Tavern in the name can serve such well-executed food.

Happy Hour Sunday-Friday, 3:00-6:00 pm. Discounted food & cocktails. Main bar only. Closes at 12:00 am on weekends. Click [HERE](#) for Yelp images and [HERE](#) for **Happy Hour**

Regarding the sister restaurant Olio e Piu, there are many world class Italian Restaurants we miss, including Spiaggia (2021, La Fontenella (2020)) and the world pasta famous pasta from Doro's on Rush (1982).

*When Nancy Goldberg suspended operations at Maxim's, one of our foodies actually purchased some of the Grivelet French Pommard they had in inventory. Another had an altercation at Le Perroquet when the stuffy staff wouldn't let his wife off the elevator. Populated with waiters from Italy, another had his wedding reception at Jacques. While the groom drank Armand Rousseau's

Clos de la Roche French Burgundy daily for under \$25 back then, he opted to serve the pioneering Super Tuscan Tignanelo at his wedding.

in River North, located at the corner of Wells & Superior, is among the latest. The Lake is

Piccolo Sogno has served the delicious low-cost Matilde Falanghina as the house wine for almost fifteen years. Selected by co-founder and wine director Ciro Longobardo, a Naples born wine fanatic who loves his job, Piccolo Sogno has one of the best Italian wine lists in Chicago. Their well-trained waiters are also among the most wine savvy.