

[FOOD & DRINK]
BITES

By Lisa Shames



BEAN THERE Tre Soldi's fagioli antipasti

MINI REVIEW

NO SMALL CHANGE

THE CUISINE OF ROME FINDS A WELCOME HOME AT TRE SOLDI.

Restaurateur Jack Weiss has already proven he knows a thing or two about Tuscan cuisine at River North's Coco Pazzo, going on 20-plus years, and at its younger and more casual sibling, Coco Pazzo Café. Next up on his Italy hit list? Rome, which he explores along with chef Brandon Wolff (Osteria

via Stato, La Madia, Signature Room) at his newest restaurant, **Tre Soldi**. Even if you didn't know *tre soldi* means 'three coins' in Italian and references the Trevi Fountain and the 1954 movie *Three Coins in the Fountain*, the mural of Rome and its iconic architecture on one wall of the Streeterville restaurant is a hint at what's going on at this casual, family-friendly spot. An even better clue? The six Roman-style pizzas (think a thin crust with a bit of chewiness to it). We're partial to the *cavolo nero*, topped with crunchy pieces of kale, sweet caramelized

onions, mozzarella and Parmesan. But Tre Soldi is more than just pizza (although, truth be told, we could make a meal out of any one of them). The *fagioli antipasti* combines perfectly cooked bright green fava beans with crispy pancetta, pecorino cheese and a tangy lemon-dill dressing. There are a half-dozen or so pastas to choose from, including the oh-so-Roman *cacio e pepe* and rigatoni mixed with just the right amounts of Slagel pork sausage and zucchini in a tomato-based sauce. And one of these days, we hope to actually save enough room for the pan-roasted half chicken with Calabrian chile oil from the entree selection. Forget about throwing a coin in the Trevi Fountain to make our Italian food dreams come true—we've found it right here. *Grazie, Jack.* 212 E. Ohio St., 312.664.0212, tresoldichicago.com



BELLY UP
Crafting cocktails
at Tre Soldi



NEW SHOP ALERT

Meat Market

How do you go from a career consulting in bomb-resistant materials to maker of artisanal cured meats at Illinois' only USDA-certified salumeria? If you're **West Loop Salumi's** Greg Laketek it starts with a lifelong passion for aged meat treats like pancetta, bresaola and lardo fueled by visits to his relatives in Italy. Throw in classes at Kendall College and hands-on training with Massimo Spigaroli, Italy's king of culatello (a sought-after cured ham), along with two high-tech drying chambers, and Laketek's dream of making the salumi he grew up with became a reality. Following traditional recipes, Laketek, along with partner Jesse Katzman (Avec), uses top-quality heritage meats, plus imported ingredients—think fennel pollen, Spanish paprika, black truffles—for the dozen or so products he sells online and at his small shop on the weekends. Their hard work has been attracting lots of fans, including some four-legged ones. "Dogs love walking by our shop," says Laketek. "The ones that lay down get a treat." Lucky dogs, indeed. 1111 W. Randolph St., 312.255.7004, westloopsalumi.com

TRE SOLDI PHOTOS BY MATT SAVAGE; WEST LOOP SALUMI PHOTOS BY GADONES PHOTOGRAPHY



A CUT ABOVE
From top: Greg Laketek;
slicing bresaola.

SPIRITS SPOTLIGHT

LIQUID ASSETS

THE CRAFT COCKTAIL SCENE GETS SOME LOCAL LOVE WITH THESE NEW LIQUORS.



REAL RUSSIAN

When Russian third-generation master distiller Grishka Polevoy arrived in the U.S. in 1979, the market for small-batch spirits was lacking. But when attitudes started to change, the engineer jumped at the

chance to once again make his handcrafted vodka from a family recipe dating back to 1905. Smart move. Illinois-based **Real Russian**, available at Binny's, has earned awards for its clean and well-balanced vodka that includes notes of zingy citrus and pine. See, you can go home again. premierdistillery.com



BALSAM

If anyone can convince us to drink vermouth, ubermixologist Adam Seger can. After all, he's been ahead of Chicago cocktail trends for years.

Balsam, launching this month, is similar

to a traditional sweet Italian vermouth and includes ingredients such as nutmeg, cloves, vanilla bean and pu-erh tea. The versatile spirit is terrific on its own over ice or mixed with red or sparkling wines. "It's like 'boom,' a Champagne cocktail on the fly," says Seger. We'll drink to that. balsamspirits.com



LEATHERBEE

With three talented bartenders behind it (creator Brenton Engel, along with Nathan Ozug and Ian Van Veen), it's no wonder the handcrafted gins from **Letherbee**

Distillers are so darn good—and can be found in some of our favorite new cocktails around town (looking at you, Parson's Chicken & Fish negroni slushy). And it seems the small Ravenswood distillery is just getting started, if its more recent malört and barrel-aged absinthe are any indication. letherbee.com



CRAFTHOUSE

Bottled cocktails often get a bad rap, but in the hands of The Aviary's Charles Joly (recently named Bartender of the Year at Tales of the Cocktail) and The Drawing Room's Matt Lindner, it's a much

different story. Tapping into their years of behind-the-bar experience, the two recently created **Crafthouse Cocktails**, a tasty line of bottled drinks that includes a Moscow Mule, Paloma and Southside. "We're getting into some uncharted territory, but we hope to blaze a new trail," says Joly. crafthousecocktails.com



SITTING PRETTY Jessy Bolt (left) and Nicole Ess, founders of Un86'd

GIVING BACK

Helping Hands

Chicago's hospitality workers have a friend in Un86'd.

Spend time working at one of Chicago's restaurants or bars and two things become evident fairly quickly: It's a close-knit industry, and health insurance, for the most part, is nonexistent. Those two factors weren't lost on Jessy Bolt, server/manager at Carriage House, and Nicole Ess, server at La Sirena Clandestina, who together formed **Un86'd**, a charity created to provide monetary relief to restaurant professionals in need. With their 28 combined years in the business, the duo has reached out to the industry folk they've met along the way to help with the events they organize. Case in point: A recent hot dog challenge benefit at Red Door that included guest chefs from Three Aces, Publican Quality Meats, Bangers & Lace, The Bluebird, Bistro Bordeaux and Homestead. Some \$7,300 was raised for Michel Davis, a restaurant worker hospitalized after trying to break up a bar fight. In addition to the monthly special events, Bolt and Ess work with restaurants to create specialty cocktails with proceeds going to Un86'd. Down the road, they hope to help source lower-cost health-care options for Chicago hospitality employees. "We've watched so many of our friends without insurance get hurt," says Ess. "So, we thought it would be awesome to do something for our industry." un86d.org