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Garden Parties

Tip your glass to these stellar outdoor patios

BY LISA SHAMES

Spend any time in Chicago and odds are you'll hear a joke or three about the weather—yeah, we know, it gets cold. But once warm temperatures arrive, we take our outdoor activities very seriously, including finding the perfect patios to enjoy a cold beer, a seasonal cocktail or glass of wine.

Sure, the main dining room of **VOLO** (2008 W. Roscoe St., 773.348.4600) is cozy enough, but insiders know to head to the back of this Roscoe Village wine bar to its beautiful, rustic garden. There you'll find cabanas, chaise lounges, a fountain and a 100-year-old barn. Toast your good fortune in snagging a coveted spot over a bubbly flight or go for one of the 40-plus wines by the glass. Non-oenophiles can opt for cocktails or beer, while everyone will appreciate the seasonal American small plates, such as duck confit and crispy flatbreads.

If your idea of an al fresco affair involves fine champagnes, organic cocktails, caviar, sushi and stunning city views, then **NOMI GARDEN** (800 N. Michigan Ave., 312.335.1234) is where you'll want to be. Located on the seventh floor of the Park Hyatt Chicago, the sophisticated urban oasis features chic Italian furniture, large ivory



OPPOSITE: Orso's enchanting patio. ABOVE, FROM LEFT: Cocktails at NoMI's rooftop garden lounge; Volo Wine Bar's back patio has seating in the main courtyard and semi-private cabanas.

umbrellas and manicured topiaries. The Garden isn't afraid to show its casual side with a varied selection of beers and sandwiches. Those inspired by all the greenery can opt for a glass of absinthe.

Sports bars are a dime a dozen in Chicago, but the just-opened **MARKET** (1113 W. Randolph St., 312.929.4787) is in a league all its own. First there's co-owner Kenny Williams, who just happens to be the general manager of the White Sox. Then there's the layout of the West Loop spot, which includes, in addition to a 4,500-square-foot bar and dining area, a huge outdoor beer garden surrounded by trees, a sidewalk café and a sprawling rooftop lounge. Market features an extensive drink menu as well as plenty of creative twists on American cuisine—some mac 'n' cheese muffins perhaps?

ORSO'S (1401 N. Wells St., 312.787.6604) in Old Town may be more old-school Italian restaurant than bar, but just because you're not looking for multicourse dinner doesn't mean you can't take advantage of their secluded back garden. Grab a spot at the outdoor bar—or at a table on a quiet weekday—and enjoy classic cocktails or Italian wines. No matter where you park yourself, the 25-year-old grape vine canopy overhead guarantees everyone's sitting pretty.

West Town's **OLD OAK TAP** (2109 W. Chicago Ave., 773.772.0406) may be a bit off the beaten path, but with its 1,500-square-foot beer garden landscaped with flowerbeds, large ceramic pots and a lantern-adorned pergola, it's worth the trek. Look for a hip mix of friendly artists and musicians hanging out there who not only appreciate the eclectic selection of beers on tap—3 Floyds, Delerium Tremens, Maudite Red Ale—but the shareable eats, such as sriracha chicken wings and homemade pretzels with cheese sauce. ■