

THE 50 FINEST

Chicago's dining scene is nothing if not eclectic—and that's just how we like it. From lavish tasting menus and classic French cuisine to steakhouses galore, we're serving up a glittering, tasty roster of places to try now. We hope you've come hungry.

BY LISA SHAMES

WITH LIZ GROSSMAN, CHANDLER ROLLINS,
SARAH RYAN, JESSIE SARDINA AND DAVID ZIVAN



FISH TALE Scottish langoustine with caviar, white asparagus and torched lardo from the West Loop's Oriole

ARBOR

"Have it your way" takes on a new—and delicious—meaning at this innovative Logan Square spot where chef Leonard Hollander creates customized multicourse Midwestern omakase dinners (\$30 to \$130). Uberseasonal dishes might include sweet pea velouté and gin-cured salmon with a poached egg. That just-for-you mindset applies to the beverage pairings too (\$25 to \$55), which focus on small wine producers. Bespoke dining? Count us in. **POWER MOVE** Sustainability isn't just lip service here: A small farm out back provides Arbor with 60-plus varieties of produce, while a rooftop apiary supplies honey. 2545 W. Diversey Ave., 312.866.0795, arborprojects.com

THE BLANCHARD

Traditional French cuisine becomes new again in the hands of classically trained chef Jason Paskewitz. His gorgeous caviar-topped *oeuf Outhier* (\$16) is an Instagram star, while the four preparations of foie gras (\$16 to \$22) have led to heated discussions on which one is best. Everyone agrees, though, that the Dover sole *meunière* (\$42) is amazing, especially when paired with a glass of 2014 Domaine Laroche Saint-Martin Chablis (\$17). **POWER MOVE** Reserve one of the six seats at the kitchen counter, and odds are Paskewitz will drop off a plate or two. 1935 N. Lincoln Park West, 872.829.3971, theblanchardchicago.com

BOEUFHAUS

As if we needed more proof Chicago's having a major steakhouse moment, along comes this charming meat market away from the expanding herd's downtown habitat. At this West Town brasserie, chefs Brian Ahern and Jamie Finnegan's culinary magic is just as apparent with steak, including a hefty 55-day dry-aged rib-eye (\$62), as it is with delicate vegetables—crudités with Green Goddess dressing (\$8), anyone? **POWER MOVE** Wine whiz Nathan Adams' (Red & White wine shop) list includes plenty of hard-to-find bottles that are often in short supply. If a bottle of the 2006 Terrebrune Mourvedre (\$105) is available, grab it. 1012 N. Western Ave., 773.661.2116, boeufhaus.com

DOS URBAN CANTINA

This stylish contemporary Mexican spot is everything you would hope for in a project from a team led by two veterans



10 MOST EXCITING NEW RESTAURANTS

of the legendary Topolobampo, couple Brian Enyart and Jennifer Jones. Gorgeous raw scallops surrounded with spicy lime aquachile, chia seeds and roasted sweet potato (\$13) and beef pibil with collard greens, pickled onions and black beans (\$19) demonstrate the place's flavorful approach—and be sure to save room for the dark and decadent Chocolate Cake on a Fancy Plate (\$7). **POWER MOVE** For a dazzling private party, reserve the bar seating surrounding the open kitchen and let the chefs do their thing. 2829 W. Armitage Ave., 773.661.6452, dosurbancantina.com

GREENRIVER

This Streeterville restaurant is full of surprises beyond its unusual location on the 18th floor of a medical center. While the gorgeous views are hard to beat, it's the contemporary American food of chef Aaron Lirette that captures our attention with dishes such as housemade saffron spaghetti with a creamy uni sauce (\$25). Well, that and the perfectly balanced cocktails (\$13 to \$19) of Julia Momose that can also be enjoyed in Annex, the

restaurant's sultry lounge. **POWER MOVE** Lirette's eight-course tasting menu (\$140) features seasonal dishes not on the regular menu. 259 E. Erie St., 312.337.0101, greenriverchi.com

MAPLE & ASH

This steakhouse in the heart of the Gold Coast manages to be both sexy and muscular at the same time. Chef Danny Grant takes full advantage of the restaurant's 12-foot wood-burning hearth with dishes ranging from roasted seafood towers (\$120 to \$175) to a juicy New York strip (\$44). **POWER MOVE** When there's a James Beard Award-winning sommelier in the house, you pay attention. Even better when it's Belinda Chang, who is eager and expert with her suggestions. 8 W. Maple St., 312.944.8888, mapleandash.com

MONTEVERDE

As the former executive chef of Spiaggia, Sarah Grueneberg knows a thing or two about traditional Italian cuisine. But at her West Loop restaurant, she isn't afraid to bend

the rules with delicious dishes such as cacio whey pepe (\$14), her clever riff on the traditional Roman dish, and schnitzel made with skate wing (\$25). **POWER MOVE** Pick up some pro pasta tips or just enjoy the show with a center seat at the bar, which offers an up-close view of the *pastificio* (pasta-making station) and the nimble-fingered women behind it. 1020 W. Madison St., 312.888.3041, monteverdechicago.com

ORIOLE

After tasting what chef Noah Sandoval was able to do at a gluten-free restaurant, we wondered what he could create without the ingredient restriction. Plenty, it turns out, as his 15-course evolving tasting menu (\$175) at this elegant spot proves. His Alaskan king crab is as beautiful to look at as it is to eat and even better when paired with the 2014 Domaine Weinbach Clos des Capucins riesling (\$75, part of the wine-pairing menu). **POWER MOVE** There's star power on the sweet side of the menu too with acclaimed Pastry Chef Genie Kwon (Boka, Eleven Madison Park) in charge of desserts. 661 W. Walnut St., 312.877.5339, oriolechicago.com

PRIME & PROVISIONS

Set inside a 100-year-old building, this Loop steakhouse captures everything people love about the beloved dining tradition while gently nudging it into the future. That means you'll find cushy leather booths, powerful cabernets and dry-aged Black Angus beef (\$39 to \$68), as well as a pickled purple cauliflower salad (\$15). **POWER MOVE** Dark liquor lovers will appreciate the thoughtful selection of whiskey and scotch, such as Macallan 18 year (\$35). 222 N. LaSalle St., 312.726.7777, primeandprovisions.com

SWIFT & SONS

With his French culinary background and meat expertise—he's often credited with spearheading the now-ubiquitous nose-to-tail dining trend here—chef Chris Pandel elevates the steakhouse experience with ease at this sophisticated West Loop restaurant with dishes ranging from English pea cappelletti (\$13) to beef Wellington for two (\$105). **POWER MOVE** Up your dessert game with Pastry Chef Meg Galus' chocolate trolley (priced per piece), which is as wonderful as it sounds. 1000 W. Fulton Market, 312.733.9420, swiftandsonschiicago.com



6 FOOD MECCAS

CHICAGO FRENCH MARKET

Located in the Ogilvie Transportation Center, this European-style market has recently undergone a major renovation. While its decor takes inspiration from Paris, its 32 local vendors range from barbecue (Lillie's Q) and Korean (K-Kitchen) to gourmet meatballs (Polpetti).

The long line at newcomer Aloha Poke Co. looks daunting, but the plump ahi tuna dressed in spicy aioli, scallions and cucumber (\$8 to \$15) is worth the wait. 131 N. Clinton St., 312.575.0306, frenchmarketchicago.com

EATALY

Mario Batali's 62,000-square-foot food emporium has come a long

way from when it opened nearly three years ago and had to close for a day after it ran out of food. Today, it's an epicenter of Italian cuisine, including a market, hands-on cooking classes, cafes and its first Roman-style pizza concept, Pizza alla Pala, which debuted last month. 43 E. Ohio St., 312.521.8700, eataly.com

GREEN CITY MARKET

Lincoln Park's beloved Green City Market, which got its start back in 1998, branches out on Saturdays this summer with a second location in the West Loop. While vendors frequently change, Justice of the Pies tops

our not-to-be-missed list. Its lavender blueberry pie (\$30 to \$40) is a decadent combination of fruity and floral flavors wrapped up in one lattice-topped buttery pastry. 211 S. Peoria St., 773.880.1266, greencitymarket.org

LATICINITY

Celeb chef Richard Sandoval's Latinicity, located inside the Loop's Block 37, serves as the perfect solution to post-shopping hunger with a tapas restaurant, full bar and 12 food stalls ranging from Mexican tortas and empanadas to Latin-style sushi. This month, Sandoval expands with an 80-seat beer garden in partnership with Denver's

acclaimed Crazy Mountain brewery. 108 N. State St., 312.795.4444, latinicity.com

LOCAL FOODS

Starting out in early 2013 as a way to bridge the gap between Midwest farmers and Chicago chefs, Local Foods has grown beyond its wholesale-distributor status with its 17,000-square-foot food hub/ gourmet market located on the eastern edge of Bucktown. There, you'll find farm-fresh products, cooking classes and workshops, meat butchered in-house at The Butcher & Larder, and delicious daily changing dishes at its cafe, Stock, from chef Abra Berens. New this summer are make-at-home



DAIRY QUEEN
Eataly's cheese counter features an extensive selection of the best Italian and American *formaggi*.

BALENA PHOTO BY ERIC KLEINBERG; FORBIDDEN ROOT PHOTO BY ANTHONY TAHIER; MOMOTARO PHOTO COURTESY OF GALDONES PHOTOGRAPHY; CHICAGO CUT PHOTO BY JACK EDINGER

items in the refrigerated cases as well as a boxed-lunch program. 1427 W. Willow St., 312.432.6575, localfoods.com

PUBLICAN QUALITY MEATS

PQM, as the cognoscenti call it, is much more than a minimally furnished, bright cafe/gourmet grocer: It is the meaty epicenter of a vertically integrated deliciousness operation. In the basement, carcasses hang behind a glass-doored cooler, and hip butchers produce an endless array of sausages and cuts (like dry-aged Slagel Farm ribeye, \$33 per pound) on offer at One-Off Hospitality's restaurants (The Publican and Blackbird among them) and in the display cases upstairs. 825 W. Fulton Market St., 312.445.8977,

5 SPOTS WHEN YOU'RE THIRSTY FOR...



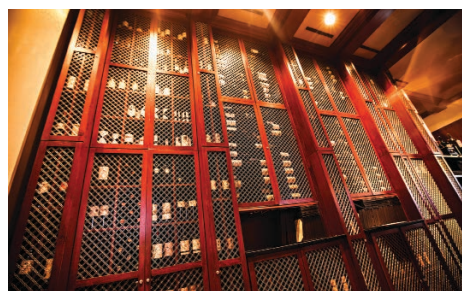
AMARO At any given time, the smart Italian spot Balena features 25 or more amaros on its list—the result of Beverage Director Keith Whitten's dedication to the herbaceous Italian afterdinner drink. You might try his rarest current holding, Don Bairo (2 oz. for \$20). "The bottles date from the late 1970s, and it was discontinued in the '80s," he says. "Like a wine, it has developed some floral, subtle characteristics." 1633 N. Halsted St., 312.867.3888, balenachicago.com

CRAFT BEER Forbidden Root sprang up as if out of a beer-loving foodie's dream; a place dedicated not only to making seasonal artisanal beers but also to crafting a menu built in harmony with the brews. Thus, you might bounce a delicious vegetarian wild-mushroom pot pie (\$16) off of the Number Six, a smoked porter with chipotle peppers—though with 18 taps, the pairing variations are nearly endless. 1746 W. Chicago Ave., 312.929.2202, forbiddenroot.com



JAPANESE WHISKEY When the rarest of the Japanese whiskeys arrive at Momotaro's izakaya, the dimly lit downstairs tavern, they don't tend to last long. "The stocking is irregular because of the allocation and the high demand," says expert Beverage Director Kolin Juckins. But ask: There may be a gem, partially hidden for aficionados. And in a pinch, there's almost always a pour of the intriguing peated Ichiro Chichibu (\$39). 820 W. Lake St., 312.733.4818, momotarochicago.com

AMERICAN WHISKEY The second line atop the massive document that Untitled Supper Club calls simply Whiskey List claims that this dim, sexy boîte has "the largest selection of American whiskey in the world." Can that be possible? Well, it has the Blade & Bow 22-year (\$46), Old Blowhard 91-proof (\$50) and Jim Beam White Label (\$7), all on the same list. Don't bet against it. 111 W. Kinzie St., 312.880.1511, untitledsupperclub.com



TROPHY WINE Chicago Cut proprietor David Flom acknowledges the outsized charms of Napa cabs—and the list at this muscular steak palace features plenty of worthy West Coast conquests—but to his mind, if your celebration requires a truly exciting, extraordinary bottle, head to the Old World and crack a 1990 Château Margaux (\$3,400). It's that rarest of birds, a Robert Parker 100-pointer. 300 N. LaSalle St., 312.329.1800, chicagocutsteakhouse.com

3 TOP MIXOLOGISTS & THEIR SIGNATURE DRINKS



SIX BIT, \$19, ANNEX

Whether she's creating cocktails for GreenRiver or sister lounge Annex, Head Bartender **Julia Momose** always takes the road less traveled. "I really enjoy playing with savory flavorings and unique pairings," she says. This cocktail from Annex, which combines aquavit, blended Irish whiskey, vermouth, cumin, walnut, cacao and Sotol Por Siempre (a vegetal-tasting spirit from Mexico) is no exception. 259 E. Erie St., 18th Floor, 312.337.0101, greenriverchi.com



RUM RIVER MYSTIC, \$12, LOST LAKE

"I love simple, classic-inspired recipes, and I love to split base spirits," says **Paul McGee**. "This cocktail exemplifies both." The spirit-forward drink, which is a variation on the 1930s Preakness, marries the richness of rum with the spice of rye whiskey. Cinnamon and clove notes from Angostura bitters temper its sweetness, while the orange and nutmeg in Bittermens Elemakule Tiki bitters provide a complementary aromatic component.

"The result is a drink that straddles both of my cocktail worlds: classic and tiki," says McGee. 3154 W. Diversey Ave., 773.293.6048, lostlaketiki.com



MISSIONARY'S DOWNFALL, \$14, THREE DOTS AND A DASH

Recent L.A. transplant and mixology master **Julian Cox** hasn't wasted any time in his new position at Lettuce Entertain

You, where he's refreshing some of its beverage programs. At this tropical lounge, his twist on a classic rum-based tiki cocktail combines his passions for old-school drinks and the science of bartending. Rather than use a blender, Cox mixes mint with liquid nitrogen—"cryo-muddling," he says—until it turns into frozen mint shards. Cool, sure, but says Cox, "I won't do any techno stuff unless it enhances the flavor." 435 N. Clark St., 312.610.4220, threedotschicago.com

ANNEX PHOTO BY ANTHONY TAHIER; THREE DOTS AND A DASH PHOTO BY ANJALI PINTO; BOKA PHOTO COURTESY OF GALDONES PHOTOGRAPHY

NUT CASE Boka's Meg Galus puts the spotlight on hazelnuts in this multitextured dessert (\$11).



6 BEST DESSERTS

BOKA

We've been following Meg Galus' career all the way to her James Beard nomination and love that she's now pastry queen at Boka Restaurant Group. At Boka itself, her terrific ode to hazelnuts includes praline and hazelnut-coffee cream, whole milk ice cream, toasted milk powder, candied hazelnuts and coffee-flavored tuiles (\$11). Goopy caramel seals the deal. 1729 N. Halsted St., 312.337.6070, bokachicago.com

MAPLE & ASH

What better way to chase the Baller seafood tower at this sexy steakhouse than with a blinged-out dessert? The first thing you'll notice about Aya Fukai's chocolate-banana Bulleit bombe is the edible gold on top. But a hot pour of Bulleit caramel reveals so much more: butter-, bourbon- and sugar-sauteed banana and vanilla ice cream hiding underneath (\$16). 8 W. Maple St., 312.944.8888, mapleandash.com

NICO OSTERIA

When Leigh Omilinsky set out to make the "best possible doughnut," she started with a 9-year-old bread starter. "His name is Stanley, and we feed him every day," she says. Stanley is used to make her buttermilk-glazed sourdough *bomboloni*, which she serves with braised pineapple and butterscotch and black-pepper graham-cracker gelato (\$12). Mission accomplished. 1015 N. Rush St., 312.994.7100, nicoosteria.com

NOMI

Greg Mosko admits he's not a fan of overly sweet desserts, which explains the Thai basil ice cream, black pearl tapioca, togarashi gastrique and basil seeds in his roasted pineapple with coconut-lime cake (\$10). But he doesn't abandon sugar completely, admitting devotion to caramelized pineapple: "Just the smell of it in the oven is intoxicating," he says. 800 N. Michigan Ave., 312.239.4030, chicago.park.hyatt.com

SALERO

Desserts don't get more Spanish than flan. So when this *flan de queso fresco* (\$10) earned a thumbs up from the Spaniards at our table, we knew it was the real deal. Pastry Chef Amber Sullivan's perfect rendition of the classic soft custard gets an upgrade with a layer of refreshing blood-orange gel. "I love how everything comes together to make a wonderfully balanced and light end to your meal," she says. We do too. 621 W. Randolph St., 312.466.1000, salerochicago.com

SPIAGGIA

There's nothing better than an afterdinner espresso. Especially if that dinner is at Spiaggia, and the espresso is in the form of foam and granita. Add mascarpone gelato, Vin Santo-soaked baba cake and chocolate cookie shards, and you've got something way better: Pastry Chef Joey Schwab's modern take on classic tiramisu (\$18). 980 N. Michigan Ave., 312.280.2750, spiaggiarestaurant.com



BOWLED OVER
Pork ramen from Furious Spoon, one of the local restaurants in the soon-to-open Revival Food Hall in the Loop

3 RESTAURANTS ON OUR RADAR

CODA DI VOLPE

With two restaurant vets behind it—Billy Lawless (The Gage, Acanto, The Dawson, Beacon Tavern) and Ryan O'Donnell (Gemini Bistro)—and a chef from San Francisco's A16 (Chris Thompson) who spent time in Naples, Italy, perfecting his pizza-making, expectations are high for this Southern Italian spot opening this summer. 3335 N. Southport Ave., cdvolpe.com

REVIVAL FOOD HALL

In theory, a food hall doesn't inspire thoughts of deliciousness. But when it's the same guys as Longman and Eagle, Dusek's, The Promontory, Moneygun and Saint Lou's Assembly behind it, it's a different story. Set in a historic Loop building, this massive venue, scheduled to open this month, will feature food from all-local vendors, including Antique Taco; Furious Spoon; Black Dog Gelato; and Danke (Table, Donkey & Stick). 125 S. Clark St., revivalfoodhall.com

SEPIA'S YET-TO-BE-NAMED SECOND SPOT

It's enough for us to know that the outstanding team from Sepia (Andrew Zimmerman, Arthur Hon and Emmanuel Nony) is opening this West Loop spot later this year. Added bonus: The menu takes inspiration from street food from around the world, and intriguing interactive cocktails are slated for the beverage side. 565 W. Randolph St.

SHELL GAME

Although a rumored aphrodisiac, oysters make us crave, well, more oysters. Luckily, the beauties glisten on seafood towers and crushed-ice canvases all over town. The name says it all at **Oyster Bah** (1962 N. Halsted St., 773.248.3000, oysterbah.com), where eight to 12 cold-water varieties from both coasts are shucked to order (\$18 to \$36). Swift & Sons' seafood sister, **Cold Storage** (1000 W. Fulton Market, 312.638.6280, coldstoragechicago.com), offers eight daily oyster varieties served with cocktail sauce and seaweed-vinegar mignonette (market price).

At **Shaw's Crab House** (21 E. Hubbard St., 312.527.2722, shawscrabhouse.com), live music Sunday to Thursday covers up the slurping sounds coming from the oyster bar, where fresh-farmed oysters are doused in cocktail sauce and Champagne mignonette (\$18 to \$36).



SEA SHELLS
Oysters from Lincoln Park's Oyster Bah

3 TRENDS DEFINING CHICAGO



HOT STUFF The multitiered wood-burning oven at Rural Society

FIRE STARTERS

Call it primal instincts, but there's something about a live fire that cues carnivorous cravings. It's not just meat coming from the fire at **Roister** (951 W. Fulton Market, roisterrestaurant.com), where

Andrew Brochu hearth-bakes pineapple and serves it with kimchee (\$10). The best seat in the house at **Rural Society** (455 N. Park Drive, 312.840.6605, ruralsocietyrestaurant.com) is the chef's table, where Cory Morris mans meats and veggies on the newly renovated parilla grills. Embers also glow at **Leña Brava** (900 W.

Randolph St., 312.733.1975, rickbayless.com/restaurants/lena-brava), where the fire side of the menu flaunts cauliflower steak (\$18) and butterflied bass (\$38).

SMOKE SIGNALS

Tequila's smoky sibling, mezcal, is finally getting the attention it deserves. At flower shop-turned-mezcal bar **Mezcaleria Las Flores** (3149 W. Logan Blvd., 773.278.2215, mezcalerialasflores.com), more than 50 varieties are served straight, or in cocktails (\$10), which feature everything from absinthe to rooibos tea mixers. Tucked under Mercado is **La Mez Agave Lounge** (108 W. Kinzie St., 312.329.9555, mercadorestaurants.com), where 80 mezcals come from all over Mexico and come paired in drinks like the funky Highgarden (\$12). At **Dove's Luncheonette** (1545 N. Damen Ave., 773.645.4060, doveschicago.com), mezcal shows up in refreshing cocktails like sparkling brut-topped La Realeza (\$9), on a list that's more than 50 bottles deep at this homey and modern Mexican-inspired diner.



WHERE THERE'S SMOKE Hot Mez cocktail from La Mez Agave Lounge

FURIOUS SPOON PHOTO BY ZACHARY JOHNSTON; OYSTER BAH PHOTO BY ANJALI PINTO; LA MEZ AGAVE LOUNGE PHOTO BY MARCIN CYMMER



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5 CHEFS OF THE MOMENT

1. DIRK FLANIGAN Wherever Flanigan has gone, we've followed—with many terrific meals along the way, including at The Gage and Henri. Now at Ocean Cut, the Florida-born chef taps into his forward-thinking approach to food and love for fishing. The result? Dishes such as King crab custard (\$16), house-smoked trout (\$13) and Lobstercargot (\$29). Ahoy, matey! 20 W. Kinzie St., 312.280.8882, oceancutchicago.com

2. CHRIS CURREN With big, bold paintings and art installations adorning its walls, it's hard to know where to look first at Fulton Market Kitchen. With chef Curren now in charge of the kitchen, we tend to keep our attention focused right in front of us on plates of rabbit meatballs (\$15) and lamb ragout with hummus and housemade pita (\$9). Art on the walls *and* plates? Sounds like a no-brainer. 311 N. Sangamon St., 312.733.6900, fultonmarketkitchen.com

3. JENNER TOMASKA It's not easy making a name for yourself when your boss is world-renowned chef Grant Achatz. But Next's Tomaska has done just that, earning a James Beard

Award finalist nod for Rising Star Chef this past year. He didn't win, alas, but we predict as the new executive chef of the restaurant, which changes its menu and concept every four months, his name won't easily be forgotten. 953 W. Fulton Market, 312.226.0858, next.tocktix.com

4. RYAN PFEIFFER Blackbird is no new kid on the block, but Chef de Cuisine Pfeiffer brings a youthful vibe to the 19-year-old restaurant by combining his classic French culinary training with a laid-back California-cuisine sensibility, to create beautiful dishes such as sweetbread pastrami with wax beans, hazelnuts and lemon balm (\$18). Age really is just a number. 619

W. Randolph St., 312.715.0708, blackbirdrestaurant.com

5. NAOKI NAKASHIMA It was always a lovely surprise to find expertly made sushi at Shaw's Crab House. These days, we're even happier now that the chef behind those pristine rolls and precise cuts of fish has his own namesake restaurant tucked behind the kitchen of Intro. At Naoki, Nakashima's 31 years of culinary experience—ranging from fish markets in Japan to sushi spots all over the world—can be tasted in every dish, including his creative sashimi, which balances the raw fish with delicate flavors (\$9 to \$19). 2300 N. Lincoln Park West, 773.868.0002, naoki-sushi.com

DIRK FLANIGAN PHOTO BY ANTHONY TAHLER; CHRIS CURREN PHOTO BY KAILLEY LINDMAN; NAOKI NAKASHIMA PHOTO BY JASON LITTLE; RYAN PFEIFFER PHOTO BY SANDY NOTO; JENNER TOMASKA PHOTO BY RIKKI FOOTE



FULL CIRCLE Land and Sea Dept. took home a James Beard Award for Outstanding Restaurant Design this year for its restoration of the Chicago Athletic Association Hotel's Cherry Circle Room.

3 DESIGN-DRIVEN RESTAURANTS

CHERRY CIRCLE ROOM If you're lucky enough to spot the tiny neon-lit emblem signifying the entrance to this hideout—tucked away beyond the crowds of jovial bocce and shuffleboard players in the Chicago Athletic Association Hotel's second-floor Game Room—you'll pass through a pair of bronzed porthole swinging doors to a dimly lit cherry-paneled rotunda that feels more like a swanky clubhouse for the high-powered than a James

Beard Award-winning restaurant. Designed by local creative firm Land and Sea Dept., the space fuses the building's pre-existing art deco elements with modern details to create a fresh interpretation of the original restaurant that served hotel guests more than 120 years ago. *12 S. Michigan Ave., 312.792.3515, cherrycycleroom.com*

IMPERIAL LAMIAN For its first stateside concept, Imperial Group, which helms two dozen upscale Chinese restaurants across Indonesia, sourced Singapore-based Metaphor Interior Architecture to transform its River North space, and buzz of the eye-catching design (and colorful Instagramworthy dumplings) has circulated since the restaurant opened its doors this winter. Raw timber beams and exposed brick set the backdrop for

the evocative decor, which features handmade oriental screens, birdcage-inspired pendant lights and brass Chinese-medicine boxes. *6 W. Hubbard St., 312.595.9440, imperial-lamian.com*

3 ARTS CLUB CAFE Ask a member of the stylish set to meet for coffee, and they'll likely propose a date at one of the plush fountainside sofas at 3 Arts Club Cafe, the posh dining concept inside the landmarked building housing the newly opened RH Hospitality, the glass-and-steel-enclosed courtyard boîte features elegant bistro tables and lounges amid lush topiaries and climbing heritage olive trees, all arranged around a trickling concrete fountain and massive crystal chandelier. *1300 N. Dearborn Parkway, 312.475.9116, 3artsclubcafe.com*

3 MOST CREATIVE BRUNCHES

THE DUCK INN

You'll find plenty of this quaint Bridgeport restaurant's namesake on its brunch menu, including duck-confit hash (\$15), a duck-fat hot dog (\$10) and chili cheese fries topped with—you guessed it—a duck egg (\$7 to \$11). Then there's our favorite dish from chef Kevin Hickey: cured wild salmon paired with seasonal crudité, herbed goat cheese and a crumbled hard-boiled duck egg (\$14, below). Fowl play at its finest. 2701 S. Eleanor St., 312.724.8811, theduckinnchicago.com



THE PUBLICAN

Chef-driven brunches are officially a thing now in Chicago, but this restaurant has been serving them for years—and continues to nail it every weekend with dishes such as smoked sablefish scramble (\$18) and pork shoulder with pinto beans and a sunny side up egg (\$16, above). Our tip? Make your reservations early and often. You're welcome. 837 W. Fulton Market, 312.733.9555, thepublicanrestaurant.com



FAT RICE

It was at this Logan Square spot where we first discovered—and subsequently fell in love with—the wonderful fusion food of Macau. Rather than dumb it down at brunch, owners-chefs Abe Conlon and Adrienne Lo keep the bold and wacky-in-a-good-way flavors going strong with dishes like Portuguese egg tarts (\$6) and peanut butter- and banana-stuffed Hong Kong French toast (\$14, below). 2957 W. Diversey Ave., 773.661.9170, eatfatrice.com

3 OVER-THE-TOP EXPERIENCES

ALINEA

Make your first trip back to Alinea after its highly anticipated renovation a memorable one by booking The Kitchen Table (\$385 per person). Parties of six can enjoy this glass-enclosed space with a circular table that gives an insider's look at the innovative chefs hard at work in the kitchen. The space is completely private, except for the servers and chefs, and has a mirrored wall adjacent to the kitchen, so no one in your party has a bad view. 1723 N. Halsted St., 312.867.0110, alinearestaurant.com

LONDONHOUSE

The recently opened LH at LondonHouse is taking dining to new heights with a one-of-a-kind dining experience in its 23rd-story

rooftop cupola, which is original to the historic building and offers unparalleled city, river and Lake Michigan views. Bound to be a popular spot for engagements (proposal packages are offered for \$1,000), the 240-square-foot space also offers a private dining option with fare from Executive Chef Riley Huddleston (\$10,000 for up to 10 people). 85 E. Upper Wacker Drive, 312.357.1200, londonhousechicago.com

SIXTEEN

Extend your enjoyment of chef Thomas Lents' exquisite tasting menu at Sixteen by opting for the Clos wine pairing (\$750 per person), in which roughly 25 wines are poured in small quantities over 2½ hours. "Without exception, all of these wines are some of the most cult expression of their grape variety and produced in minuscule quantities," says sommelier Parag Lalit. "A small flight of wines per dish diversifies and elevates the experience." 401 N. Wabash Ave., 312.588.8030, sixteenchicago.com

FIRST SIGHT The Kitchen Table, with its views of the chefs in action at the newly remodeled Alinea, is the most exclusive table in the restaurant.

