

Digging in

Tasty morsels about Chicago's food scene

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A new blog for the fattest of days

JANET RAUSA FULLER



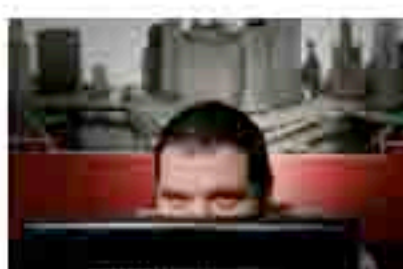
Sun-Times Food editor Janet Rausa Fuller is always thinking about her next meal.

LISA DONOVAN



For almost 20 years now, reporter Lisa Donovan has been hitting Chicago's neighborhood markets and restaurants not only for the best grub at the best prices but also as a way to understand the city's melting pot.

JAMES SCALZITTI



As Rhoda Morgenstern would say, food is the first thing Sun-Times Wire Service reporter James Scalzitti remembers liking that liked him back...

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Colds, be damned: Chicago chefs on how they kick what ails them

By [Janet Fuller](#) on May 14, 2009 2:28 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

By guest blogger and New York writer [Seanan Forbes](#):

Never mind spring flowers. This year, for many of us, April's showers brought May's head cold.

It hit me late last week.

My mother's cure (for adults only) involves tea with brandy, a 50/50 split. Her recipe: Make the tea, get under a mound of duvets, and drink the mixture while it steams. You'll heat up, fall asleep and feel better - or not care.

Work doesn't mesh well with a mug full of hot brandy. My daytime cold routine: heat whole wheat udon in chicken soup, add at least three kinds of chili pepper and down it - hot enough in all ways to make me sweat. My drink's no gentler: ginger root and lemons, simmered in water, drunk by the honey-sweetened mugful.

For three days, I lived on chicken soup and hot ginger lemonade. It didn't drown the cold.

The weekend ended, the workweek started, and I was still in the grip of the gripe. Okay, it wasn't a flu; it was just a cold - but it wasn't going anywhere. As I sat, head bent over my third consecutive dinner of hot noodles, broth, garlic, ginger and pepper, pepper and more pepper, my head dripping, my brain drowning and my tongue on fire, I started to wonder: What do chefs eat - or drink, if they're not cold-time eaters - when they have colds?



Rodelio Aglibot of [Sunda](#), 110 W. Illinois, grew up in Hawaii. He was reared on multicultural foodstuffs and his restaurant's menu celebrates Asian food. Where does Sunda's peripatetic chef turn when a head cold tries to take him down? The answer has to be exotic, right? No. He goes for two shots of Jack, then honey ginger tea, served hot. My mother would approve.

Laurent Gras of [L20](#), 2300 N. Lincoln Park West, seldom falls prey to a cold or flu. When he does, someone else cooks for him.



Gras says, "I am lucky I do not get sick very often. When I do, my wife usually makes egg drop soup for me. It has chicken broth with a lot of ginger and feathery threads of egg. She sometimes puts a little green onion and soy sauce on the top. The hot broth and ginger are soothing and the egg gives you some energy and protein. But also it is probably the effect of having someone make you soup when you are sick. That makes you feel better right away."

You have to love love.

Josh Adams, chef-owner of [June](#), 4450 N. Prospect Rd, Peoria Heights, is another player on the hot soup team. When a cold invades his body, June's chef gets pho -- spicy, brothy and, he says, it seems to be the best thing to make him feel better.

It's better to stave off a bug than try to evict it, and Michael McDonald of [one sixtyblue](#), 1400 W. Randolph, is serious about prevention.

"I like to do as much as I can do to not get sick," he says, "like getting enough sleep, washing hands, go to gym regularly and drinking four to six cups of green tea daily. When I do get sick, I prefer not to take medication but to get through it naturally. When I get sick, I switch to chamomile tea with a touch of honey and thinly sliced raw ginger. I find sleep helps the most, so in the night I'll drink a beer, which makes me tired and makes it easy to go to sleep. I'll also drink as much OJ as possible to help speed up the recovery time."

Steve McDonagh, half of the [Hearty Boys](#), is meeting more bugs than he used to. "I have a son in preschool so my cold ratio has skyrocketed."

When McDonagh is feeling less than hearty, he turns to traditions far from Illinois. "I lived in NYC for many years," McDonagh says, "There are excellent Chinese takeouts everywhere. I learned there, that when I have a truly miserable cold, that hot and sour soup will clear me up like nothing else, a good hot and sour soup, like at the Westside Cottage in Hell's Kitchen [Westside Cottage Too, 689 9th Avenue, for those who are going to New York or who know New Yorkers in need of a quick cure]. I am always on the lookout for a soup as good here in Chicago and remain let down with tepid spice or too much soggy tofu."

"Also, I have an English mom who drank hot tea all day every day. I cannot tell you how often I heard the phrase, 'Put the kettle on for me, darling,' growing up. I can tell you that it has put me off tea and I never drink it - except in the mornings when I have a sore throat or a bronchial cough. I have to pull out the step stool to reach the tea bags stuck in the very back of the cabinet on an upper shelf. Hot herbal tea, half a fresh lemon, a generous squeeze from the honey bear ... if you see me with a cup of tea, you know I'm feeling sick."

McDonagh's not one to turn to the liquor cabinet when he's sick. His partner (life and business), Dan Smith, does.

"Dan is a great caretaker," McDonagh says, "and when I'm ill he tries to get me to drink a hot toddy. I have never in 12 years taken him up on it though. The idea of a shot of liquor when I'm unwell makes me feel worse."

It's important to know what makes you feel more wretched, what keeps colds at bay and what evicts the bug. Armed with a tip sheet from Chicago's finest, it should be easy to kick any season's cold.

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