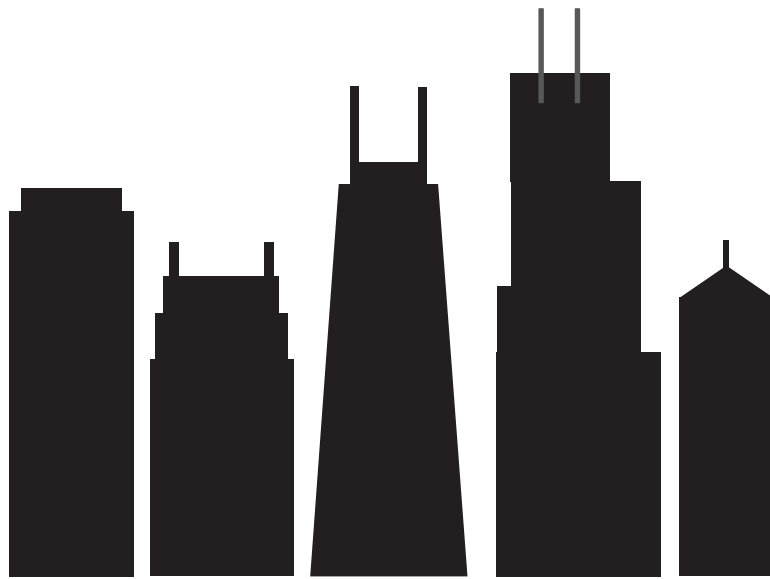

The **chicago**ist guide to Chicago

Act Like You've Been Here Before



Chicagoist is a lover of many things.

Food. Theatre. Drinking. Music. The list has the potential to go on and on.

In no city, however, are these activities more enjoyable than right here in Chicago, home to some of the best grub, best live entertainment and best of well, everything, that the world has to offer.

We're biased, we know, but we're right on this one.

We've slapped together the Act Like You've Been Here Before guide as a small—but handy—way for those of you who visit our fair city this year to check out Chicago in a fashion you might not otherwise have. It's by no means definitive, but it does offer a peek into the city that we call home, and a glimpse into its heart and soul without breaking the bank.

Welcome to Chicago.

Chicagoist

Jake Dobkin and Jen Chung, best friends who met while attending Columbia University, began Gothamist.com in Fall 2002. Jake was starting to use blogging software and invited Jen and a few other friends to work on a group blog. It occurred to them that they loved to discuss New York City the most so they decided to experiment with a NYC-focused blog and called it Gothamist. The site was officially launched on February 16, 2003, and slowly but surely they realized that they wanted to talk about the city and what they loved, hated, wondered about, etc and they wanted to hear about other New Yorkers or NY ex-pats or anyone else with an opinion about life thought.

Jen and Jake found that an invaluable side effect to working on Gothamist is learning so much more about the city they love and meeting people they would have never met had it not been for the site. Gothamist now features some 30 writers and contributors, and receives an average of over 20,000 visitors each day.

They also quickly discovered that people in other cities have similar passions in talking about where they live and are interested in helping develop a network of sites. In 2004, Gothamist.com began opening sites in other cities. Chicagoist was the first non-NY site.

The rest is pretty much history.

Gothmist has expanded their network to include all major cities across the United States and even has gone international with sites for Shanghai, London, Paris, and Toronto.

Rachelle Bowden and Margaret Lyons launched Chicagoist.com in May 2004. Rachelle was a friend of Jake and Jen's from when she lived in New York and when she moved to Chicago she was asked if she would like to start a "Gothamist site for Chicago." Margaret is no longer with Chicagoist, officially, although she does regularly attend our happy hours and

events. At the end of 2004, she moved on to become Time Out Chicago's Time In editor. You can read her "Geek Out," TV and movie reviews weekly there.

Today Rachelle is the lead Editor and there are two Associate Editors – Scott Smith and Erin Shea. The site also has over a dozen contributors who post on assigned "beats". Chicagoist has been featured in Chicago Tribune, Chicago Magazine, Red Eye, Slate.com, Daily Northwestern, and BoingBoing.net.

The Gothamist network and Jen Chung were the focus of an AP article about blogs that was seen in USA Today, CNN, along with many other papers and news sites around the country. Chicagoist has also been interviewed on Chicago Public Radio's morning show, Eight Forty Eight, the Late Night Late Show, and an ABC7 segment on blogging and has appeared on professional blogging panels "Writing for Blogs for an Independent Writers of Chicago meeting and "Navigating the Blogosphere" a panel at a Business Wire meeting.

History

We live in Chicago. If you've been living here longer than three weeks, stop calling it Chitown. And it's pronounced Chi-caw-go (or if you're my Uncle Bob, you call it Chi-cahgo).

Chicago is a big city but it feels like the smallest big city in America. Why? Two reasons: its neighborhoods and its grid-like system of streets. If you ask most Chicagoans where they live, they'll tell you the name of their neighborhood.

Old school Chicagoans might even refer to their parish. While canny real estate agents are always trying to push the boundaries of high-rental areas like Lakeview, Lincoln Park or Andersonville, the truth is that these neighborhoods have boundaries to them.

Follow this link for a map of Chicago neighborhoods:

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/classified/realestate/communities/chi-communitieschicagomap,0,2925476.htmlstory>

Chicago is also a city of sides. Generally, there's the North Side, the South Side and the West Side (note the capital letters). The East Side is called Lake Michigan. Seriously, while there's an East Side neighborhood, most people don't refer to any portion of Chicago as the East Side (though a case could be made for the area south of 95th Street and east of Stony Island).

The corner of Madison and State in the Loop marks the division between the North and South Sides though it's not an equal split (and some will tell you that the real South Side starts at Roosevelt or Cermak). But it is the start point of Chicago's grid system. Every city block is "100", every eight blocks equals a mile. So Chicago Ave. (800 N.) is a mile north of Madison while Halsted (800 W.) is a mile west of State St.

The north, south, east and west designations for some streets are only necessary when the street has both a significant north/south portion or an east/west portion. So Halsted gets a N.

or S. while Belmont is just called Belmont. Most of the roadways don't require abbreviations like St., Ave. or Blvd. as most folks don't refer to them.

Chicago is also divided into wards. They're referred to by the number. So: the 1st Ward, the 43rd Ward, etc. Each of these wards has an alderman. The aldermen serve on the City Council. The City Council does whatever Mayor Daley (either one) tells them to do (for now).

Politics

Politics in Chicago is never boring. Historically, much of our urban political system is based on the idea of the "political machine" in which patronage is key, an idea which is increasingly coming under attack as it seems more and more elected officials are bound to loyalty to the system rather than to the governed. Most prevalent was Mayor Richard J. Daley, who served from 1955 until his death in 1976. Although we often criticize Daley for his "vote early, vote often" election mantra and his "shoot to kill" strategy at the 1968 Democratic National Convention, he is also praised for bringing us O'Hare, McCormick Place, the Sears Tower, etc.

In a lot of ways, Chicago is still his city.

Chicago got its only female mayor with the election of Jane Byrne, a product of Daley's political machine, in 1979 after city residents sought new leadership following the failure of the city to respond adequately to a horrendous blizzard. She was the first big city mayor to recognize the gay community, and she moved into the now defunct Cabrini Green public housing to raise awareness of crime, poverty, and racism. She lacked the power and charisma to bring about real change, and she served only one term after being defeated by Harold Washington in a racially charged election battle.

Washington served from 1983 until his death in 1987. He often faced strong opposition in the City Council and found it difficult to gain majority support for his ideas to reform the patronage system.

Mayor Richard M. Daley has served as mayor since 1989, and in many ways is trying to live up to the legacy of his father, proof that the political machine is alive and well. Although Daley has recently suffered from a drop in his approval ratings due to the Hired Truck Scandal and the widening patronage scandal that has resulted from the investigation, he is still a powerful player in the local and national political scene, and many believe him to be an integral part of Chicago.

On the state level, Illinois saw three moderate Republican governors (Thompson, Edgar, Ryan) until Rod Blagojevich was elected in 2003. State legislators most often reflect the area in which they live (downstate-more conservative). Illinois' current U.S. senators (Durbin, Obama) lean heavily to the left and enjoy powerful positions in our national government. In the past, Illinois' senators have been more moderate.

Transportation

Unlike other cities, lots of people in Chicago use public transit to get around. Most Chicagoans have a love/hate relationship with the Chicago Transit Authority, commonly known as the CTA.

The CTA includes the trains and the buses within the city. The commuter trains that run into the suburbs are collectively known as the Metra. The suburban bus system is called Pace. The RTA, the Regional Transportation Authority, is in charge of funding the CTA, Metra and Pace.

A word about those trains: while some portions of the CTA run underneath the ground, no one refers to it as “the subway.” It’s all called The L (as in elevated). The CTA trains are all named for colors: Red, Blue, Brown, Green, Orange, Purple and Yellow. But each line used to be individually named for the neighborhood where the line ended, while they’re now labeled with the location where they terminate.

Red: Howard-Dan Ryan

Blue: Douglas (54th/Cermak), Congress (Forest Park) and O’Hare

Brown: Ravenswood (Kimball)

Green: Lake (Harlem/Lake), Englewood (Ashland/63rd) and Jackson Park (East 63rd/Cottage Grove).

The Yellow line is also referred to as the Skokie Swift. The Purple and Orange lines were created after the move to color-coded L lines.

By the way, the phrase “the Loop?” It originally referred to the route taken by streetcars through downtown, not to the circle the elevated trains make around the downtown area.

And while we’re on the topic, “downtown” generally refers to the area south and east of the Chicago River, west of Lake Michigan and North of Congress unless you live in Schaumburg and then it refers to pretty much everything in the city limits.

Neighborhoods of Chicago

(arranged north to south)

Rogers Park

Rogers Park is a thriving arts community on the far north side of Chicago. The demographics vary racially, with more than 80 languages spoken within the neighborhood, and economically, with residents inhabiting everything from vintage apartments, moderate single-family homes and brand new condos. The affordable real estate has drawn visual artists, writers, poets and performers to not only reside in Rogers Park but to establish galleries and performance spaces there as well, which a cruise down the north end of Glenwood Ave. will reveal. Take the #22 Clark bus north to Lunt and walk east, the #96 Lunt bus east to Glenwood or the Red line to the Morse stop.

Rogers Park is also home to Loyola University, further diversifying the neighborhood with a college-age demographic. A journey up or down Sheridan Ave. will lead you to several coffee shops, cheap sandwich shops and unique retail spots. Walk just one block east of the university, and you'll find yourself with plenty of space on some of the less-frequented beaches on Lake Michigan. Rogers Park is also home to great coffee shops (The No Exit Café, Metropolis Coffee Company), restaurants (Leona's, Siam Pasta), bars (The Oasis), and theaters (Raven Theatre). Take the #147 Outer Drive Express bus, the #151 Sheridan bus or the Red line to Loyola.

The No Exit Cafe
6970 N. Glenwood
773-743-3355

Metropolis Coffee Company
1039 W. Granville
773-764-0400

Leona's
6935 N. Sheridan
773-764-5757

Siam Pasta
7416 N. Western
773-274-0579

The Oasis
6809 N. Sheridan Rd.
773-973-7788

Raven Theatre
6157 N. Clark St.
773-338-2177

The Heartland Café
7000 N. Glenwood Ave.
773-465-8005

Nestled in what this establishment commonly refers to as the "heart of Rogers Park" is an oasis for vegetarians, liberal-minded folk, lovers of live music and sunshine and those who simply love good eatin'. Not only can the Heartland boast one of the most diverse menus in the Chicago area, which includes everything from tofu burritos to buffalo chili, but it also offers a wide array of mixed drinks, beers, coffee drinks and desserts. The Heartland also offers up a full brunch menu every weekend. Early risers on Saturdays can pair their omelet with a live taping of "Live from the Heartland," a community-based radio show on the independent radio station 88.7 WLWU. After eating to the point of explosion/euphoria (take your pick), browse the

café's general store, which sells a variety of magazines, hemp clothing, cruelty-free beauty products and anti-Bush propaganda.

The Red Line Tap
7006 N. Glenwood Ave.
773-274-5463

Heartland Café visitors who want to dig something on the late-night tip can stumble next door to the Red Line Tap, the bar operated by the same happy Heartland folks. Alternatively, those who want to skip the sit-down table business and go straight to the bar can order from a shortened Heartland menu at the Red Line Tap and have the food delivered to them as they sit on a stool and listen to a local singer/songwriter croon Bob Dylan covers. The Red Line Tap isn't Chicago's most happening bar, but it is guaranteed to be filled with local

neighborhood folk who likely came for the booze rather than the atmosphere or the tunes. If you find yourself in Rogers Park, you should, too.

Ennui Cafe
6981 N. Sheridan
773-973-2233

This is the neighborhood coffee house you have been looking for. That is, if you came for reasonably priced coffee, endless amounts of reading material and enough peace and quiet to actually get some work done. It contains some of the must-haves of a neighborhood joint: locally produced art for sale on the walls, live jazz music some evenings, and a bitchin' outdoor seating area. The food offerings in the café are standard coffeehouse fare, such as baked goods, salads, a hummus plate and desserts. And Ennui is steps away from Loyola Beach, so don't be afraid to get your coffee and bagel to go and hit the sand before the undergrads get out of class and take up all of the space.

Andersonville

Located on the far north side of the city, Andersonville has retained its roots as a Swedish neighborhood while growing into a diverse area with one of the city's largest gay and lesbian communities. The Swedish and Rainbow flags are prominent in the area, and you'll also find an eclectic range of restaurants, a variety of fun shops, comfortable cafes and coffee shops, great theaters and galleries, and some favorite neighborhood bars. The retail heart of Andersonville is along Clark St. from just south of Foster to Bryn Mawr. Get off the Red line at Berwyn or Bryn Mawr and walk west to Clark, or take the #22 Clark bus to Foster.

Simon's Tavern **5210 N. Clark St.** **773-878-0894**

If you find yourself way up north (or "Wisconsin" as some of our friends like to call Andersonville), check out Simon's Tavern. You won't be alone by any stretch, but the vibe is comfortable and inclusive, the bartenders are friendly, and the jukebox is near-perfect and will be playing all the music you just heard at the festivals.

Kopi Cafe **5317 N. Clark St.** **773-989-5674**

Kopi has fantastic coffee and other drinks (try the green chai shake), a fun shop in the back, a friendly bunch of servers, and is filled with memorabilia (most purchasable) from the owners' travels around the globe. Plus, they make a killer breakfast burrito that's served all day. A good time is sitting on the cushions by the windows, reading a book, and sipping some coffee or tea. The menu is mostly vegetarian, but they've also got some fish options.

Taste of Heaven **5401 N. Clark St.** **773-989-0151**

Taste of Heaven is a great spot for dessert, coffee and a light meal. The outdoor seating looks out on Clark St. and is

great for people-watching, and the inside is blissfully air-conditioned. But truth be told, the entire reason we like to go there is for the ice cream. Only available in the summer months, they serve ice cream from Oak Park's Petersen Ice Cream Company, which makes the best damn pure natural vanilla bean ice cream we've ever tried. If you prefer a more complicated ice cream, we're told the Mackinac Island Fudge is delightful.

Taste of Lebanon **1509 W. Foster** **773-334-1600**

For addictively delicious and awe-inspiringly inexpensive Lebanese food run by extremely friendly and helpful people, check out Taste of Lebanon. The spicing in the falafel is perfect, and the lentil soup is worth sampling even in the hottest weather. Walk up to the counter to order, but they do have a small dining area with a smattering of tables.

Hip Fit **1513 W. Foster** **773-878-4447**

Everyone loves jeans, and one of the inspirations for this clothing store was how hard it can be to find that perfect fit of denim. Stocked with an assortment of new and used jeans for both men and women, you'll find many options in a variety of sizes

and prices. Also of note is that the store sells Threadless t-shirts from the popular online graphic t-shirt company

Lincoln Square

The boundaries of Lincoln Square vary depending on who you ask, but the heart of this historic, German-influenced neighborhood is at the intersection of Lawrence, Western and Lincoln Aves. Accessible by the CTA Brown Line, several CTA buses and the Metra Union Pacific North line, Lincoln Square is a mix of the old and, increasingly, the new. Get a taste of the neighborhood's German flavor at the Chicago Brauhaus, Hans' Delicatessen Meyer and Huettenbar. The new guard of neighborhood restaurants represents a wide range of ethnic cuisines, making it one of the fastest-growing culinary hot spots in the city. And while some of these meals come with a somewhat hefty price tag, you don't have to drop a ton of cash to have a good time.

If you're on a budget, stop by Garcia's Mexican Restaurant for a great burrito, Chubby Wieners for their signature dog and super-crispy fries, the Davis for a movie, and Lincoln Square Lanes for some bowling and beers. The Rail also has some great drink and food specials every night of the week, and we've never had a bad meal at the Daily Bar and Grill. Our other favorite spots: Quake Toys, Watchtower Comics, Laurie's Planet of Sound, Budacki's Drive In and Café Selmarie (stop by on a Sunday morning for the best sticky bun you'll ever taste).

Quake Collectibles
4628 N. Lincoln Ave.
(773) 878-4288

Browsing through the enormous selection of retro toys is sure to bring up all sorts of childhood memories – hopefully the good kind. Whether you were into He-Man, Rainbow Brite, Star Wars, or anything in between, this store is sure to have it.

Laurie's Planet of Sound
4639 N. Lincoln Ave.
773-271-3569

This slice of record store heaven is the place to find those indie CDs and DVDs that aren't available for downloading. The very knowledgeable staff makes us remember why going to the record store was not only about finding great music, but about making connections with people who love music, too.

Chubby Wieners
4662 N. Western Ave. at W. Leland Ave.
773-769-1394

Stop in for their signature, namesake dog and super-crispy fries. Steps from the Western Brown Line stop, this no-frills spot is big on taste and friendly service, and easy on the wallet.

The Rail
4709 N. Damen Ave.
773-878-9400

This neighborhood bar offers a laid-back atmosphere and great drink (and food) specials every night of the week. Pints of Harp, Bass and Guinness are only \$2.50 on Fridays, and the Bloody Mary bar on Sunday (\$7.50 unlimited) is a great hangover cure.

The Brownstone
3937 N. Lincoln Ave.
773-528-3700

After a long, hot day watching bands, clean up, and head back out to this more upscale pub experience. A non-smoking section, outdoor seating,

and lively atmosphere make this a great place to meet up with those friends who just can't rock all weekend anymore due to those 2.1 kids.

Ravenswood

Ravenswood is actually three neighborhoods in one. Ravenswood proper is centered around its namesake north-south Ave. adjacent to the Metra Union Pacific North tracks, Ravenswood Gardens is a leafy suburban-like neighborhood a mile further west, and Ravenswood Manor is a gorgeous enclave west of the Chicago River, an area overrun with million-dollar homes that somehow lies below most city residents' radars. Brown line trains (slowly) connect all three areas, which grow more leafy, quaint and affluent as you travel west. The Chicago River, dividing the Gardens from the Manor, looks particularly tranquil and scenic at this juncture. In Ravenswood, you'll find Zephyr's (a grill with a fantastic dessert selection), and Caro Mio (an intimate Italian BYOB). And in Ravenswood Gardens/Ravenswood Manor, there's Kitchen Chicago (a café run by entrepreneuring chefs), and Beans and Bagels (a faux boho café).

How to get to Ravenswood: CTA brown line to Montrose or Damen

How to get to Ravenswood Gardens: CTA brown line to Rockwell

How to get to Ravenswood Manor: CTA brown line to Francisco or Kedzie

Zephyr's

1777 W. Wilson Ave.

773-728-6070

Caro Mio

1825 W. Wilson Ave.

773-275-5000

Kitchen Chicago

4664 N. Manor

773-463-0863

Beans and Bagels

2601 W. Leland Ave.

773-649-0015

Uptown

Uptown is served by the 36 Broadway bus, the 151 Sheridan bus and the Red Line el. The Red Line is the quickest and most reliable way to get to Uptown. Wilson, Lawrence and Argyle are the most relevant stops to the Uptown neighborhood. Uptown is a neighborhood that has changed a lot even in the last five years. It is now seeing a slow but steady gentrification process that includes the requisite Starbucks and Borders, but it has some gems that have always been there, and some that are just starting to show themselves.

Salon Echo
1134 W. Bryn Mawr
773-989-2358

This spa/salon is slightly north of Uptown in the Edgewater neighborhood. At first look, this space may seem like just another place for a haircut. But Salon Echo offers a variety of services ranging from massage and waxing to make-up lessons and yoga classes. The staff is friendly and helpful. They do take walk-ins, but many of their snippers are solidly booked most of the time, so it's wise to call and make an appointment. They are also 100% committed to being environmentally friendly as well. It's a pleasant experience from start to finish.

Tattoo Factory
4441 N. Broadway Ave.
773-989-4077

They've been doing it a million times longer than Miami Ink. Well, not that long ... but a lot longer. They were across the street, and they moved over a little and into bigger, brighter, fancier digs. Everyone's got their favorite spot for a tattoo in Chicago, but if you're wanting a big selection of artists and work to choose from, this is the place. And like the sign in the shop says – before you get your tattoo, check the spelling, and know the difference between an om and an ankh.

El Norte
5600 N. Ridge Ave.
773-728-0182

With the endless supply of taquerias in Chicago, it seems hard to distinguish one from the other at any given (drunken) moment. The determining factors in the equation start to be quality for price to proximity of one's domicile or crash pad. El Norte consistently delivers quality food for low prices and with healthy portions. The consistency is strange; the tacos are better when a particular cook is there versus another, we've noticed. Odd, but we know which cook to root for. All in all, it's a great bet for some late night burrito action and great guacamole.

Carol's Pub
4659 N. Clark St.
773-334-2402

A 4 am bar with a reputation. Kind of like that bad girl in high school, except for if you had lived in Texas. This place is always filled with a mixture of people – the regulars who have been around the block, the kids who just moved in up the block, and the drunkards who are going to have their blocks knocked off by the end of the night. Thursday nights bring country karaoke, and the whole atmosphere is just sort of what it is – country music, old school bartenders, and lots of denim. Whether you're there to listen to music, to get

your drink on, or to just check out “the scene,” be ready to go with the flow, lest someone show you how they do it Carol's style.

Uptown Lounge
1136 W. Lawrence Ave.
773-878-1136

Crew Bar and Grill
4804 N. Broadway St.
773-784-2739

Shake Rattle and Read
4812 N. Broadway St.
773-334-5311

Andie's
1467 W. Montrose
773-348-0654

Lakeview

Lakeview, Lake View or Wrigleyville? Doesn't matter what you call it, as long as you experience it. Lakeview is best known for being the home of Wrigley Field, the Cubs and their hopeful fans. It's also home to one of Chicago's most thriving Gay and Lesbian neighborhoods, the mini-hood of "Boys Town".

Lakeview is bordered by Diversey to the South, Irving Park to the North and the Lake to the East and every trendy bar in between. If you're up for it, make sure to check out the 'hood during a game, but make sure to write your name on your arm – you might not remember it when the night is through.

Jake's Pub
2932 N. Clark St.
773-248-3318

Another bar that's just good at being a bar, we've always enjoyed the laid-back atmosphere of Jake's and the friendly bar staff. Honestly though, we like it the most because we can usually play darts there without anyone noticing how horrible we are and what a generally bad idea it is to give sharp objects to people who have been drinking.

Hubba Hubba
3309 N. Clark St.
773-477-1414

Hubba Hubba has about the cutest clothes in the whole world. This charming little boutique located right in the heart of Wrigleyville has everything for the girliest of girls. There are cute skirts, feminine tops, cozy sweaters and counterfuls of sparkly jewelry. The price may be up there, but trust us, it's worth it.

Reckless Records
3161 N. Broadway Ave.
773-404-5080

If you're looking for music the best place to buy it is Reckless Records. It's just like the record store in High Fidelity ... sort of. It seems that people are sort of divided on this beauty. They

are either enamored of the large selection of vinyl, used CDs and hard-to-get box sets with a staff that knows their way around the music you won't hear on the radio – or – people can find the place sort of snobby and elitist. We have sometimes felt a little uncomfortable, looking for an old James Taylor album or something, but for the most part we've found the staff to be helpful and friendly, and if they mock us, they are waiting until we've left the store. They are a beacon of hope in this big-box consumerist world.

Southport Avenue Corridor

Start the day off with a primer from Schuba's – either food from the Harmony Grill to fuel

the feet or a beer to open the wallet, whichever gets your motor runnin'. Walk a couple steps over to Uncle Fun and Paperboy to start off the shopping festivities. After looking through all the fun toys, head back out and north on Southport. This corridor in Chicago is perfect for the drinking/shopping spree from Belmont to Irving Park. Make sure enough liquor has been imbibed by the time you enter the boutique shops like Krista K or Shane. Otherwise, that must-have item just won't seem worth it.

Uncle Fun
1338 W. Belmont Ave.
773-477-8223

Paperboy
1351 W. Belmont Ave.
773-388-8811

Krista K's
3458 N. Southport Ave.
773-248-1967

Pick Me Up Café
3408 N. Clark St.
773-248-6613

The Pick Me Up Café is definitely food for the casual diner, but even though it offers your usual array of sandwiches and “diner” type food, the ingredients are fresh, the veggies are delicious, and the 7-grain bread is hearty and filling. The décor is colorful yet cozy, and best of all, the Pick Me Up is enough out of the way, that most Cubs fans have no idea it exists. On game day, the Pick Me Up is a great place to get away from it all.

The Town Hall Pub
3340 N. Halsted St.
773-472-4405

In the midst of Boy's Town, the Town Hall Pub stands out like a sore thumb, as long as you can find it first. This dive bar on Halsted St. is a classic Chicago bar – small, smoky and a ton of character. But you'd better like the Grateful Dead, or you're going to be banging on the jukebox for most of the night.

Roscoe Village/North Center

Still considered North Center by many, Roscoe Village's newfound des-

ignation as a neighborhood is a direct product of the gentrification of neighboring Lincoln Park and Lake View. It's a neighborhood that many of Chicago's "old school" inhabitants simply remember as the few blocks where people resided "over by Lane Tech High School." Those who've been around even longer remember it as where the famed Riverview Park – a fantastic amusement park that has been closed since 1967 – used to call home. Despite its fairly new bona fides, Roscoe Village has retained a certain amount of character and its residents lack the posturing so predominant in 'hoods with similarly high real estate values and burgeoning main thoroughfares. Its people and businesses are dog-friendly, and there are enough die-hards remaining to keep this a pleasant and charming community. Roscoe St. is the center of the neighborhood, and it's teeming with bars, affordable restaurants, and independently owned shops, not to mention Beat Kitchen and Hungry Brain. Take the CTA Brown Line to Paulina and head west, or the #50 Damen bus or #77 Belmont to hit Roscoe Village.

Costello's Sandwich and Sides **2015 W. Roscoe St.** **773-929-2323**

With sandwiches made-to-order, Costello's is a little pricier than a Subway, but worth every penny. Our favorites include the Smokin' Turk, smoked turkey on a fresh Italian roll, garnished with sweet pepper rings and mayo, as well as the "The Mess," a bonanza of meat including Genoa salami, capicola, and ham, french fries (on the sandwich), and coleslaw (more "on the sandwich"). Vegetarians aren't left out in the cold – the Baked Caprese, with "roasted red peppers, artichoke hearts, Ricotta cheese spread and black olives, melted under provolone cheese, and topped with tomatoes and lettuce, served on an Italian sub," is another winner.

Kitsch'n on Roscoe **2005 W. Roscoe St.** **773-248-7372**

No visit to Roscoe Village would be complete without a stop at Kitsch'n – the neighborhood's favorite destination for comfort food and 70s nos-

talgia. If the pictures of Leif Garrett and Billy Dee Williams don't draw you in, the Magic 8 Balls and Etch-A-Sketch's on the tables just might. Once you're there, order up the Eggs In A Basket Deluxe – with bacon buried inside for an extra buck, of course – or the Coconut Crusted French Toast made with vanilla and cream, served with raspberry sauce and fresh pineapple. If you're there at dinner, don't pass up the Wow Pot Pies, Not-Your-Mom's Meatloaf or the Cerveza-Lime Chicken.

Lincoln Restaurant **4008 N. Lincoln Ave.** **773-248-1820**

You know when people give you directions to their city and say things like "you can't miss it," and it pisses you off because you know you can? Well, we mean it this time. You can't miss the Lincoln Restaurant because the sign with the picture of President Lincoln himself is as big as all get out. Thursdays and Fridays at 9, the Lincoln Restaurant sponsors the "Lincoln Lodge," at which they have often good stand-up comedy as more variety

acts. You never know what you'll get, but the appeal is that they host the event in the back room, so you feel like you've discovered something between a speakeasy and the Catskills.

Resi's Bierstube **2034 W. Irving Park Rd.** **773-472-1749**

Resi's Bierstube is an authentic German beer hall but without the fake stained glass or one-man oompah-band of glam awfulness of the Chicago Brauhaus up in Lincoln Square. No, Resi's is a true hole-in-the-wall with an authentic German beer list so comprehensive you'll definitely want to trust the knowledgeable and friendly bartenders' suggestions. Food-wise, order up several plates of different succulent sausages and potato pancakes so good they'll make you cry. And we weren't kidding about the hole-in-the-wall décor: don't be put off by the wood paneling or vinyl chairs.

Kaze
2032 W. Roscoe St.
773-327-4860

For years, the building at Roscoe and Seeley stood dormant, and it always perplexed as to why. Now we know: the Gods were just waiting for this sushi joint to come along and call it home. Considered one of the best new sushi joints to open up in the area in a long, long time, Kaze serves up some excellent raw goodness. Kaze may seem a tad on the pricey side for some selections, but you pay for the quality. You can't go wrong here with anything you choose – but definitely sample off of the seasonal menu.

Glam To Go
2002 W. Roscoe St.
773-525-7004

Glam To Go opened its doors in August 2000 to supply the growing Roscoe Village population with a destination for lotions and potions and kitschy bath and beauty wares of all kinds. Still packed with unique and yummy products of all kinds, the store also now offers gift and bath products for babies.

Village Discount Outlet
2043 W. Roscoe St.
708-388-4772

This thrift store is horribly organized, but there are treasures abound if you're looking hard enough and you've got some time to kill. Don't go expecting find many vintage finds in the clothing realm, or really, many items of the wardrobe nature since things get picked over pretty quickly there. Perfect for books and assorted knick-knacks, though.

Four Treys Gin Mill
3333 N. Damen Ave.
773-549-8845

On a recent visit to Four Treys, Chicagoist had the chance to watch the bar's female bartender throw out and chase off a very big and very drunk fool without lifting a hand to the guy. That's really all you need to know about Four Treys. Well, that, and they have daily drink specials that can be enjoyed in a place sure to remind you of your Uncle George's basement.

Village Tap
2055 W. Roscoe St.
773-883-0817

While it tends to draw a wickedly large crowd on the weekends, Village Tap has a fantastic beer garden and the friendliest bar staff around. The vibe there is relaxed, which makes up for the fact that it's slightly on the high-end of the pricing scale. Just the same, we can't recommend the Tap enough, with its 26 beers on draft and some of the best bar food you can find. Try the burger or the hummus platter.

Portage Park

Portage Park is largely a bedroom community on the northwest side, radiating from the six cornered intersection of Milwaukee, Cicero, and Irving Park. The neighborhood has made progress since the 1990s, when its main attractions were the Blockbuster Video and Mr. Steer's Family Steakhouse (R.I.P.). Now movie lovers can enjoy silent film and other classics at the LaSalle Theater and second-run flicks around the corner at the Portage. Fans of sci-fi and fantasy burn many an afternoon at Milwaukee Ave.'s Windy City Comics and the adjacent Fantasy Headquarters costume shop, the largest such store in Chicago. Hungry visitors enjoy ceviches, an Ecuadorian delicacy, at La Peña Restaurante (Ecuadorian), and Artemio's (Latin American).

How to get there: CTA buses #50, 54, 54X, 56, 80, and 80X run through the heart of the neighborhood, or from the Montrose blue line stop, head _ mile west on Montrose and a _ mile south on Cicero.

Windy City Comics
4051 N. Milwaukee Ave.
773-481-0717

Fantasy Costumes
4065 N. Milwaukee Ave.
800-872-9447

La Peña Restaurante
4212 N. Milwaukee Ave.
773-545-7022

Artemio's
4918 W. Irving Park Rd.
773-545-2631

Logan Square

Recently Logan Square's rough edges have started to round out due to the influx of two-flat- and condo-buying hipsters. The neighborhood is heavily flavored by its Latin population though, and no amount of whitewashing can dull this neighborhood's throbbing heart.

Helen's Two Way
2928 W. Fullerton Ave.
773-227-5676

The bar scene is still in its nascent stages but we can recommend Helen's Two Way (so named for its double points of entry) if you're looking to get your old-man bar vibe on.

The Whirlaway Lounge
3224 W. Fullerton Ave.
773-276-6809

If you're looking for something more akin to a Pitchfork-approved vibe then head up Fullerton a couple blocks to The Whirlaway Lounge. If you're really nice, the owner might even make you some food if she thinks you look like "you need a sandwich." The place earns bonus points for hosting a jukebox that includes mix CDs compiled by the customers.

El Cid
2115 N. Milwaukee Ave.
773-252-4747

You can't go wrong with El Cid. At times the food can be a little salty but their mind-blowing margaritas cause such concerns to be secondary.

Logan Square Auditorium
2539 N. Kedzie Blvd.
773-252-6179

Finally, live shows can be caught at the Logan Square Auditorium, but beware: the majority of the music falls under the all-ages emo category so make sure you check the schedule ahead of time.

Wicker Park/Ukrainian Village

Don't let the whole argument of hipster versus

yuppie throw you off track – Wicker Park is still a hot little section of Chicago that's home to a diverse population of artists, punks, imported suburbanites and everything in-between. It is arguably the center of the city's non-Viagra-powered nightlife and has recently seen an influx of boutiques and higher-end shops nestled amongst all the bars and nightclubs.

The Pontiac Cafe & Bar
1531 N. Damen Ave.
773-252-7767

Looking for a drink and some people-watching? The Pontiac Cafe & Bar's massive outdoor patio is filled with folks both beautiful and damaged, and it offers a terrific opportunity to drink in the neighborhood's flavor.

Tecalitlan
1814 W. Chicago Ave.
773-384-4285

If you're looking for a bite, we recommend traveling to the far Southern reaches of the neighborhood to Tecalitlan. This Mexican restaurant has been a favorite of ours since we moved into the area a decade ago, and we still haven't tried of their fare.

Alliance Bakery
1736 W. Division St.
773-278-0366

Chicagoist knows that the first thought on your mind when you wake up from your hungover stupor is probably going to be "Where do I get some fucking coffee?" Worry not, Alliance Bakery serves up fresh, locally roasted Intelligentsia coffee and espresso every day and a wide variety of hot and iced teas. If you're looking to fill your stomach, Alliance has croissants and muffins, as well as sandwiches on fresh-baked bread. Their cookie and muf-

fin selection is also to die for, if you dare. Chicagoist personally recommends the hummus and eggplant sandwich with a mint iced tea and a red velvet cupcake.

Mac's
1801 W. Division St.
773-782-4400

With Duck Quesadillas and Wild Run Seared Salmon on the menu, you quickly discover that Mac's has more than just your run-of-the-mill bar food. Favorites of Chicagoist's are the Grilled Chicken Salad with mixed greens, strawberries, goat cheese, oven roasted walnuts, and a balsamic dressing, and the Fresh Seared Ahi Tuna Club served rare with bacon, lettuce, tomato, avocado, and a green goddess spread. Mac's also has plenty of TVs where you can catch the game back home.

Pizza Metro
1707 W. Division St.
773-278-1753

Pizza Metro is chock full of Roman-style pizza and baked-fresh pastries as well as Italian sodas and espresso. The pizza is in squares, or rectangles, even if you order just a slice. All are good, but if you want something different, try the Rosemary Potato pizza. This pizza has no tomato pizza sauce, but is heaped with potatoes and rosemary and cheese. Yum.

Inside the restaurant tends to get hot from the ovens, so when the weather's right, opt for the outside patio seating. Also, these guys are open til 1am, perfect for your late-night munchies.

Una Mae's Freak Boutique
1422 N. Milwaukee Ave.
773-276-7002

Rolling up to Una Mae's you will notice one common theme: everything in this store looks good with a dirty pair of Chuck Taylors. But this isn't just another over-priced vintage boutique. Una Mae's stocks a variety of new men's and women's clothing as well as top-notch vintage clothing that looks as if it has been on the rack – unworn and untattered – since 1969. If you don't have the dough to splurge boutique style, don't be afraid to make a visit anyway. The outdoor rack is always full of awesome used and vintage finds for 2, 5 and 10 bucks. Extra props to Una Mae's for going against the normal rave shopping soundtrack and always playing something (Ghostface, Red Man, Raekwon) that makes us do the bump bump while we sashay around the dressing room.

Penelope's
1913 W. Division St.
773-395-2351

Although Penelope's is centered in the heart of the Wicker Park bar scene, it is easy to overlook as one cruises down Division St. The modest storefront with lowercase logo doesn't scream at shoppers like most trendy boutiques in the area, and the mannequins in the windows are dressed in classic, yet mildly trendy fashion. This store definitely doesn't rely on gimmicks or sex appeal to sell the clothes, and it doesn't have to. The clothes are unique finds of incredibly high quality, created by underexposed designers in Chicago. The store is easy to navigate, with plenty of room to browse without bumping into racks or other shoppers, and the clothing is color coordinated throughout the store. Aside from carrying men's and women's seasonal fashions, Penelope's has a plethora of jewelry, bags, notebooks, magazines, wallets and other accessories. The incredibly petite and friendly staff is attentive but not pushy. They just want to help you find what you're looking for. Chicagoist has received some gifts from Penelope's, and we must say, the staff knows what they are doing.

Ben's Shoes
1424 N. Milwaukee Ave.
773-342-0358

As you're walking up and down Milwaukee Ave., don't be deterred by the fact that this store usually seems empty. Ben's Shoes, with its hand-painted sign and portable outdoor display, may seem like it sells nothing more than work boots, but the fact is this store is a Mecca for cheap

sneakers. You don't browse Ben's the way you would browse a regular shoe store. Instead of picking up display models sparsely spread around the room, you look through the two large glass display windows on the front of the store to find the kicks you want. Ben's specializes in Chuck Taylors and has most styles and colors available, but the store also carries a modest variety of skate shoes and boots in brands such as Nike and GBX. A sign in the front of the store brags that Ben's carries steel-toed boots in women's sizes, too, so if you're tired of having masses of concert goers in Clap Your Hands and Say Yeah T-shirts smashing your sandal-clad feet all day, this might be, but Chicagoist cannot confirm or deny the claim. Caution, though: Ben's only takes cash.

Lincoln Park

Lincoln Park, supposed residence of the mythical Trixie and Chad, is a popular choice of neighborhood for young professionals living in Chicago because of its proximity to downtown and the lakefront, as well as the abundant shopping, restaurants, and bars. Armitage Ave. is lined with dozens of upscale boutiques, while the area surrounding North Ave. and Clybourn have developed into a virtual shopping mall in recent years – lined with national chains more associated with suburban malls, only with less parking. Check out CB2 – Crate & Barrel’s trendier, edgier sibling – located on North at Halsted. Dining options in Lincoln Park span the whole spectrum, from the world-class Alinea and Charlie Trotter’s to the raunchy, late-night antics of the Weiner Circle. Lincoln Park may have more bars per capita than anyplace else in the country. It’s hard to walk more than a block without passing some sports bar or Irish bar. Lincoln Ave. also includes some more upscale nightlife options. Lincoln Park is easily accessible by the Red and Brown Lines, as well as the #22 and 151 buses, among others.

Pilsen

Mere minutes from downtown, and originally settled at the turn of the 19th Century by Bohemian immigrants, Pilsen today is the center of Chicago's Mexican community. A walk along 18th St. will introduce you to a plethora of galleries, dining, and shopping. Pilsen is accessible by public transportation, via Blue or Pink Line trains (exit at 18th St.), and the Ashland, Halsted, Cermak, and 16th/18th St. buses.

Mexican Fine Arts Center
1852 W. 19th St.
312-738-1503

Pilsen is home to Mexican Fine Arts Center, which is the largest Latino Arts institution in the nation, and the only Latino museum accredited by the American Association of Museums. Another option is the Chicago Arts District, also known as "the Podmajersky district", after the controversial family that owns all the buildings that make up the district. The Chicago Arts District runs down Halsted St., from 16th St. to Cullerton (2000 south); and along 18th St., from Halsted, east to Wallace.

May Street Café
1146 W. Cermak Rd.
312-421-4442

Gourmands have their options of too many carnitas shops and taquerias to choose from, but fans of Nuevo Latino cuisine should head to May Street Café. This quaint, colorful restaurant, located in the middle of an industrial corridor, makes some of the most creative dishes in the city.

Picante Grill
1626 S. Halsted
312-455-8500

Another fine option is Picante Grill. In addition to some flavorful dishes, Picante Grill also makes the best margarita in Pilsen.

South Loop

Count to 5. In the time it took you to do that, another condo development or restaurant just opened in the South Loop. Perhaps that's an exaggeration, but it doesn't seem like it. Despite the widespread gentrification, much of the area retains its history, particularly the Printers' Row area (Dearborn between Polk and Congress) where classic examples of Chicago architecture can be found along with the old Dearborn Station that used to bring Hollywood stars and commerce to the area. Take the Red Line to Harrison or Roosevelt or get off the Blue Line at LaSalle and head south.

Kasey's Tavern
701 S. Dearborn
312-427-7992

Kasey's Tavern is the quintessential neighborhood hangout. The bar's motto is "Be Nice or Be Gone" and the crowd—a mixture of students from nearby Columbia College and older folks from the neighborhood—heeds the warning. If you don't end up in conversation with someone at a nearby table then you're just not trying. Drinks are inexpensive, especially for a place that stocks more than 40 different beers. Widescreen plasma TVs show whatever game is on that night, the bar staff's favorite movies and episodes of Chappelle's Show and The Simpsons. Classic and modern rock are found in equal measure on the jukebox while the patio makes for good people-watching.

George's
8th and Wabash

We're not going to lie: George's is a tough joint and it's the ultimate in ultimate dive bar—we can't even find a phone number for it. This matters not to us: this South Loop bar kept us nice and drunk into the wee hours last winter when the season's first snowstorm hit. It's no-frills and cheap, as a bar of this kind should be.

Taste of Siam
600 S. Dearborn
312-939-1179

South Loop residents who favor inexpensive, but savory, Thai food have only one option, but it's also one of the best in the city: Taste of Siam on Dearborn. An unassuming but bright interior with a friendly and attentive wait staff perfectly compliments the high-quality menu. The beef or chicken satay is a perfect starter (we'd put their peanut sauce on everything if it didn't mean getting weird looks from the table next to us) before delving into pad thai that's far better than most of the lauded noodle shops on the North Side. The bean sauce with the ginger chicken is a particular highlight as are the many spicy curries.

Hackneys
733 S. Dearborn
312-461-1116

Stop by Hackneys for a delicious burger, and don't forget the onion rings. A Chicagoland classic for more than 60 years, a Hackney burger is sure to help with that morning-after hangover in a way that defies the logic of mere mortals. Chicagoist advises it on black bread, rather than a bun. Trust us.

Printer's Row Wine Shop
719 S. Dearborn
312-663-9314

Printer's Row Wine Shop is much more than you'd expect from a liquor store across the street from a college dorm. Their hand-picked beer and wine options are the best you'll find downtown, and the extensive selection of smokes makes it a nice alternative to hitting the White Hen before an evening out. Visit their website for this week's featured booze or sign up for their e-mail list to get notices about their weekly beer and wine tastings.

Bridgeport

They call Bridgeport the “neighborhood of mayors” because it’s produced seven of them, including our current Elective Majesty, Richard M. Daley. This near South Side neighborhood is a no-nonsense neighborhood, populated by whites, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, and African Americans, currently in the midst of a housing boom that has long-time residents puffing up their chests with pride. Along with this real estate grab is a growing number of restaurants, retail, and galleries.

We would be remiss if we failed to mention that Bridgeport is also the home of the defending World Series champion Chicago White Sox, who make their home at U.S. Cellular Field (AKA “Comiskey Park” or “Sox Park”), which has become a lot more fan-friendly in the wake of the Sox’s success. Bridgeport is accessible via the Red line train (35th/Sox Park), Orange line (Halsted or Ashland), and the Halsted, Archer, Ashland, Wentworth, Wallace/Racine, and 35th St. buses.

Zhou B Center
1029 W. 35th St.
773-523-0200

Art lovers can get their fill at the newly opened Zhou B Center. This 87,000-square-foot center, formerly a converted hotel furniture liquidation warehouse, was opened a year ago by the world renowned Zhou Brothers as a way of giving other artists a home and presence on the South Side.

Polo Café and Catering
3322 S. Morgan Ave.
773-927-7656

Steak lovers and fans of Americana dining can get their fill at Polo Café and Catering. Polo Café retains the charm of its former candy store past while giving residents some much-needed white tablecloth service.

Gio’s Café and Deli
2724 S. Lowe Ave.
312-225-6368

Fans of good old-fashioned Italian comfort food dine at Gio’s Café and Deli. Its tables always full, Gio’s is also a corner grocery store and deli, so you can browse the deli counter and shelves while eating some great dishes.

G’s... a Boutique
610_ 31st St.
312-842-7115

Shoppers don’t have many options yet, but women can head to G’s... a Boutique for fine hand-crafted jewelry, handbags, and accessories.

Bronzeville

Bronzeville is in the midst of a revival thanks to some newfound love from city leaders who have finally begun to preserve the city's history. The traditionally African-American neighborhood's contribution to music cannot be understated. Sam Cooke started his musical career here, and it was the home of Chess Records, which boasted Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and Little Walter. Lately, new restaurants and nightclubs have re-opened amongst the various cultural centers throughout the area. Take the Green Line to any stop between 35-Bronzeville-IIT and 47th St.

Jokes and Notes

**4641 S. King Dr.
773-373-3390**

Since it opened in January 2006, Jokes and Notes has started to skew more towards jokes and less toward notes. Formerly a record store, the club has comedy on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. Wednesday is Open Mic Night, and Thursday is a grab bag of jazz, stand-up, and original songs. Tickets for the shows are \$20, and there's a 2-drink minimum to see a mix of quality local and national comedy acts.

Negro League Cafe

**301 E. 43rd St.
773-536-7000**

Part soul food restaurant, part baseball museum, the Negro League Café mixes a modern look with the feel of a drug store soda fountain. Above the bar, you'll see the names of all the Negro League teams next to memorabilia from that bygone era. The dining area features a wall of fame alongside murals of former greats. The menu is replete with catfish, crab cakes, and several items that are either smothered or blackened. The soul food plate of BBQ, collard greens, mac and cheese and yams for nine bucks should be all you need.

Hyde Park

Hyde Park is home to the University of Chicago, which is almost everything you need to know about the neighborhood. Most of the folks living there will have some connection to it, and the bookstores, bars, cafes, and restaurants all seemed geared to students and the pros that teach them. The area maintains some racial diversity and contains two great museums: the must-see Museum of Science and Industry and the DuSable Museum of African-American History. Take the #4 or #6 bus southbound into the heart of Hyde Park.

**The New Checkerboard Lounge
for Blues 'n' Jazz**
5201 S. Harper Court
773-384-1472

The old Checkerboard Lounge was a dive-y mecca for the Chicago blues sound. The New Checkerboard has lost some of the old place's atmosphere, but still retains a quality musical pedigree. Now featuring jazz as well as blues on alternating nights, there's more of an upscale club feel without the haughty vibe thanks to the friendly bartenders and wait staff. The crowd's a mix of nearby University of Chicago professors and students alongside dressed-to-the-nines African-American ladies and gentlemen.

The Cove
1750 E. 55th St.
773-684-1013

Old-school types will tell you that Jimmy's Woodlawn Tap is where it's at in Hyde Park, but The Cove is where we often find ourselves settling in for the night. Remember your parents' basement rec room with the paneling, the old pin-ball machine, and the inexplicable nautical theme? That's the Cove. Chances are, you'll find a guy who resembles your Uncle Ray — ready for an argument and half in the bag — sitting at the bar.

Dr. Wax
5225 S. Harper Ave.
773-493-8696

If you're going to school in Hyde Park, you're broke. So you need to start selling some stuff, starting with your blood and your CDs. Dr. Wax can help with the latter. They'll even sell your possessions back to you at a much greater discount than some of the indier-than-thou places up on the North Side. Where else are you going to be able to buy a 1998 Candy Dulfer calendar and a copy of Terence Trent d'Arby's *Symphony or Damn* album?

Beverly

The far South Side neighborhood of Beverly is the ancestral home of the South Side Irish, and they are not afraid to let you know, either. Home to the South Side Irish Parade, Beverly is a neighborhood teeming in bungalows and larger homes. If you're taking public transportation, we recommend reaching Beverly via Metra's Rock Island Line. Board the train downtown at LaSalle and Van Buren, and you can exit at 101st, 103rd, 107th, and 111th Streets. Other options to Beverly are the 111th St. bus (transfer to that line via the Red Line 95th St. Station), and suburban PACE buses 49A and 349 (South Western Ave.).

Beverly Arts Center
2407 W. 111th St.
773-445-3838

Fans of the visual and performing arts might want to explore the Beverly Arts Center. The Beverly Arts Center hosts workshops, sponsors classes, performs community outreach, stages plays, screens movies, and hosts live performances in its pristine new center. The Beverly Arts Center is also the home to the city's Irish Film Festival.

Koda
10352 S. Western Ave.
773-445-5632

Until recently, fans of good dining were out of luck in Beverly. But the neighborhood's Irish Pride has transferred to this recently opened French bistro. The locals have taken to Koda like a duck to water. On weekends, a wait for a table can be up to ninety minutes, but the food and service are absolutely worth it, and it won't put a crimp in your budget.

Cork & Kerry
10614 S. Western Ave.
773-445-2675

After your appetite has been sated, walk down to Cork & Kerry, which successfully brings the charm of an Emerald Isle pub to the Windy City.

Music Venues.

The Abbey
3420 W. Grace St.
773-478-4408

We're still not sure what The Abbey is trying to be, but when they book something that catches our fancy we do enjoy attending shows here. Most of the music is in the indie rock vein, but the room has gained some acclaim for its dedication to hosting a whole slew of underground hip-hop acts.

Aragon Ballroom
1106 W. Lawrence Ave.
773-561-9500

Also known as The Brawlroom. Avoid shows here at all costs. The room's design is wonderful for its original purpose of housing un-amplified orchestras, but modern bands fill the hall with an impenetrable sludge of feedback and sonic backwash.

Beat Kitchen
2100 W. Belmont
773-281-4444

This little venue hosts up-and-coming rock bands for the most part with an occasional national act. It's a bit off the beaten path, but the room sounds great.

Big Horse
1558 N. Milwaukee
773-227-0465

Nestled behind a taco joint, this is the place to see punk rockers playing to ten of their best friends. Beware the constantly changing beer prices though, since they have a tendency to differ a number of times in the same evening.

Double Door
1572 N. Milwaukee
773-489-3160

Our vote for best music venue in the city. Great sound and sight lines combined with national and international acts combine to create near-perfect concert experiences.

Elbo Room
2871 N. Lincoln Ave.
773-549-5549

This basement room used to host primarily jazz and funk groups, but when that movement died out they rejiggered and aimed for mostly local rock bands. Every Monday hosts a local night where unsigned bands can come in and get their demos played.

Empty Bottle
1035 N. Western Ave.
773-276-3600

The Empty Bottle was once the bastion of hipness and was primed to take over the city once Lounge Ax closed down, but in recent years the club has slipped, and its booking choices have grown less exciting. However we still recommend the club if you want to experience a little slice of Williamsburg in the heart of Chicago.

Green Mill Jazz Club
4802 N. Broadway Ave.
773-878-5552

This lounge has become an institution on Chicago's north side; it has become one of the premiere spots for listening to jazz in the city. Entering the club, one is instantly transported back to another time – one of speakeasies and women in fringed dresses and gangsters with guns. There are booths opposite a long bar

that make a corridor funneling down toward the back where there is a stage for music. The atmosphere practically begs for a martini or Negroni. Once a week on Sundays, the lounge plays host to the Uptown Poetry Slam, a showcase for poets. They invite both established and amateurs to participate; the slam has special guests and open mic slots for audience members to participate. All in all, this is an experience not to miss.

The Hideout
1354 W. Wabansia Ave.
773-227-4433

Alt-country rules the roost at the Hideout, and we're pretty sure most of the Bloodshot roster works here.

HotHouse
31 E. Balbo Ave.
312-362-9707

HotHouse is the global music queen of the city. Its lush atmosphere plays host to international acts thus making it the best place to bring a date if you want to impress them with your cultural acumen.

House Of Blues
329 N. Dearborn St.
312-527-2583

Looking for corporate stroking of the corpse of rock and/or roll? Attend a show here.

Martyr's
3855 N. Lincoln Ave.
773-404-9494

If you are over 35 you will love Martyr's. Everyone else stay away.

Metro
3730 N. Clark St.
773-549-0203

The granddaddy of them all. The Metro is the king of Chicago clubs. The large room is invitingly cozy allowing the place to look packed whether there are 200 or 1700 people in the crowd. Everyone has played here that counts. Everyone.

The Note
1565 N. Milwaukee
773-489-0011

Recently The Note turned over its booking to local promoter MPShows. While the room still suffers from a bit of a personality disorder the early shows have been uniformly terrific. We don't recommend going there after 2am, though, unless you're looking to grope or get groped.

Park West
322 W. Armitage Ave.
773-929-1322

A lovely room. We have no idea why anyone would want to see the majority of the acts that play here, but it is a really lovely room.

Phyllis' Musical Inn
1800 W. Division
773-486-9862

This hole in the wall is usually host to crap acoustic bands or crusty old country groups. But we still love it.

The Pontiac
1531 N. Damen Ave.
773-252-7767

DJs and rock bands fill every night with music, but we recommend the Live Band Karaoke on Fridays or the Honky Tonk Bingo with Fulton

County Line's country music on Sundays.

Schuba's
3159 N. Southport
773-525-2508

Schuba's is the best small room in Chicago. A solid history of booking excellent acts has helped lift this venue to the top of the list, and bands the world over have represented on the stage. Also, check out the upstairs room where DJs will often spin sets after the shows.

Subterranean
2011 W. North Ave.
773-278-6600

This was once a bordello. Hot! Skip the downstairs bar where generic DJs spin beats, and head upstairs to the two-tiered music room. The booking is incredibly eclectic but does veer more towards the garage/indie rock contingent. Most of the cool acts that used to play The Empty Bottle now play here.

The Riv
4746 N. Racine Ave.
773-275-6800

Don't bother. Well, it's better than the Aragon, but not by much.

The Vic
3145 N. Sheffield Ave.
773-472-0366

When not hosting Brew And View movies, The Vic hosts a number of pretty good concerts throughout the year. It seems to be a touchstone for a lot of touring jam bands, but they have also host acts like Peaches and Queens Of the Stone Age. Oh, and Bauhaus. That was an awesome show.

Culture

Even if they never buy a ticket, most locals know Chicagoland has a lively, well-regarded theater scene. Everyone seems to know someone who saw a kickass show at a major institution like The Goodman, The Steppenwolf, or Chicago Shakespeare. Those company's artists have paid their dues and are putting on consistently good work, but Chicago's theater excellence extends far beyond those houses. As the League of Chicago Theaters won't stop reminding us, there are over 200 hard working companies competing for your hard earned cash. Tickets to many of the best shows in town can be had for less than \$20, that's some of the best entertainment value in the city.

Be Prepared

If you can't or won't plan ahead, Hottix is your best friend. Around 10am Tuesday – Friday, the half-priced theater booths post their offerings, mostly day-of-show sales with a few advance offerings, on www.hottix.org. All weekend offerings are announced Friday morning and updated as necessary. Hottix sells its wares for half price + 10% surcharge at four city and three suburban locations, and tix to even the most highly recommended shows may show up on their board earlier in the run. The most comprehensive theater listings in town are at the Chicago Reader (www.chicagoreader.com) and the League of Chicago Theaters websites (www.chicagoplays.com). The Reader and Time Out Chicago provide comprehensive theater news and reviews in print, as do The Chicago Tribune's Chris Jones and The Chicago Sun-Times' Hedy Weiss.

Insider tip: Subscribe to the League of Chicago Plays' "ChicagoplaysEXTRA" newsletter via their website to learn about special discounts.

Companies to Look For

This town's got a show for everyone, even theater for people who don't really like theater. Please note: this is not an exhaustive list and companies may disappear or revamp their mission out of the blue.

Chicago audiences continue to welcome hardscrabble, kitchen sink realism at its many black box and storefront spaces. Strawdog Theatre and Gift Theatre are deftly preserving this tradition. So are The Hypocrites, who sucker punch us in the gut as they rewrite the rules, and the side project, who perform in a tiny studio at the edge of town. Mary-Arrchie's brash style and Prop Thtr's politically charged work are also worth the trip.

We've found truth and entertainment on larger stages too. American Theater Company produces the work of American writers examining the American character. WNEP Theater puts a quirky, inventive stamp on cultural touchstones like classic radio drama and Midwestern pluck. Lookingglass and Redmoon specialize in eye-popping spectacle, the exuberant House Theatre rewrites the rules and packs the kids in the seats, while the Neo-Futurists serve up 60 minutes of short, brutally and comically honest plays each week. Black Ensemble Theater and ETA Creative Arts Foundation produce work by and about African-Americans, Teatro Luna is one talented group of Latinas, and Bailiwick Rep is a hit with the GLBT community.

Even the durable Equity houses like Hyde Park's Court Theatre, Evanston's adventurous Next Theatre, and Lincoln Park's homegrown Victory Gardens sometimes get lost in the shuffle. VG hosts a parade of strong resident companies including the erudite work of Remy Bumppo, Irish Repertory's pipelines to the Emerald Isle, and Eclipse Theatre, which devotes every season to a single writer.

Second City's track record of breaking big talent keeps them atop the local comedy summit, but they tend to sell out quickly. Get your dose of funny with IO Theatre's broad roster of shows, Improv Kitchen's interactive take on dinner theater, the high- and middle-brow humor of Theater Wit, and The Playground's procession of rising stars. Musical theater lovers don't have to fork over the big bucks to Broadway in Chicago to be satisfied. The itinerant Porchlight Musical Theater selects and casts shows well, consistently racking up awards. Someone's always singing at Theatre Building Chicago, presenting old favorites, lost classics, and original work.

Architectural Artifacts
4325 N. Ravenswood
773-348-0622

Hop on the Brown Line and head north to Ravenswood and Albany Park for a quiet afternoon that's easy on the wallet. One block from the Montrose stop is Architectural Artifacts, a warehouse turned showroom/ museum that features pieces designed by, among others, Louis H. Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, as well as remnants from Chicago landmarks and historical buildings. Some of the items have price tags of half a million dollars, but you can look for free.

Art Institute of Chicago
111 S. Michigan Ave.
312-443-3600

One-thousand tourist guides can't be wrong. The granddaddy of Chicago art museums houses one of the most impressive collections in America, featuring work by impressionist masters Seurat, Monet, and Caillebotte; a stately hall of armor; and priceless Asian art. They'll open a new wing in 2007, providing more space for architecture and 20th and 21st century artist exhibitions.

Chicago Cultural Center
77 W. Washington St.
(enter from either Washington & Randolph St.)
312-744-6630

See how the City spends its tax dollars at the "people's palace." Arts programmers at the Department of Cultural Affairs continue to develop relationships with hundreds of local and international artists, affording Chicagoans and tourists some of the best free entertainment in the city. Three ground floor galleries

and two fourth floor exhibit halls are hit or miss. Best to visit during lunchtime or evenings to take advantage of regular concerts and erudite discussions about topics ranging from architecture and city planning to art appreciation and making a living as an artist.

DuSable Museum of African American History
740 E. 56th Place
773-947-0600

Named for Chicago's first permanent settler, the DuSable Museum celebrates a richly diverse African American heritage. We're particularly fond of Harlem Renaissance work and the Harold Washington exhibit.

Hyde Park Art Center
5020 S. Cornell Ave.
773-324-5520

HPAC tripled their exhibit space when they opened a new building in spring 2006 which, as of this writing, still looks a bit rough around the edges. But they're opening their doors (and studios) to encourage collaboration and dialogue between artists and art lovers from all over the region. They exhibit lots of contemporary work in traditional and non-traditional spaces – in stairwells, on the rooftop, and on the front façade.

International Museum of Surgical Science
1524 N. Lake Shore Drive
312-642-6502

Art and science meet in one of Chicago's quirkiest museums, housed in a marble and stone lakeside mansion. They feature informative, occasionally freaky takes on the human

anatomy and human health and free tours Saturdays at 2pm.

Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago
220 E. Chicago Ave.
312-280-2660

The MCA functions as a playground for style mavens and house of acutely and vaguely subversive recent work, hanging work by pop favorites like Andy Warhol, Alexander Calder, and Sarah Tze alongside captivating work by photographer Andreas Gursky and niche work by fluorescent tube artist Dan Flavin. They also know how to throw a party, packing in scene-hoppers on the first Friday night of every month, and how to host fun, sometimes bizarre, theater and performance.

Museum of Contemporary Photography
600 S. Michigan Ave.
312-663-5554

The modest yet underrated exhibition space on the Columbia College campus features boundary-busting photographers and the occasional video artists from around the world and a student showcase each spring. Managed by academics, the museum has a considerable slide collection and resource library for students only.

David & Alfred Smart Museum of Art
5550 S. Greenwood Ave.
773-702-0200

The University of Chicago's art museum is free and open to the public, providing a major survey of art history and special exhibits.