



PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY RITZ-CARLTON, CHICAGO

STAY

RITZY RESURRECTION

Marriott brings a grand dame back to life.

BY AMBER GIBSON

You won't even recognize the Ritz-Carlton after its multimillion-dollar renovation. All 90 suites were refashioned, and the indoor water fountain has been replaced by a blue glass floating sculpture inspired by Lake Michigan. Gray marble columns and metal partitions pay homage to Chicago's architecture. The hotel now boasts the city's largest luxury ballroom, and the spa received a facelift, too. The Indulgent Drench body massage includes reflexology and a scalp massage for head-to-toe relaxation.

Previously, under Four Seasons management, there was no club lounge. Now, the Ritz-Carlton rivals the Langham for the nicest lounge in town, with four enticing daily culinary presentations accompanied by city and lake views. Hors d'oeuvres might include juicy chicken skewers or spanakopita, and dessert always involves chocolate fondue.

Just don't spoil your appetite for dinner at Torali, the onsite modern Italian steakhouse. Broiled Maine lobster is painted with uni butter, and perfectly cooked fillets are served with lardo pesto and black truffle garlic butter. The eatery also delivers an exceptional breakfast in bed. There's no more relaxing way to start your day than noshing on Sicilian scrambled eggs with eggplant, tomato and Parmesan in your bathrobe in a lakeside suite. *The Ritz-Carlton, 160 E. Pearson St., Chicago, 312-266-1000, ritzcarlton.com*

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SEAFOOD SPLENDOR

Nautical chic Portsmouth serves up a touch of whimsy.

BY AMBER GIBSON

Chicago boasts plenty of solid seafood eateries despite being hundreds of miles from the ocean. But none have the imagination of Portsmouth, the Fifty/50 Restaurant Group's fine-dining establishment at Dana Hotel. Purists will approve of the raw and lightly cooked offerings, including a charred shrimp cocktail and hamachi crudo with umeboshi.

Executive Pastry Chef Chris Teixeira delivers the best bread service in town; housemade rosemary butter melts into warm squid-ink ciabatta, and black garlic butter sweetens bonito-flake sourdough. For a seafood restaurant, there's a surprising abundance of foie gras, too. It's shaved over oysters, paired with a donut in a sweet and savory appetizer, and served seared alongside an ahi tuna steak topped with Luxardo bordelaise sauce. After rich entrées, a jeweled clamshell arrives with a palate cleanser, an elegant prelude heightening anticipation for dessert.

Even sweets have a seafaring theme, all inspired by popular international ports of call. Cuba, for instance, is embodied by a baba au rum cake with compressed pineapple and tobacco ice cream. Diners are invited to inject the cake themselves with a squirt of rum. Here, interactivity and novelty are backed up by undeniably delicious food. *Portsmouth*, 660 N. State St., Chicago, 312-202-6050, portsmithchicago.com

PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY PORTSMITH, RUSTIC CUFF



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OBJECTS OF DESIRE

Cool Oklahoma cuffs make their Windy City debut.

BY AMBER GIBSON

When Oklahoma-based Rustic Cuff opened its Chicago showroom last fall in iconic Water Tower Place, an excited troop of loyal fans road-tripped from Tulsa to celebrate with designer and founder Jill Donovan. She greeted guests warmly, spontaneously taking the silver cuff off her wrist to give to one lucky young woman. She was a creative law professor in a past life before she turned her part-time jewelry-making hobby into a full-time business. Her bracelets have an apparent cult following, and the glittering new Gold Coast store will surely lure in new converts.

Rustic Cuff is known for its customized approach to jewelry, making accessorizing a means of personal expression. The eclectic array on offer varies tremendously in price, design and aesthetic. Simple bracelets, meant to be layered, start at \$25, while more complex, limited-edition pieces with gemstones, hammered metal and exotic skins cost several hundreds of dollars. The signature collections are most impressive, inspired by exotic tropical destinations with an Ancient Greek feel.

The line has expanded into clothing, suede handbags and other accessories, all stamped with Rustic Cuff's cross logo. There's even a commemorative-edition Monopoly board game where the object is to collect cuffs and visit showroom locations. *Rustic Cuff*, 835 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, 918-804-8404, rusticuff.com

