

make it better

POWERFUL. POSITIVE. CONNECTIONS.

CHICAGO AND BEYOND



THE
Dining
ISSUE

A top-down photograph of a gourmet dish served on a dark, textured ceramic plate. The dish features several pieces of seared A5 Miyazaki beef, a bright yellow egg yolk, and a delicate web of golden-brown fried threads. It is garnished with five small, vibrant magenta flowers. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the food against the dark plate.

A5 MIYAZAKI
BEEF

IN GOOD TASTE

To experience a tasting menu is to tumble down a rabbit hole on a culinary adventure, not really knowing what to expect or whether the lavish price tag will be worth it in the end. But if said rabbit hole happens to lead you to one of these seven extraordinary restaurants, hop in with abandon. Sip everything that says *drink me*, taste everything that says *eat me*, and remember the magic long after you've reentered reality.

BY AMBER GIBSON

ACADIA

Acadia's South Loop location is in a bit of a restaurant dead zone, which could make chef Ryan McCaskey feel like an underdog—or the beholder of a delicious secret. He's also smart: In January, Acadia switched from multiple tasting menus to a single seven-course menu with optional wine pairings. "Being able to dine without a huge time commitment, and at a manageable price point, we think will allow diners to experience Acadia more than a handful of times a year," Chef Ryan McCaskey says. "We love the thought of seeing our regular diners more often!" A shorter—read: less pricey—bar tasting menu also makes more frequent visits more feasible.

One of the most interesting dishes on the current tasting menu is a cured foie gras atop Anson Mills steel cut oats. "It's served almost breakfast style," McCaskey explains. He cures the foie gras in goat's milk, then slices it into thin curls with candy cap mushroom milk, confit pineapple and pickled Maine blueberries. Diners will also choose between two classic courses from the opening à la carte menu: the Yukon potato "risotto" flavored with leeks and black truffle, or a deconstructed lobster "pie" with garlic flan, turnips, Brussels sprouts, lobster bisque and sour cream pastry, a contemporary creation also inspired by McCaskey's summers in Maine.

7-course tasting menu (\$145/person); optional wine pairing (\$115/person); bar tasting menu (\$45/person), acadiachicago.com

LUAU CAKE MADE WITH
LYCHEE SORBET, HAUPIA,
AND DEHYDRATED
COCONUT MERINGUE.



NEIL JOHN BURGER



**ROASTED CAULIFLOWER
WITH FERMENTED
SUNCHOKE PUREE,
RYE PAIN PERDU, AND
BLACK LIME**



**GUINEA HEN WITH
BROWN BUTTER SAUCE,
PARSNIP PUREE AND
GALANT DES ABBESSES**



**OCTOPUS WITH
MISO-GLAZED
EGGPLANT AND AN
IBERICO EMULSION**



**SOFIA GOAT CHEESE
WITH BEET SHORTCAKE,
WILD STRAWBERRIES,
FREEZE-DRIED BALSAMIC,
AND JUNIPER SMOKE**

TEMPORIS

The dining room at this inconspicuous 20-seat restaurant in West Town is stark, nudging your attention to the colorful and dainty abstract landscapes on your plate. Chefs Sam Plotnick and Don Young met working together at Les Nomades, but the 11-course tasting menu at Temporis is a departure from classic French food, with more contemporary twists and unusual flavor combinations including white chocolate with caviar and foie gras ice cream with black sesame and canel   de Bordeaux for dessert.

This upstart restaurant is still flying under the radar for now, and seats are easy to come by on OpenTable. "I believe we have really hit our

stride creatively and Temporis is just becoming what we had dreamed it would be," Plotnick says. "We are excited about spring ingredients such as white asparagus, morels, and ramps."

You might be asked to snip something from the centerpiece growing out of the middle of the table for a course, and a basement hydroponic garden supplies herbs and garnishes for several courses. They're even growing strawberries and cherry tomatoes. "We want to see if we can produce excellent fresh products even if they are not available locally yet," Plotnick explains. They even make their own kombucha for the palate cleanser with teas from Rare Tea Cellar.

11-course tasting menu (\$125/person), temporischicago.com



GOLDEN OSETRA CAVIAR
WITH COCONUT DASHI,
LYCHEE, AND SEA GRAPE

ORIOLE

Enter through the door of a freight elevator to what many now consider to be Chicago's best fine-dining experience, in a 28-seat exposed brick dining room with white tablecloths. Chef Noah Sandoval's food is incredibly fancy—he uses only the best ingredients, like Japanese A5 wagyu and Alba truffles—yet craveable, like the Berkshire pork ribs you eat with your hands. Sandoval tweaks dishes on a daily basis, but a few items, like jamón mangalica and nigiri, have become signatures. It's hard to believe, but what's arguably the best bite of sushi in town—Santa Barbara sea urchin one night, madai snapper the next—isn't even served at a sushi restaurant. For spring, Sandoval is most excited to work with white asparagus and rhubarb. "White asparagus is floral and takes on fat very well," he says. "I really like rhubarb and foie gras in a light preparation with a lot of sweetness and acid to represent the season."

The attention to every detail extends to the well-stocked bathroom, including breath mints made by Pastry Chef Genie Kwon. She'll send you home with a generous sweet treat to enjoy the morning after, too.

13-course tasting menu, (\$190/person); optional non-alcoholic beverage pairing (\$85/person); standard beverage pairing (\$125/person); reserve wine pairing (\$250/person), oriolechicago.com

ALASKAN KING CRAB WITH
AGUACHILE, CHICHARRONES,
AND WILD OREGANO





**LAMB LOIN WITH CHARRED TURNIP,
CUCUMBER, APRICOT, AND A
BROKEN YOGURT AND SMOKED OLIVE OIL
VINAIGRETTE**

EL IDEAS

The industrial brick building in Douglas Park and bottlecap sign on the door are hardly what you'd expect of Michelin-star dining in Chicago, but El Ideas is Chicago's fine-dining rebel. Chef Phillip Foss runs a bare-bones open kitchen operation with just two cooks blasting hip hop and cranking out high-quality food. Befriend the team and you might be asked to do shots with them after service.

El Ideas finds inspiration everywhere, viewing life through the lens of food. One new dish was inspired by Chef Abe Conlon's egg tarts at Fat Rice, and the El Ideas version is equally rich, but savory, topped with tart finger lime and briny caviar and sea urchin bottarga.

French fries and ice cream is one dish that will never leave the menu, a fine-dining version of dunking your fast-food fries into melting ice cream, inspired by Foss' daughter. El Ideas kicks it up a notch with liquid-nitrogen vanilla ice cream, potato-leek soup and crispy diced fries. It's hot, cold, crunchy and creamy all in one bite. Even better, there's no dress code here and you'll BYOB.

11-13-course tasting menu (\$155/person); front-row seat in the kitchen (\$195/person), elideas.com

ELIZABETH

Self-taught chef Iliana Regan calls her cuisine "New Gatherer," and thanks to the importance of foraging and Midwestern ingredients in her food, she's been compared to René Redzepi and her restaurant regarded as the Noma of the Midwest. At Elizabeth, whimsical tasting menus eschew luxury products flown in from all corners of the world in favor of appreciating what is growing beneath our feet. Local ingredients like Lake Superior herring roe and Wisconsin wild rice appear on the menu along with mulberries Regan picked herself and veggies she pickled last year.

Regan has received several James Beard nominations, a *Food & Wine* best new chef award and a Michelin star for five years running,

so Elizabeth is certainly on the map for foodie visitors despite its off-the-beaten-path location in Lincoln Square. Themes play an important role here in telling a story through food and recent menus have been inspired by Dr. Seuss stories and Wes Anderson movies.

Generally, diners can expect to be served about a dozen courses, starting with several small bites. Prices fluctuate based on the menu theme, day of the week, and time, and tickets are available on Tock. Both alcoholic and non-alcoholic pairings are offered and the non-alcoholic option is especially thoughtful, including teas, juices, and tinctures all created by the kitchen.

Prices fluctuate based on menu theme, elizabeth-restaurant.com

SAGE, CHICKEN,
AND OAK LEAF
SMOLDER



ALINEA

Alinea is the only three-star Michelin restaurant left in Chicago and easily the top restaurant in town for the international jetset. Chef Grant Achatz was a pioneer in dining as theater with memorable courses like the now famous taffy apple helium balloon that is at once ridiculous, tasty, and fun. Achatz challenges the concept of what food can be, exploring molecular gastronomy and the idea of food as an art medium and science experiment. Since a complete renovation in 2016, the space is lighter and brighter with three different tasting experiences—in the gallery, in the salon, and at the kitchen table.

10- to 14- course tasting menu, (\$185-\$265/person); kitchen table for parties of 6 (\$385/person), alinearestaurant.com

VEAL CHEEK,
HEART OF PALM,
AND PINEAPPLE



MERINGUE,
BLOOD ORANGE,
AND PISTACHIO



NEXT

This innovative West Loop concept is a bit more nomadic than big sister Alinea. Case in point: It changes its concept three times a year—we're talking everything from restaurant decor to dinnerware. This year kicked off with historical French classics, followed by a modern interpretation of French cuisine (the two complementary menus are titled "French: from Classique to Nouvelle") from April through June. Next up? An Alinea retrospective in two parts.

Prices fluctuate based on menu theme, nextrestaurant.com