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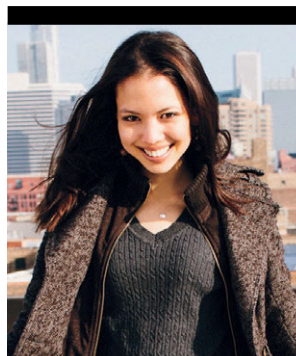
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## ...WITHOUT WHOM

*THIS ISSUE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE*



### **AMBER GIBSON**

*Writer*

Amber Gibson covers food, wine, and luxury travel for *Four Seasons Magazine*, *Saveur*, *Hemispheres*, and *American Way*. Her favorite adventures have included snowmobiling and dogsledding in Colorado, spearfishing in Punta Mita, and dining with Francis Mallmann at his home in Uruguay. Champagne, dark chocolate, and gelato are her biggest weaknesses.

**Behind the story:** "I love tasting menus ("Tasting Menu Titans," page 50) because I don't have to make any decisions. At a truly great restaurant, it's the best way to let a chef tell his or her story."

**Go-to restaurant:** "Café Spiaggia has been a favorite for more than a decade. I usually manage to eat healthfully until dessert. The pizzelle ice cream sandwich gets me every time."

**Plans for spring:** "Maybe traveling to the Northern Territory in Australia—I'm excited to see the real Outback."



### **ERIC LEVIN**

*Photographer*

Artist and entrepreneur Eric Levin grew his photography business from modest beginnings, gaining recognition peddling his artistic works off the street. Now operating in NYC and Boston, Eric's E Levin Studios is a hive of photo and filmmaking activity and an incubator for young talent. Eric studied at Clark University and L'Université de Paris-Sorbonne and enjoys travel, adventure, and astrophysics.

**Behind the story:** "Giuliana ("G Force," page 98) had really great energy and was up for anything. We got to talking a bit about her son, and she even gave me some parenting tips (I'm going to be a dad in March)!"

**Personal style:** "Since I'm not much of a suit guy day-to-day, nothing beats nice shoes, in-fashion jeans, and a beautiful watch (I have my eye on a sweet Franck Muller). For me, the trick is to care, but not really look like it. I love the Varvatos aesthetic, too—rock 'n' roll formalwear."

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: In an urban-chic West Lake Street space, Oriole snagged two quick stars with dishes like Alaskan King Crab with compressed watermelon; a mile further west, Smyth serves up unexpected desserts like salted-licorice cured egg yolk.



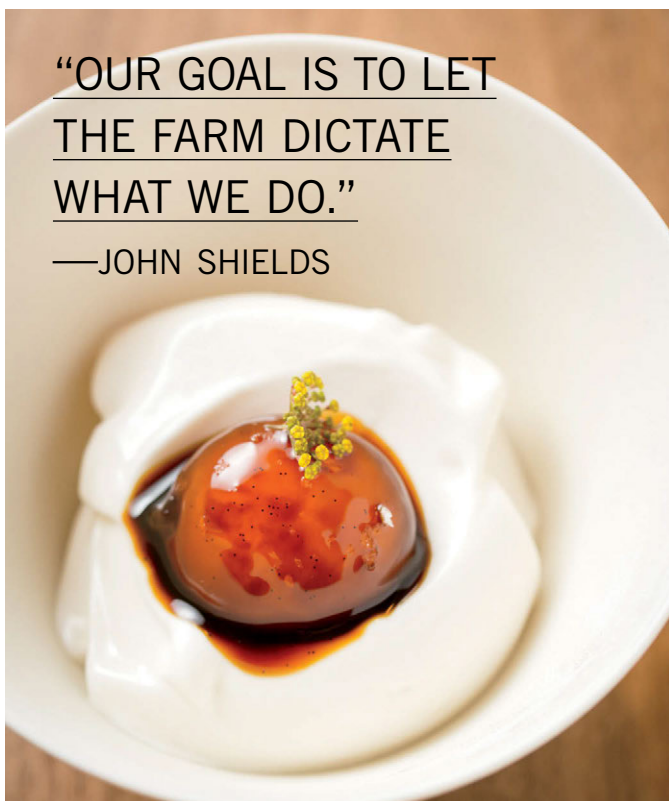
**TASTING MENU TITANS**

FORGET FAST-CASUAL DINING—CHICAGO'S HOTTEST RESTAURANTS ARE DOUBLING DOWN ON THE TASTING-MENU ONLY MODEL, WITH IMPRESSIVELY DELICIOUS (AND MICHELIN STAR-STUDED) RESULTS.

BY AMBER GIBSON

**“OUR GOAL IS TO LET THE FARM DICTATE WHAT WE DO.”**

—JOHN SHIELDS



In this age of grab-and-go eats, there's something to be said for a multi-course culinary journey that can captivate even the most restless of foodies. At several ambitious new Chicago restaurants, chefs are embracing the challenge of presenting diners with a dozen or more courses, throwing down the gauntlet to anyone who thinks of Chicago as merely steak joints and gastropubs. But tasting menus today are more passion than pretension: Show up in jeans, sit back, and let these maestros show you what they've got.

**PERMANENT POP-UP** Twenty-seat **Temporis** has all

the intimacy of a pop-up minus the communal tables. Co-chefs Evan Fullerton and Sam Plotnick make an unlikely pair, but the veteran and creative upstart strike a refined balance with their food. “I’m rooted more in the tradition of technique because I had to go to culinary school,” Fullerton explains. Plotnick, on the other hand, began cooking in his college dorm room and has only worked at one restaurant, Les Nomades, where he met Fullerton. “I’m a little more scientific method-y,” Plotnick says. “I want to try a bunch of things I’ve never tried.” That includes an interactive microgreens centerpiece, and a foie gras ice cream >

## SCENE BUZZ

and canelé combo accented with passion fruit reduction and sesame tuile. 933 N.

Ashland Ave., 773-697-4961; [temporischicago.com](http://temporischicago.com)

### EFFORTLESS EXCELLENCE

White tablecloth elegance meets exposed brick wall urbanity on an inconspicuous West Loop side street at **Oriole**. With a menu that flows smoothly from sushi (one bite of nigiri topped with crisp roasted genmai) to pasta (luscious capellini dressed with Burgundy truffles), chef Noah Sandoval nonchalantly garnered two Michelin stars just seven months after opening. “The stars are a huge honor and confidence boost,” Sandoval says. “I must be doing something right.” Even indulgent courses like lamb belly and Japanese A5 wagyu show restraint so you don’t feel too guilty as you’re digging into the pie that pastry chef Genie Kwon sends you home with. 661

W. Walnut St., 312-877-5339; [oriolechicago.com](http://oriolechicago.com)

### FARM FRESH

As you break into the carotene-packed licorice-cured egg yolk floating in frozen yogurt meringue in what has become **Smyth’s** signature dessert, thank pastry chef Karen Shields and a coop of chickens on a 20-acre farm in Bourbonnais. “Our ultimate goal is to let the farm dictate what we do,” says chef John Shields, who met his wife and partner working at Charlie Trotter’s. “It’s a really challenging proposition but there’s a uniqueness and creativity that evolves from having less.” Preserved wild black raspberries picked in July brighten up caramelized lobster, and salty shiitake mushroom powder garnishes both crispy lamb salad and a milk chocolate huckleberry bar. 177 N. Ada St. #101, 773-913-3773; [smythandtheloyalist.com](http://smythandtheloyalist.com) ■



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: Smyth chef John Shields crafts dishes like a salad of duck tongues with herbs and roasted squid stock; at Temporis, diners indulge in composed plates like parsnip, mandarin, and cucumber grass.



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