



Clockwise, from this photo, Dodge Avenger outside colorful Nuevo Leon Restaurant, famed for authentic Mexican fare. Uptown's Marigold offers Indian dishes in a stylish setting. Try to resist Kaze Sushi's whitefish tempura. Go for French at Le Bouchon.



FEEED ME, CHICAGO

THIS METROPOLIS WEARS ITS RICH ETHNIC HERITAGE PROUDLY—AND EATS IT TOO. COME ALONG IN THE ALL-NEW AVENGER AND SAMPLE THE DELICIOUS FARE THE CITY'S DIVERSE NEIGHBORHOODS SERVE UP.

BY MISTY TOSH PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT LANE

Nothing in Chicago tastes quite as amazing as the pierogis at Andrej Grill in the Ukrainian Village neighborhood. Except maybe the whitefish tempura at the Japanese restaurant Kaze Sushi in Roscoe Village. Or the *chiles rellenos* at Nuevo Leon in Pilsen.

Oh, who am I kidding? I've been writing about the food scene in this Midwest melting pot for nearly five years, and I'm constantly discovering a new ethnic eatery and a new can't-shut-up-about-it dish.

Poet Carl Sandburg once described Chicago as the City of Big Shoulders, but you could just as easily call it the City of Big Appetites. You want great Italian or Asian? That is, of course, not a problem. Curious about African cuisine? Russian, perhaps? Caribbean? We've got you covered.

Like a great menu with something to please every palate, Chicago is a collection of ethnic neighborhoods, each offering irresistible treats for bold, adventurous diners. I can't take you to all of them, but I can take you to some of the most interesting and let you discover the best the city has to offer—one intensely flavorful bite at a time.

We're hitting the city in the All-New Dodge Avenger. Chicago can be a fairly easy drive, but it's still a city. If you have trouble finding restaurants, the navigation capabilities of Avenger's MyGIG™ Multimedia Infotainment System¹ will come in handy. The system's digital music

file storage also means you'll have great tunes to accompany you on your Chicago visit.

EAST ROGERS PARK/EDGEWATER/ UPTOWN

This quirky neighborhood on the edge of Lake Michigan has shops and restaurants from myriad cultures all set up within a few square miles. More than 50 languages are spoken here, so odds are, if you traipse around for a few minutes you'll hear tongues you never even knew existed.

Start at La Unica. The blissfully simple restaurant is located in the back of a small grocery store, so if an ingredient runs low, no sweat—the beaming staff just pulls from the produce aisles. La Unica is the place to score what may be the best pressed Cuban sandwich anywhere in town. And a sauce-drenched Cuban tamale and divine café con leche only sets you back about three bucks. Keep your coffee warm in the Avenger's available heated/cooled cup holder.

Everyone's heard of Chinatown, but what about Little Saigon? This bazaarlike enclave is loaded with authentic Asian restaurants. Hai Yen Restaurant, a Vietnamese favorite next door to a Chinese supermarket, keeps the regulars flocking back for dishes like *chao tom*, sugarcane-grilled shrimp served with rice paper and bundles of herbs, optimal for creating tight little wraps to dunk into fish sauce. When it comes to more seafood, Gruppo di Amici is a hidden gem. This candlelit haven churns out lemony octopus salad and bowls of juice-heavy mussels—

those in the know show up on Tuesdays for half-price glasses of wine. If you ever see the lamb shank special on the menu, order away! Nestled on a bed of creamy mashed potatoes, it's one of the most mouthwatering slabs of meat I've tasted.

Devon Avenue links up the vibrant flavors of India, Lebanon, Pakistan and more. Smack in the middle of all the chaos is Afghan Restaurant, where an open kitchen doles out heavenly plates of *borani badinjan*, a slow-cooked eggplant, and *awshak*, dumplings filled with spinach, green onions and spices and topped with a tangy yogurt sauce.

For traditional Mexican fare, go to Dona Lolis Quesadillas on North Clark Street. Try the *huarache*, a homemade corn tortilla topped with beans, scrambled egg and cactus. And don't miss the gigantic quesadillas stuffed with *huitlacoche*, a superb-tasting corn fungus. Wash it all down with a cool glass of cantaloupe *agua fresca*.

One more Uptown surprise: the sleek Indian newcomer Marigold, which is earning raves from Chicago's restaurant critics. Sit in a chair or on an ottoman and dine under the soothing glow provided by the Taj Mahal-inspired silver lanterns. Every dish served at Marigold, from the spicy coconut soup to the lamb simmered in garlic and chilies, is loaded with character. And don't pass up dessert—the enchanting rice pudding is a stunner.

BUCKTOWN/WICKER PARK/ UKRAINIAN VILLAGE

This hip area where bourgeoisie meets bohemia is perfect for exploring on foot, and the best fuel is a super-sweet oatmeal shake from the much-adored Costa Rican restaurant Irazu. This hectic stand-alone shack also serves a football-size mushroom-and-avocado burrito that even the non-veggie crowd raves about. Or get a little more upscale at Parisian bistro Le Bouchon. The dining area is cozy (to say the least), but it makes for interesting conversation with your neighbor. And the salad lyonnaise, with its thumb-size tears of fatty bacon, is, as they say, to die for.



Chicago is a collection of ethnic neighborhoods, each offering irresistible treats for bold diners.

Opposite, In the kitchen at Marigold, the chefs infuse every dish with distinctive Indian flavor. This page, clockwise from top left, The Dodge Avenger outside of Katerina's. Dine to the delicious sounds of live music at Katerina's, a supper club serving Southern European cuisine in Roscoe Village. How about a bowl of octopus salad at Gruppo di Amici? Or maybe one of Gruppo di Amici's wood-grilled pizzas. Expect old-school Turkish fare in a sleek setting at Turquoise.



At the ancient-looking Andrej Grill & Restaurant, located on a drab strip of Western Avenue, a microscopic kitchen slings out such soul-satisfying Polish food that you'd be remiss not to search it out. Meals are cheap, and portions are huge, so prepare to take home doggie bags full of buttery crepes, potato dumplings and fluffy pierogis. You can stash them in the Avenger's Chill Zone™ beverage storage bin.

PILSEN

Brimming with pushcarts hawking steaming tamales and *elotes*, which are corncobs doused with lime and chili powder, this lively neighborhood is the heart of Mexican Chicago. Restaurants pepper the colorful streets, but my favorite is Nuevo Leon, which churns out classics like gooey *chiles rellenos* and flawless *huevos rancheros*.

A few blocks down the way, you'll find the slightly zippier Mundial Cocina Mestiza. I've developed a passion for no-liquor-license restaurants—bringing a nice bottle of your own caramel-tinged rum into this cozy dining room is the way to get treated like a regular. The staff is happy to supply you with ice, limes and Cokes for a refreshing round of *cuba libres*, the perfect

PEDAL, CHOW, PEDAL, CHOW, PEDAL, CHOW

There is no better way to explore the pure urban flavor of Chicago than by bicycle. When brilliant fall colors start creating unforgettable landscapes, make like the locals do: Grab a set of wheels and discover a world of treats you never knew existed.

Just one block west of the Argyle Red Line CTA train stop is the uber-popular French/Vietnamese sandwich shop Ba Le. Slurp down an adrenaline-poppin' Thai iced tea before continuing on to your next pit stop, Mekato's Colombian Bakery. This sun-splashed cafe brews up a potent café con leche and keeps the display cases packed with dense corn *arepas* and garlicky chorizos squirted with lime. Have a light snack before pedaling south to Marrakech Expresso. A honey-doused crepe and steaming mint tea await you at this Moroccan hideaway. That should get you revved up for the quick jaunt west to El Trigal bakery, a Mexican storefront with the most addictive *tres leches* cake in town. Just down the street is another sweet haven, the Angel Food Bakery. Here, you'll relish in the Barcelona, a jaw-dropping ode to pudding-like Spanish hot chocolate. Continue due east to Montrose Harbor for one of the most stunning views of downtown Chicago; your legs will be aching by the time you hit the lake, but your belly will love you for it!

Ba Le Sandwich Shop

5018 N. Broadway St.
Chicago, IL 60640
(773) 561-4424

Mekato's Colombian Bakery

5423 N. Lincoln Ave.
Chicago, IL 60625
(773) 784-5181
mekatos.com

Marrakech Expresso

4747 N. Damen Ave.
Chicago, IL 60625
(773) 271-4541
marrakechexpresso.com

El Trigal Bakery

3107 W. Montrose Ave.
Chicago, IL 60618
(773) 478-9116

Angel Food Bakery

1636 W. Montrose Ave.
Chicago, IL 60613
(773) 728-1512
angelfoodltd.com



accompaniment to fresh oysters on the half shell topped with ceviche.

Devoted regulars line up at the crack of dawn to get their hands on nearby La Michoacana's carnitas, pork cooked for hours in a giant vat of lard. I prefer mine on a corn tortilla with cilantro and lime.

ROSCOE VILLAGE

In this village-like neighborhood with its tangle of restaurants, every meal you have feels like you've hit the gastronomic jackpot. Reservations are mandatory at Kaze Sushi, a Japanese hot spot so hip it doesn't even have a sign. Regulars know to perch at the sleek bar, where you'll see innovative chefs creating such ravishing dishes as whitefish tempura in parsley butter sauce.

A few blocks over, you'll find Turquoise,

where everything is made following old-school Turkish traditions. Try the *manti*, a bursting pile of ravioli stuffed with a speck of piquant lamb and swimming in a drinkable yogurt-and-chili-oil sauce. Warm homemade bread appears on the table the minute you sit down—don't hesitate to ask for more of the relish du jour to go with it. (The creamy beet is a house favorite.)

Finally, no eating adventure in Chicago would be complete without a trip to Katerina's, an intimate supper club serving up exquisite Southern European food with an irresistible side of arts and culture. Dishes like *tiganiá*, a braised pork prepared with red wine and fresh lemon, come from the Greek kitchen of Katerina and her family. The atmosphere is Euro-cool—laid-back and a little sensual. Most evenings offer live music

(and a cover charge); otherwise, you'll be entertained by one of the CDs Katerina has created—eclectic selections of jazz, blues and romantic standards sung by such legendary voices as Dietrich and Piaf. Patrons often ask Katerina if they can buy the CDs, but, alas, they aren't available. Be sure to try the famous sour cherry martini and enjoy some *tiroplitakia*—an overwhelmingly delicious three-cheese-stuffed phyllo dough packet drenched in amaretto.

In many ways, Katerina's epitomizes the ethnic eating experience of the city. It's hugely satisfying, leaving you feeling a bit more worldly and definitely well-fed. 🍷

Misty Tosh is a Chicago freelancer who writes about food and restaurants for *Chicago Time Out* and other magazines.

¹ My-GIG in-dash DVD capability is not available in all states. See your dealer for details.



This photo, A tasty array of dining options awaits in the distinctive neighborhoods beyond Chicago's skyline, which provides a stunning backdrop for the Dodge Avenger. Opposite, clockwise from top left, Welcome to Gruppo di Amici. A sampling of the dishes served at Turquoise. Accompany your meal at Turquoise with a bottle of fine wine.

CHICAGO RESTAURANTS



LE BOUCHON

1958 N. Damen Ave.
Chicago, IL 60647
(773) 862-6600
lebouchonofchicago.com

ANDRZEJ GRILL

1022 N. Western Ave.
Chicago, IL 60622
(773) 489-3566

IRAZU COSTA RICAN RESTAURANT

1865 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Chicago, IL 60647
(773) 252-5687
irazuchicago.com

MUNDIAL COCINA MESTIZA

1640 W. 18th St.
Chicago, IL 60608
(312) 491-9908

LA MICHOACANA

2049 W. Cermak Rd.
Chicago, IL 60608
(773) 254-2970

NUEVO LEON RESTAURANT

1515 W. 18th St.
Chicago, IL 60608
(312) 421-1517
nuevoleonrestaurant.com

GRUPPO DI AMICI

1508 W. Jarvis Ave.
Chicago, IL 60626
(773) 508-5565
gruppodiamici.com

LA UNICA

1515 W. Devon Ave.
Chicago, IL 60660
(773) 274-7788



KAZE SUSHI

2032 W. Roscoe St.
Chicago, IL 60618
(773) 327-4860
kazesushi.com

HAI YEN RESTAURANT

1055 W. Argyle St.
Chicago, IL 60640
(773) 561.4077
haiyenrestaurant.com

MARIGOLD

4832 N. Broadway St.
Chicago, IL 60640
(773) 293.4653
marigoldrestaurant.com

AFGHAN RESTAURANT

2818 W. Devon Ave.
Chicago, IL 60659
(773) 262.8000

DONA LOLIS QUESADILLAS

6924 N. Clark St.
Chicago, IL 60626
(773) 761.5677

TURQUOISE

2147 W. Roscoe St.
Chicago, IL 60618
(773) 549.3523
turquoisedining.com

KATERINA'S

1920 W. Irving Park Rd.
Chicago, IL 60613
(773) 348.7592
katerinas.com