

Best of Chicago 1993 from the 2017 Lens

1993 FOOD & DRINK

Best Locally Brewed Beer:

Baderbräu Draft

We chose this then-Elmhurst-based product from the very nascent craft beer upstarts at the time, including Goose Island's Blonde Ale and Legacy Red Ale.

Best Rib Tips:

Ms. Piggies Bar-B-Que

We took our work very seriously for this debut edition, and for category of Best Ribs, it meant literally visiting every BBQ place in Chicago, a tasty task. This was before the internet, before Yelp, and it meant a mix of library time and Yellow Pages, but the South Side rib joints like Lem's were not yet widely known outside of their more immediate environs. (Today Lem's has a website!) On our way to visit Lem's in the course of our research, we exited the Dan Ryan at 59th Street and saw a smoker out near the street, with the unmistakable fumes of barbecue in the air. Completists that we are, we stopped to investigate and met the proprietor of a tiny, even by BBQ-shack standards, joint called Ms. Piggies Bar-B-Que. We wrote: "It's the kind of outdoor rib pit that legends are made of, and it's home base for cooks and customers alike in the summertime." We returned many times to Ms. Piggie's after that, until, eventually, it was no more.

BEST NEW FOOD DISTRICT BRANDING

Ravenswood's "Malt Row"

Chicagoans like to drink. And yet, with the wide array of breweries and distilleries across the city and beyond, no concentrations of places to imbibe quite compares with the Ravenswood Corridor rebranded as "Malt Row." With six breweries, including Spiteful Brewing, Empirical Brewery, Band of Bohemia, Half Acre (with its eye-popping 60,000-square-foot facility), Dovetail Brewery and Dovetail Brewing, you hardly need to throw in the nearby Koval Distillery to drive home the point.

Maltrowchicago.com

BEST CANDY STORE

Dylan's Candy Bar

You see all types at Dylan's Candy Bar: mostly kids, as you would expect, but also flocks of sugar junkies after work, as well as guys in suits furtively stuffing gummies into clear plastic bags, hoping no one notices they're picking out all the red ones. Dylan's is overpriced, but their selection of aforesaid gummies, chocolate in many delicious forms and penny candy cannot be beat by any corner bodega or sweet-tooth emporium in the city.

445 N. Michigan, 312.702.2247,
dylanscandybar.com

BEST PLACE TO FEED YOUR INNER CHILD WITH ADULT PORTIONS

Wyer Road

Weren't ice cream floats the best thing when you were a kid? Especially when you got crazy, and went for the orange soda instead of the usual root beer. Wyer Road lets you relive the childlike glee of a perfectly foamy, creamy, bubbly float, filling a huge soda-shop glass with a scoop of ice cream and root beer, black cherry, or, yes, orange soda. Slurp it up alongside one of their giant sandwiches, which include riffs on childhood favorites like the house-made sloppy joe (on a toasted challah brioche) or ham & cheese (on raisin walnut toast). It's a nostalgia trip that won't leave you hungry.

3581 W. Belden, 773.661.0675,
wyerroad.com

BEST KYRGYZ FOOD IN CHICAGO

Jibek Jolu

Serving the cuisine of Kyrgyzstan, Jibek Jolu has an interior design reminiscent of a yurt, a traditional structure of the Central Asian country. (Its name means "Silk Road," after China's historic central Asian trading route.) Meat and carbs dominate, and the must-have dish is the manty, a dumpling stuffed with meat and onions. Heartier foods dominate the menu, which is just what you'd expect from a restaurant serving the food of the Kyrgyz Steppes, and just what you want as the weather grows chillier.

5047 N. Lincoln, 773.878.8494,
jibekjolu.us

BEST NEW CHICAGO FOOD BOOK THAT CAN NEVER BE COMPLETED

The Chicago Food Encyclopedia

Blurbed by Rick Bayless, Rich Melman and Rahm, Carol Mighton Haddix, Bruce Kraig and Colleen Taylor Sen's heavily-illustrated A-to-Z "The Chicago Food Encyclopedia" dropped into the sea of the Chicago food scene in early fall, boasting hundreds of entries from the erratic past to the sumptuous present to the foodie future. The tone varies, from the bone-dry to the tersely tasty, hoping to be authoritative without tipping too much into passing fancy. "Of all foods commonly perceived to be Chicago icons, none is as important as the hot dog. With about 2,500 locations, the Chicago area has more fixed-location hot dog restaurants than any other city in the world," is typical of the explicating. "Hot dogs are sausages descended from several varieties brought by German immigrants, beginning in the 1850s" is even more typical of the deep-dish diving. But the range of detail about personalities, trends, temples and the history of food production impresses across 375 entries from seventy-four contributors, reflecting nearly four years of work. Haddix told the Tribune the team is ready for a second edition already: "We have a folder on Google Docs already created to add and things to change. Restaurants close, and we need to keep on top of it."