



**nileGUIDE**

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Mike

# Best Chicago restaurants

## Chicago, 1 Day

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** Chicagoans love to eat. Deep dish pizza and hot dogs are the signatures, but cuisine from all over the globe is cooked daily in Chicago kitchens. From Japanese to Brazilian, these ten restaurants highlight the diverse ethnic influences on Chicago's cuisine while also showcasing the best of the hometown classics (you really can't visit the city without at least ONE slice of cheesy stuffed deep dish). With spots ranging from fancy schmancy to counter-ordering, there's sure to be something to satisfy everyone's tastes. Photo: Anna Smith

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Chicago



### Hopleaf Tavern

Belgian beer-lovers unite!



### Frontera Grill & Topolobampo

Colorful Mexican Dining



### Giordano's

Chicago's favorite deep dish



### Schwa Restaurant

Food as Art



### Hot Doug's Inc.

Sausage superstore!



### Reza's

Mediterranean Medley



### Charlie Trotter's

Upscale and intimate dining favorite



### Fogo de Chão Churrascaria

Brazilian fiesta



### Udupi Palace

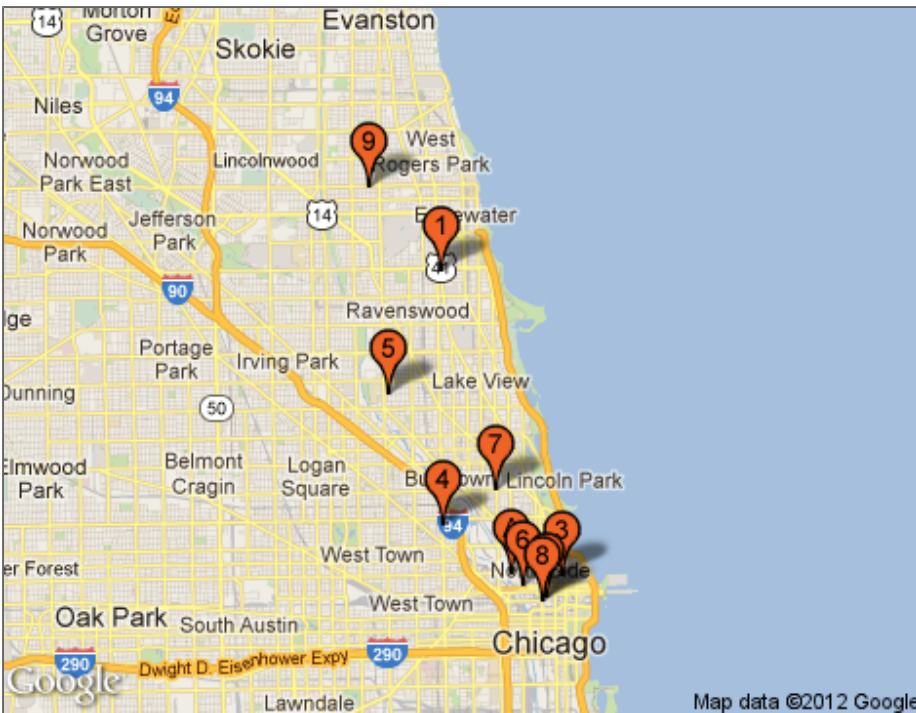
South Indian specialties



### Japonais

Japanese food in a soothing ambiance

# Day 1 - Chicago



## QUICK NOTE

**contact:**  
tel: 773 334 9851  
<http://www.hopleaf.com>

**location:**  
5148 N Clark Street  
Chicago IL 60640

**hours:**  
Mo to Fr from 03:00 PM to 02:00 AM, Sa from 03:00 PM to 03:00 AM, Su from 03:00 PM to 02:00 AM

## 1 Hopleaf Tavern

**DESCRIPTION:** If you don't know your Farmhouse from your Trappist or your Abbey-style ales, or perhaps, more importantly, if you do, then Hopleaf should be your next destination for a goblet or two. In addition to an extensive list of Belgian beers available on tap (over 15) or by the bottle (over 100), this tavern also features beers from all over North America and Europe. If beer isn't your thing (gasp!) then check out the wine list; Hopleaf features a number of wines available by the glass or bottle. Of course, with all this drinking you'll probably want to do a little eating. A few standout features on the menu include the mussels (white-wine steamed or white-ale steamed, your choice) and the frites with aioli. © wcities.com



wcities

**contact:**  
tel: 312/661-1434  
fax: +1 312 661 1830  
[www.fronterakitchens.com](http://www.fronterakitchens.com)

**location:**  
445 N. Clark St  
Chicago IL 60610

**hours:**  
Frontera Grill Tues-Fri 11:30am-2:30pm; Sat 10:30am-2:30pm; Tues-

## 2 Frontera Grill & Topolobampo

**DESCRIPTION:** Owners Rick and Deann Bayless are widely credited with bringing authentic Mexican regional cuisine to a wider audience. Their restaurant is the place to taste real Mexican food, so don't show up expecting a plate of nachos with processed-cheese topping. The building actually houses two restaurants: the casual Frontera Grill (plain wood tables, terra-cotta tile floor) and the fine-dining Topolobampo (white linen tablecloths, a more hushed environment). At both restaurants, the focus is on fresh, organic ingredients supplied by local artisanal farmers. At Frontera, the signature appetizer



Photo courtesy of Frontera Grill & Topolobampo

Thurs 5-10pm; Fri-Sat 5-11pm. Topolobampo  
Tues 11:45am-2pm; Wed-Fri 11:30am-2pm; Tues-Thurs 5:30-9:30pm; Fri-Sat 5:30-10:30pm

is the sopas surtidos, corn-tortilla "boats" with a sampler of fillings (chicken in red mole, black beans with homemade chorizo, and so on). The ever-changing entree list might include pork loin in a green mole sauce; smoked chicken breast smothered in a sauce of chiles, pumpkin seeds, and roasted garlic; or a classic sopa de pan ("bread soup" spiced up with almonds, raisins, grilled green onions, and zucchini). Yes, you can also get tacos (with fillings such as portobello mushrooms, duck, and catfish). The Baylesses up the ante at the adjacent Topolobampo, where both the ingredients and presentation are more upscale. It can be tough to snag a table at Frontera during prime dining hours (they only accept a limited number of reservations each day), so do what the locals do: Put your name on the list and order a few margaritas in the lively, large bar area. For an affordable taste of Frontera downtown, stop by **Frontera Fresco**, a counter-service lunch spot on the 7th floor of Macy's, 111 N. State St. (tel. **312/781-4884**). You can sample authentic Mexican tortas, quesadillas, and tamales, all priced less than \$8; it's open Monday through Saturday from 11am to 4pm. © Frommer's

**contact:**  
tel: 1 312 951 0747  
<http://www.giordanos.com/>

**location:**  
730 North Rush Street  
Chicago IL 60611

**hours:**  
11a-11p Su-Th, 11a-noon F-Sa

### 3 Giordano's

#### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

You probably won't be able to finish a deep dish pizza from here. The good news: it makes delicious leftovers!

**DESCRIPTION:** Locations all over the city, thin crust and deep dish, and mostaccioli to die for--Giordano's is known for being at the top of Chicagoans' "best of" lists, particularly when it comes to pizza.&nbsp; Stuffed to the brim of its flaky golden crust, the deep dish at Giordano's won't disappoint--try the Special (sausage, green pepper, and onion) or the Hawaiian (Canadian bacon, pineapple, and onion).&nbsp; Definitely start off by sharing a family-style salad to get your greens in, and if you can possibly manage to save room for dessert, savor some tiramisu.&nbsp; Not in the mood for pizza? Try one of their meatball or Italian sausage sandwiches.&nbsp; © NileGuide



photo by A Gude

**contact:**  
tel: 1 773 252 1466  
<http://www.schwarestaurant.com/>

**location:**  
1466 North Ashland  
Chicago IL 60622

**hours:**  
5:30p-10:30p Tu-Sa; closed Su-M

### 4 Schwa Restaurant

#### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Notoriously difficult to get a reservation, but keep trying!

**DESCRIPTION:** Schwa offers top-notch food in a laid-back environment. The focused, meticulously prepared menu is stunningly presented. Also, the minimalist atmosphere, lacking affectation and excess, consists of just fourteen tables. Both attributes combine to ensure that the emphasis is on the food and the restaurant's mantra of "food as art" is made



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apparent. Schwa Restaurant is BYOB, so bring along your favorite bottle of vino to compliment the meal. Reservations are recommended. © wcities.com

**contact:**

tel: (773) 348-0326  
[http://chicago.citysearch.com/profile/external/11558979/chicago\\_il/hot\\_doug\\_s\\_inc.html](http://chicago.citysearch.com/profile/external/11558979/chicago_il/hot_doug_s_inc.html)

**location:**

3324 North California  
Chicago IL 60618

**hours:**

Mon-Sat 10:30am-4pm

**5 Hot Doug's Inc.**

**DESCRIPTION:** There are no two finer words in the English language than 'encased meats,' my friend. Try the duck fat fries if they have them.



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**contact:**

tel: 312/664-4500  
fax: +1 312 664 9661  
[www.rezasrestaurant.com](http://www.rezasrestaurant.com)

**location:**

432 W. Ontario St  
Chicago IL 60654

**hours:**

Daily 11am-midnight

**6 Reza's**

**DESCRIPTION:** Reza's doesn't look like the typical Middle Eastern restaurant. Housed in a former microbrewery, it has high ceilings and expansive, loftlike dining rooms. The Persian-inspired menu will soon make you forget all about beer. Specialties include a deliciously rich chicken in pomegranate sauce and a variety of kabobs with heaps of dill rice (although, in a nod to carb-conscious diners, they'll substitute a salad if you want). Despite the menu's meat-heavy emphasis, there's a selection of vegetarian plates, too. If you can't decide what to order, go for an appetizer combo: a generous sampler of Middle Eastern dishes including hummus, stuffed grape leaves, tabbouleh, and other standbys, nicely presented in a red-lacquer bento box. Reza's has another location in Andersonville, at 5255 N. Clark St. (tel. **773/561-1898**), but the River North spot is the most convenient for visitors staying downtown. © Frommer's



Photo courtesy of rezasrestaurant

**contact:**

tel: 773/248-6228  
fax: +1 773 248 6088  
[www.charlietrotters.com](http://www.charlietrotters.com)

**location:**

816 W. Armitage Ave  
Chicago IL 60614

**hours:**

Seatings Tues-Thurs at 6 and 9pm; Fri-Sat at 5:30 and 9pm

**7 Charlie Trotter's**

**DESCRIPTION:** Foodies flock to the namesake restaurant of chef Charlie Trotter, Chicago's first celebrity chef. Yes, he's done TV shows and authored a series of cookbooks (with almost impossible-to-follow recipes), but Trotter's focus is this restaurant, a shrine to creative fine dining. There is no a la carte menu, so this is not the place to come if you're a picky eater. Your only choice is to decide between the vegetable (\$135) or grand (\$155) degustation menu. Trotter delights in presenting diners with unfamiliar ingredients and presentations, and prides himself on using only organic or free-range products (so you can feel good about indulging). The entree descriptions signal Trotter's attention to detail; sample dishes from a recent menu include steamed Casco Bay cod with cockles, picholine olives, artichokes, and stinging nettles; and roasted saddle of rabbit with fingerling potatoes, turnips, and mustard greens. Be prepared to linger: Dinner here can take up to 3 hours. The dining room may be formal, but the overall attitude is not intimidating. The wine list is extensive, and a sommelier is



Photo courtesy of Charlie Trotter's

on hand to help match wines with each course. For a taste of Trotter's gourmet fare without the high price tag, check out **Trotter's to Go**, his gourmet food store in Lincoln Park at 1337 W. Fullerton Ave. (btw. Lakewood and Wayne aves.; tel. **773/868-6510**). © Frommer's

**contact:**

tel: 1 312 932 9330  
fax: 1 312 932 9388  
<http://www.fogodechao.com/locations/chicagoIL.htm>

**location:**

661 North LaSalle Street  
Chicago IL 60610

**hours:**

Lunch: M-F 11a-2p, Dinner:  
M-Th 5p-10p, F 5p-10:30p,  
Sa 4:30p-10:30p, Su 4p-9:30p

**8 Fogo de Chão Churrascaria**

**DESCRIPTION:** Fogo de Chão is a paradise for meat lovers! And at this location, diners can exploit the all-you-can eat service to the maximum with its wide range of salads, Brazilian side dishes, vegetables, and of course, sizzling fire-cooked meats. Traditional Brazilian drinks and desserts complete the meal. Now that should reassure any finicky foodie! Don't forget to try the decadent signature dessert, Papaya Cream. © [wcities.com](http://wcities.com)



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**contact:**

tel: 1 773 338 2152  
fax: +1 773 338 2155  
<http://www.udupipalace.com>

**location:**

2543 West Devon Avenue  
Chicago IL 60659

**hours:**

Noon-9:45p M-Th, noon-10p  
F & Sa, noon-9:30p Su

**9 Udupi Palace**

**DESCRIPTION:** The majority of Indian restaurants serve north Indian cuisine, so it is always a fresh and inviting change to find a place that offers dishes of the southern variety. Connoisseurs understand that distinct tastes and flavors are particular to different regions. There are many strong vegetarian dishes here, and this is really the specialty. And, as if your meals are not spicy and flavorful enough, you are presented with various mix-and-match sauces as accompaniments. © [wcities.com](http://wcities.com)



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**contact:**

tel: 312 822 9600  
fax: 312 822 9623  
<http://www.japonaischicago.com/>

**location:**

600 West Chicago Avenue  
Chicago IL 60610

**hours:**

11:30a-2:30p M-F, Dinner:  
5p-11p M-Th, 5p-11:30p F-  
Sa, 5p-10p Su, Lounge: 5p-1a  
M-W, 5p - 2a Th-F, 5p-3a Sa,  
5p-midnight Su

**A Japonais**

**DESCRIPTION:** Japonais serves authentic Japanese food in a warm and soothing ambience. The restaurant has two dining rooms; both are spacious and elegant with cozy seating arrangements. The lounge & bar is very romantic with its plush interior and comfortable sofas. Make sure you try at least one of the sushi combinations and the Sashimi. The restaurant hosts private parties and has live music performances from time to time. © [wcities.com](http://wcities.com)



Japonais

# Chicago Snapshot

## Local Info

Chicago is "The City that Works" and "The City of Big Shoulders." It boasts North America's tallest building and one of the world's largest office buildings. With the ubiquitous elevated trains creating a continuous clatter, the city looks, feels and, in fact is, big.

At first glance, Chicago can be overwhelming. But, like any city, it is the sum of its parts, and its parts are diverse. Also known as "The City of Neighborhoods," Chicago comprises more than 75 official neighborhoods. Each features its own distinct quality and character.

So, when trying to digest Chicago, don't try to take it all in with one big bite. Break it up into manageable portions.

## The Loop

This area takes its name from the elevated train, the "El," that loops around the city's central core. While the downtown area stretches beyond these boundaries, much of the lifeblood that invigorates the rest of the city also pumps through the Loop. The Sears Tower, North America's tallest building, is here, as is the Chicago Board of Trade, one of the biggest options and futures trading floors in the world. City government offices are based here, as well as the home offices of several major corporations.

When it's time for the city that works to relax, the Loop does not disappoint. The city's magnificent Harold Washington Library, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Chicago Cultural Center are all here. While not as ritzy as the city's Magnificent Mile where State Street is a shopping mecca.

Thanks to a burgeoning theater district, the Loop is increasingly becoming a place to visit when the workday ends. The restored Ford Center for the Performing Arts-Oriental Theatre hosts lavish Broadway productions while the Chicago Theatre has several musical concerts. The landmark Auditorium Theatre, considered by some the most beautiful theater in America, hosts musicals, concerts and other performances in the South Loop area. The renowned Goodman Theatre also offers several performances throughout the year. This North Loop site includes dining and retail options.

Many restaurants, such as The Original Heaven on Seven, Italian Village and Berghoff, vie to whet every Loop-goer's appetite. Boutique Hotels such as the Hotel Allegro, Hotel Burnham Chicago and Hotel Monaco compete for guests with the more traditional Palmer House and Chicago Hilton Plaza and Towers.

While technically just outside the Loop's borders, Grant Park should not be missed. Hugging Lake Michigan, this park is often referred to as "Chicago's Front Yard." The majestic Buckingham Fountain is here, as is a plush rose garden and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's outdoor home, the Petrillo Music Shell. The park is immense, with the capacity to hold up to three million people, as is tested annually by the Taste of Chicago festival. Grant Park also plays host to many music and arts festivals during the summer, including Jazz Fest and Blues Fest.

## Near North Side

Just to the north of the Loop, bordered by the Chicago River on the south, the Lake on the east and North Avenue on the north, is Chicago's Near North Side neighborhood. This area is in turn made up of several other smaller districts.

The city's "Magnificent Mile" (known as the "Mag Mile" to locals) is one of the Near North's most famous offerings. Stretching along Michigan Avenue from the Chicago River to Oak Street, this shoppers' paradise is home to high-scale chains like Neiman Marcus and Bloomingdale's at the 900 North Michigan Avenue Shops, as well as the lavish boutiques of Marilyn Miglin and Room & Board. The city's early monument to modernity, the John Hancock Center, is just a few blocks from the city's links to its past, the Water Tower and the Chicago Water Works, two of the few buildings that survived the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Water Tower Place, an upscale indoor shopping mall, houses numerous other chain stores. You can enjoy RL Restaurant or Ralph Lauren's, the designer's largest retail store and its hip adjoining restaurant. Nordstrom, Crate & Barrel and Saks Fifth Avenue can be found a few blocks south on Michigan Avenue.

If you are wondering where the people who can afford to shop at the more expensive stores on Michigan Avenue live, head east

to Streeterville, or the adjoining Gold Coast neighborhood. Theoretically, the Gold Coast is named for the African coast of the same name, but the moniker also describes the area's opulence. The neighborhood is the nation's second wealthiest, surpassed only by New York City's Central Park East.

Just north of the Chicago River and a few blocks west of the Mag Mile is River North, home to an eclectic mix of swanky galleries, trendy cafes and theme restaurants like the Hard Rock Café. While many of the city's residents pretend they have never been to these restaurants, they most likely have — so go and enjoy with a clear conscience.

## South Loop

In stark contrast to the garish designs of the chain restaurants, the South Loop offers a quaint, Old World charm, neighborhood bars and smaller restaurants. Once home to one of the largest publishing centers in the Midwest, the warehouses left behind have been renovated and taken over by young, affluent professionals who wish to walk to their jobs in the Loop. The area's focal point, Dearborn Station, sets the tone for the neighborhood. The former rail transportation hub's façade has been lavishly restored.

## Beyond Downtown

Lake Shore Drive, one of the city's major north-south arteries, runs along the picturesque lakefront. While the Drive will take you to many of the city's attractions, do not forget that this boulevard is an attraction in itself. The lake view, the bold skyline and even the Drive's own tree-lined medians offer some of the most breathtaking views in the city. However, Chicagoans have little patience for "Sunday drivers" gawking at the sites. So when you get on Lake Shore Drive, have a destination in mind.

## Lincoln Park

Once you pass North Avenue, you will enter Lincoln Park, one of the city's more gentrified areas. Tree-lined Fullerton Avenue, with its brownstones converted into condos, gives you a feel for the neighborhood residents. Lincoln Park also surrounds the DePaul University neighborhood. A variety of bars, dance spots and inexpensive restaurants cater to the college and just-out-of-college crowd.

## Chicago Snapshot continued

Not all of Lincoln Park hustles and bustles. In fact, the park from which the neighborhood takes its name is one of the city's largest and most pastoral. Designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, who also drew up the blueprints for New York's Central Park and Lincoln Park encompasses more than 1,000 acres. It includes a Zoo, the Lincoln Park Conservatory, a driving range, dozens of ball fields and several biking and running paths connecting it to lakefront beaches. You'll find many pickup games of soccer and ultimate Frisbee here on warm summer days.

### Lakeview

Heading further north brings you to Lakeview, a neighborhood that serves as a popular nightlife center for both the straight and gay communities. These groups tend to party separately, with the standout exception being Berlin, a late-night dance club where hipsters of every orientation party together.

Halsted Street between Belmont Avenue and Irving Park Road serves as the headquarters for gay nightlife. The area is not hard to find; just look for the gigantic rainbow-colored pylons that line the streets. For dancing, head to Roscoe's Tavern or Spin.

If partying is not your thing, don't despair. The area also offers its share of restaurants, from Angelina Ristorante and Yoshi's Cafe to the 24-hour Melrose Restaurant.

For the straight set, head a few blocks west to Wrigleyville, a bar area that gets its name from the nearby Wrigley Field, home of the Chicago Cubs. The numerous taverns here make for excellent bar-hopping, so stop in the Cubby Bear or The Metro, a bar that features live music and up-and-coming rock bands like the Smashing Pumpkins, who

played here before they made it big and returned for their final two shows.

Diners can satisfy a variety of tastes in Wrigleyville, including Asian, Cajun, Italian and Mexican. Those who prefer to stick with the bar scene can eat well at Bar Louie, John Barleycorn Memorial Pub or Sluggers.

### Uptown

For more live music, head farther north, where you'll find the Aragon Ballroom, the Riviera and the prohibition-era jazz bar, Green Mill. When you're strolling through this area, a word of caution is in order. As the once grand, now deteriorating buildings that house the Aragon and the Riviera suggest, this formerly posh neighborhood has changed drastically over the years. Still, some of the best music in the city (be it jazz, rock, or something in between) can be found here.

### Wicker Park/Bucktown

A hot spot for artisans and heavy drinkers alike is the Wicker Park/Bucktown area. Hang out at bars like the Blue Note and Holiday Club or restaurants like Northside Bar & Grill and Beat Kitchen and it won't be long before some hipster starts talking to you about gentrification.

### The South Side

If you are visiting the city, do not make the mistake many North Siders do by forgetting that Lake Shore Drive also runs south of downtown.

As you cruise south on Lake Shore Drive, admire the Museum Campus where the Shedd Aquarium, Adler Planetarium and the Field Museum converge. If you have the time, you could easily spend a day in each museum, but it's also well worth a stop just to enjoy the lake views and watch sailboats go by.

Just south, you will pass Soldier Field, home of the Chicago Bears. Immediately

after gazing at Soldier Field you will need to guard against whiplash as you turn to stare at the sprawling McCormick Place, one of the largest convention centers in North America and home to numerous annual trade shows, like the Boat & RV Show and Auto Show. The space includes more than 2.2 million square feet of exhibition space, Chicago's largest ballroom and the Arie Crown Theater.

Comiskey Park, home of the Chicago White Sox, lies on the west side of Lake Shore Drive. The modern stadium features an exploding scoreboard that sets off fireworks along with a Sony Jumbo Screen.

Further south, the charming Hyde Park neighborhood has a quaint, old-world look to it. Home to the world-famous University of Chicago, the area boasts interesting restaurants like the Dixie Kitchen and Medici, great used book stores like O'Gara & Wilson's (the oldest used bookstore in the country), and the quaint 57th Street Art Fair. Hyde Park is also home to the gigantic 350,000 square-foot Museum of Science and Industry. This monument to 20th century technology houses a replica coal mine, a German U-Boat and a Zephyr train all under one roof.

After visiting the museum, push away thoughts of industriousness long enough to take a leisurely stroll through Jackson Park. Like its sister to the north, Lincoln Park, Jackson Park was designed by Frederick Law Olmstead. It features a Japanese garden, a bird sanctuary, a reflecting pond and a golf course.

All in all, do not be overwhelmed by Chicago's size or grit. Just find a corner of this city that suits you and celebrate its diversity.

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