

CASUAL

BY MORGAN CARTER



BEATRIX MARKET {multiple locations}

Since 2013, Beatrix has always been our go-to neighborhood spot for casual eats and quality coffee on the run. But with the introduction of Beatrix Market in 2015 in Streeterville, and most recently in Fulton Market, the Loop, and soon to be open at DePaul University (Loop Campus)—there is even more to love. The market provides healthful options with a focus on quality, flavor, and responsible sourcing. Set in a clean, industrial setting, guests can peruse a wide variety of options, including self-serve salads, soups, hot food bars, and a grab-and-go section packed with chef-prepared salads, sandwiches, and snacks. Get your fill of veggies with a plethora of local greens, naked grains—like freekah and red quinoa—and even vegan soups, made from scratch each day. Craving a hot meal but don't have time to cook? Choose from chef-inspired meals from Chef Partner/Executive Chef Janet Kirker, including Stuffed Peppers, Spinach & Kale Lasagna, and guilt-free Cauliflower Mac & Cheese. Oh, and don't forget to snag a refreshing drink from replenishing coconut water to local kombucha, straight from the cooler. For a sweet start to your morning or a much-needed reward after a long day, pick from a selection of sweet treats, including fair-trade chocolates and premium nuts sourced from local artisans. BEATRIXRESTAURANTS.COM

LA BODEGA {355 North Clark Street}

Bodegas are a staple in any bustling city, providing a handful of necessities for any and all city dwellers.

Taking a step up on the classic convenience store, DineAmic Group has introduced La Bodega. Next door to River North restaurant, Barrio, La Bodega functions as part restaurant/part convenience store. Offering an elevated take on the typical one-stop shop, the store has a little something for everyone. For much-needed caffeine therapy, morning commuters can walk up to the service counter for piping hot cups of Limitless coffee, lattes, and teas. Tacos are served daily, offering a menu of both breakfast (just add eggs!) and lunch options like Al Pastor Tacos with spit-roasted pork as well as the health conscious Skinny Tacos. Take it to-go or catch a breather by snagging a stool at the small seating area, facing Clark Street. For a sweet treat any day of the week, visit the store for imaginative, freshly made churros with options like Nutella, Red Velvet, Fruity Pebbles, and more. Need a post-work refreshment or last-minute gift? True to the name, La Bodega offers grab and go options from wine and spirits to candles and retro candy plus a variety of accoutrements (including a full wall dedicated to hot sauces) perched on the handmade wooden retail shelving. BODEGAIMPORTS.COM

BRIGHTWOK KITCHEN {21 East Adams Street, 312.583.0729}

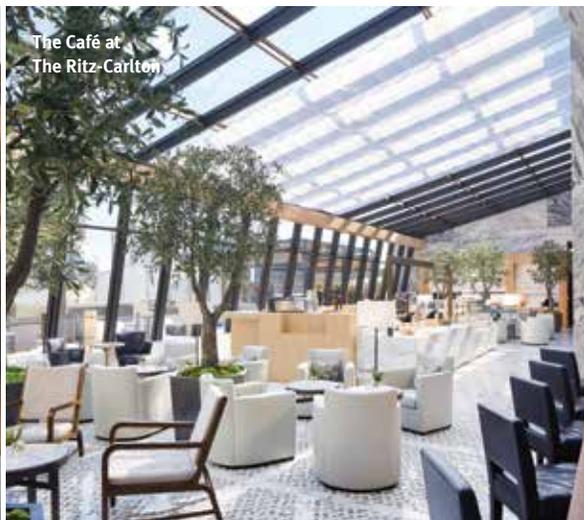
Servicing hungry patrons in the Loop since 2015, the counter-service joint, Brightwok Kitchen, has been dishing up vegetable-centric Asian fare with a conscience, thanks to a commitment to local ingredients. Helming the health-conscious venture, Chef Kolter Livengood brings a bounty of experience—working at a multitude of Michelin-

starred ventures, including Chicago's Tru and Cyrus in Sonoma County—paired with an appreciation for technique and high-quality ingredients. Sourcing locally, Chef Livengood presents an approachable (and affordable) menu for all types of palates as the entire menu is gluten-free, dairy-free, peanut-free, and even includes a full line-up of homemade vegan sauces. Mindful of the seasons, Brightwok Kitchen constantly rotates its menu, introducing new bowls, sauces, veggies, and even drinks to keep up with local offerings. For Brightwok mainstays, dive into the cheekily named and very popular Earth, Curry, and Fire, spiced with a fiery chili coconut curry topped with a crispy egg. Besides their core menu, Brightwok can also be ordered catering-style for office lunch meetings, dinner parties, or other special events. For a little wok on the go, Brightwok Kitchen is a no-brainer for a health-forward meal. Tell them DiningOut sent you. BRIGHTWOK.COM

BROWN BAG SEAFOOD CO. {multiple locations}

Brown Bag Seafood Co. is a local restaurant group with a focus on casual sustainable seafood in a counter-service format. With four locations—one situated next to Maggie Daley Park and Millennium Park, one in Revival Food Hall, the latest venue perched on Lincoln Avenue, and one on deck alongside Merchandise Mart—Brown Bag serves up sustainable seafood year-round. Owner Donna Lee has made it her personal goal to create a place where quality seafood is fast, friendly, and affordable. After all, who says that seafood has to be an upscale, sit-down affair?

GOURMET



Order at the counter and choose from crispy fish tacos, salmon salad, lobster rolls, and truffle tater tots. Enjoy it with a craft beer on the gorgeous patios (at the Randolph and Lincoln locations) or in the cozy dining rooms. Brown Bag makes for a superb sack lunch at the office or in the nearby parks, or a meal before a show at the Harris Theatre. While waiting, guests can chill out among interior accents of “Brown Bag blue”—a cheerful shade of turquoise—and the reclaimed wood from an Illinois barn downstate while relishing in the action of the open kitchen. Oh, and be sure to grab an “honor system” cookie. Craving something from the sea without all the fuss, this contemporary quick-casual seafood spot does the trick. BROWNBAGSEAFOOD.COM

THE CAFÉ AT THE RITZ-CARLTON

{160 East Pearson Street; 312.573.5160}

Redefining hotel dining, guests and locals alike should make the journey to the 12th floor at The Ritz-Carlton Chicago. Thanks to a massive \$100 million dollar overhaul, the 12th floor lobby now features a handful of dining gems from contemporary Italian fare at Torali Italian-Steak to aperitivos and authentic Italian spirits found at Torali Bar. But for a needed break away from the hustle and bustle of the Magnificent Mile, head to The Café. Designed by the San Francisco-based design firm, BAMO, elements of The Café reflect Chicago’s heritage of innovative architecture and design, found in exquisite white Italian marble and mosaic marble floors. Flooded by natural light thanks to floor-to-ceiling windows and an overarching sunroof, this atrium

cafe is a welcoming refuge for city slickers. Morning routines can begin with freshly roasted coffee from La Colombe. For an added jumpstart, guests can order housemade quinoa granola or choose from a handful of fresh breakfast sandwiches. For a break midday, Italian paninis and salads are on order. During all hours of the day, guests can indulge in decadent desserts and pastries made exclusively by Executive Pastry Chef, Jamie Sue Caudy. We say settle into the plush furniture, breathe in the views, and find your zen. RITZCARLTON.COM/EN/HOTELS/CHICAGO/DINING/THE-CAFE

COCO PAZZO CAFE

{212 East Ohio Street; 312.664.0212}

Inspired by the cafés that line the piazzas of Florence, Italy, Owner Jack Weiss introduced Coco Pazzo Cafe to Chicago in 1996. For over 20 years, the outpost offered a memorable, Tuscan-inspired fine dining experience to the Streetwork neighborhood. In 2017, the cafe moved around the corner to its new location, reopening with time-honored Tuscan favorites alongside Roman-inspired dishes. Decorated with beautiful Modigliani-style murals lining the walls, the charming eatery is mere steps away from the Magnificent Mile. For classic Italian-fare look to dishes like the Rigatoni with Slagel Farms pork sausage, tomato, Parmesan, and peas; the Spaghetti “AOP” with tomato, garlic, olive oil, and spicy red chile pepper; and a variety of ultra-thin crusted pizzas. On the lighter side, favorites include the Selle Vegetali Salad featuring seven chopped vegetables, topped with shaved

Parmesan cheese; or the Tagliolini Zucchini made with thin cut zucchini, tomato, onion, olives, and ricotta cheese. Indulge in dessert and order the Tartufo—house spun pistachio gelato dipped in bittersweet chocolate. Open daily at 11:30am, guests can experience Italian flavors in the morning, afternoon, and well into the evening. When the weather warms, the sidewalk patio welcomes patrons to enjoy the summer breeze while dining alfresco. COCOPAZZOCAFE.COM

STIX 'N BRIX

{218 West 33rd Street; 312.265.0219}

Baseball fans rejoice—Italian fare has come to Sox Park. A stone’s throw from the park, Stix ‘N Brix offers baseball fans a casual, sit down dining option. Outfitted with exposed brick and quaint tables, this intimate venue is a perfect place to stop in before the first pitch. Stix ‘N Brix specializes in thin-crust pies kissed by the flames of the wood-burning, brick oven. Bubbling to perfection, guests can nosh on classic pizzas, including a Margherita sprinkled with fresh mozzarella or a Sausage pie laden with homemade sausage. Inventive pies include the Potato and Ricotta or the Fig & Pig dotted with dollops of jam and strips of prosciutto. Beyond the pie, this eatery serves up light Italian fare, including the pesto injected Burrata Crostini. Keep it green with the Apple Salad sprinkled with caramelized walnuts and sun-dried pesto mozzarella. With a drinking program still in the works—set to include five wines and prosecco on tap—guests at Stix ‘N Brix can indulge in a little BYOB action. Now, play ball! SRG33.COM/STIXNBRIX