

Gourmet Gossip *with Sarah Levy*

YOUR INGREDIENTS... CHEF'S WAY

Have you ever settled on a dish to order, and then spotted that deal-breaker ingredient, which leads you back to square one of not knowing what to get? Well, Andersonville's **Tanoshi** eliminates this possibility by allowing customers to pick their favorite ingredients and then letting Chef Mike Ham work his magic with them! It seems like such a simple concept that it's odd it hasn't been done before (to the best of my knowledge). The list of

ingredients from which to choose is vast, and besides the ingredients you would typically expect to find at a Japanese restaurant – such as yellowtail, hamachi and sake – you're faced with unusual choices such as mango and Asian pear. And for starters, the Yaki Igai – half-shell mussels, topped with a spicy seafood combination – is dynamite!

TANOSHI, 5547 NORTH CLARK STREET, 773.878.6886



ROCK STARS AND HOT DOGS?

Another hot dog joint has been born, but this time in the West Town neighborhood. Owner Dion Antic has just opened **Rock Star Dogs**, exclusively cooking up Vienna Beef, as well as tofu and veggie dogs (after all, this is an equal eating opportunity kind of city). Former Mas chef John Manion is the consulting chef on hand, and beyond tweaking the hot dog “recipes,” he has created gourmet condiments (maybe that's why it's called Rock Star Dogs?). All of the dogs are named after America's favorite rock stars. If you are feeling adventurous, try the Tommy Lee Foot Long, or if you're feeling a little love, try The Beatles – All You Need Is Veggie dog. It's \$5-\$7 a pop, but that includes fries and a soda. And as though this spot weren't “modern” enough, it uses eco-friendly packaging.

ROCK STAR DOGS, 801 NORTH ASHLAND AVENUE, 312.421.2364

LET'S GET FRANK



Lettuce Entertain You has transformed the old Tucci Benucci spot into a great pizza place. Located on the fifth floor of the Bloomingdale's building, **Frankie's Fifth Floor Pizzeria** is a great lunch spot for those of us working or shopping in Chicago's Gold Coast. The Rita D is my go-to pie – the crispy crust is topped with ricotta, mozzarella, parmesan, asparagus, a runny farm egg and truffle oil. Other tantalizing options include

the Sardinian garlic pizza with shaved garlic, red pepper flakes and extra virgin olive oil, and the Chicken and Pesto with roasted chicken, tomato sauce, pine nuts and basil pesto.

FRANKIE'S FIFTH FLOOR PIZZERIA, BLOOMINGDALE'S BUILDING – 5TH FLOOR, 900 NORTH MICHIGAN AVENUE, 312.266.2500

MELMAN MAGIC, NEXT GEN

RJ Melman, the second generation Chicago restaurant family, is going to Lettuce have our food and drink it too! Melman and his brother, Jerrod, will open **Hub 51** in April or May. This spot will dish out tasty food from the late morning hours (for lunch) until 2AM! Good drinks, good food, good people...what more could you ask for?

PEACE TO MY EARS

I am a huge fan of Wicker Park's Piece Pizza, and now you don't have to be carded to pick up your to-go order! The owners decided to open an adjacent Piece Out local, which caters to their takeout and delivery clientele.

1927 WEST NORTH AVENUE, 773.772.4422, WWW.PIECECHICAGO.COM

Coco Pazzo
RESTAURANTS

Tuscan Fare.
Italian Flare.

Coco Pazzo

300 W Hubbard 312.836.0900
cocopazzochicago.com

Coco Pazzo Café

636 N St Clair 312.664.2777
cocopazzocafe.com

TAKASHI

Takashi is one of Chef Takashi Yagihashi's newest accomplishments. The highly acclaimed chef (the James Beard Award Foundation dubbed him Best Chef Midwest in 2003) has succeeded in creating a quaint restaurant with superb food. Tucked into what appears to be an old cozy two-story Bucktown house (which housed the restaurant Scylla before they closed their doors), this restaurant has an irresistible charm. The winter roll with prosciutto and shrimp has an added element of texture with its toasty French bread, and the hot and sour sauce that accompanies it gives a perfect extra punch of flavor. Another starter not to be missed is the sautéed Maine scallops and soba gnocchi – served with a creamier-than-usual celery root-parmesan “foam,” and unique trumpet royale mushrooms. The entrees also incorporate both Japanese and French cooking techniques (which I was surprised by because I was originally under the impression that I was going to a traditional Japanese restaurant). The roasted Atlantic salmon had quite an unexpected presentation – it appeared like maki, but sans rice and with a thin potato shell rather than seaweed. The desserts by Pastry Chef Michael Florance truly wowed me! The warm pear financiers with honey milk ice cream is, quite simply put, perfect. The financiers (pronounced without the R) is a super moist almond-based cake made with browned butter for an extra richness, with a slight crispness to the edge, with pieces of pear resting inside of the cake.

1952 NORTH DAMEN AVENUE,
773.772.6170, WWW.TAKASHICHICAGO.COM

FOX ON THE LOOSE

Gourmet grocery store Fox & Obel may be opening more locations. The company was just bought by Vulpes, LLC, owned by a local Chicago group of investors, including Bill Bolton. They are hoping to open in River North, South Loop, North Shore, Naperville and Oak Park. ■

Sarah Levy is the president and founder of Sarah's Pastries & Candies, 70 East Oak Street, 312.664.6223, and 111 North State Street, First Floor, 312.781.3004, www.sarahscandies.com. If you have a Gourmet Gossip sip tip or favorite restaurant you'd like reviewed here, email Sarah at sarah@sarahscandies.com.



THE PARTHENON

RESTAURANT AND BANQUETS

Voted One of Chicago's
Top Ten Restaurants

Featuring the finest
in authentic Greek
dining in relaxed and
friendly surroundings.

Banquet Facilities:
25 to 250

Your Hosts:
Chris, Yanna and Chef Sotiris

In the heart of Greektown
314 South Halsted Street
Chicago, IL 60661
312-726-2407

Open daily 11 am – 1 am
Free Valet Parking

Visit our website at
www.theparthenon.com



The most authentic Italian
experience outside of Italy.

158 East Ontario Street, Chicago
www.bicechicago.com
312.664.1474