

TRENDING

Going Without the Grain

Eating gluten-free is more than just a passing fad, as these two new neighboring Broadway restaurants set out to prove.



GOURMET GLUTEN-FREE Foie gras with quince, red onion and pistachio

Senza

Think eating gluten-free means everything will taste like cardboard? Not so, says Senza chef Noah Sandoval. “You just have to put a little time and effort into it.” And that’s exactly what this Schwa and Spring vet is doing at this Lakeview spot that doubles as a laid-back coffeehouse in the morning with beignets, bagels and waffle cone parfaits, and then ups the creativity at dinner for the seasonal à la carte offerings and three prix fixe menus that can be paired with wine. Dishes have included butternut squash soup with lobster, skirt steak with smoked potato and Alaskan halibut with black garlic. Not convinced? Sandoval swears his tagliatelle will make you a believer. “I don’t think people would even know it’s gluten-free,” he says. 2873 N. Broadway, 773.770.3527

Bountiful Eatery

“I wanted to open a place where people can eat healthy food,” says Bountiful Eatery owner Ed O’Brien. “There are too many sandwich shops in the world.” We have to agree, especially after we tried a few of the entrées and smoothies at this charming and very casual dine-in or takeout spot. O’Brien’s menu includes wraps made with gluten-free pitas from Rose’s Bakery in Evanston, smoothies that are more affordable than anywhere in town (\$4!), huge salads with seasonal veggies and fruits, and grilled goodies ranging from kabobs to bison. The options are filling, healthy and really affordable. Even better? You don’t have to spend hours at Whole Foods to put together a gluten-free meal. 3312 N. Broadway Ave., 773.687.9811



DINNER IS SERVED Lamb with farro and spearmint gremolata

HOMEFRONT

Fare Game

As a young cook starting out in the restaurant business, it’s not easy to get your food out there, having instead to follow the vision of the head chef. Not a problem for Maxwell Robbins (Blackbird, Dragon Ranch) and Jacob Versteegen (Telegraph) and mixologist Elliot Kay (Crimson Lounge), who in June opted to create **Mercenary Collective**, an in-home catering service. Born out of the casual Sunday suppers the three would whip up for their lucky friends, the business puts the emphasis on intimate events, 20 people maximum, where the ideas of the host are front and center. “We wanted to make it a really personal and interactive experience,” says Robbins. For the one to two dinners they create a week—the three, after all, still work their “day” jobs—seasonal and local are high on the trio’s must-have list, as are foraged ingredients, too. While opening their own restaurant is a ways away, “At the very least we’re having fun,” says Robbins. “Plus, we have this awesome collection of recipes for the future.” mercenarycollective.com



INGREDIENT UPDATE Oh, Honey As executive chef at one of the country’s top Italian restaurants, Spiaggia’s Sarah Grueneberg knows a thing or two about luxe ingredients. But what really gets the *Top Chef* finalist, um, buzzing, is the restaurant’s **Mieli Thun** Italian honeys. “I had no idea honey could be so complex,” she says of the seven they feature from beekeeper Andrea Paternoster, who creates his mono-floral seasonal honeys by moving the hives to various regions in Italy. At Spiaggia, the honeys find their way into desserts and savory dishes, but where they really shine is paired with the restaurant’s outstanding cheeses, available at the bar, too. Grueneberg is so passionate about the stuff, she recently tagged along with Paternoster on a bee adventure, traveling with the hives from the Dolomite Mountains to Venice. “It’s great as a chef to find a new product that can spark your creativity and be your muse,” she says. 980 N. Michigan Ave., 312.280.2750

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