

# Ready to Dish?

NYC's hottest Mexican restaurant hits Chicago, dumplings gone wild and more

## GROCERY LORE

Andre Christopher, the punky, fast-talking former executive chef of Pops for Champagne, former chef de cuisine of Japonais and vet of Ambria and Spiaggia, has left behind those “foofy and bourgeoisie” (his words) spots to open West Loop hotspot The Grocery Bistro. With BYOB, killer low price points, produce occasionally procured from the corner grocery store and thrift store china, it's the ultimate neighborhood restaurant. We checked in with the homeboy (he's a grad of Lane Tech) about his new project and to get his verdict on age-old Chicago culinary conflicts.

**You're a vegetarian chef cooking meat. Isn't that like a priest preaching Satanism?** I've been a vegetarian for only three months. My mother was diagnosed with a condition that stops her body from digesting proteins. I decided I wanted to change my diet with her. Here, the animals we use are natural-fed. I do want people to eat better. **You have a signed photo of Rocco DiSpirito above the bar?** I worked at Union Pacific. He's a great cook. It was one of the best restaurants in NYC. I also have Bourdain and Ramsay. I might have my own restaurant, but I still get excited about meeting chefs. They inspire me every day. **Favorite Italian beef?** Mr. Beef with chili and cheddar and some French fries on top. **Trotter or Tramonto?** Trotter's in my heart. He's the original P-I-M-P, the original gangster for sure. 804 W. Washington Blvd., 312.850.9291, [thegrocerybistro.com](http://thegrocerybistro.com). —Michael Nagrant

## CHEF Q&A



Andre Christopher in The Grocery Bistro.

## RAKING IN THE DOUGH

Call it what you like—gyoza, pierogi, kreplach or just plain dumpling—dim sum's favorite doughy dish is suddenly in high demand at the city's hottest restaurants. Put these three spots on the top of your must-visit list. —Lisa Shames



Market's chicken and jack cheese dumplings.

## TASTE TEST

**URBANBELLY** The kitchen at this Avondale gem turns out 40-plus orders of lamb and brandy dumplings a night—a popularity that owner Bill Kim attributes to the dish's perfect meat-to-fat ratio and the brandy's flavor-enhancing punch. We dig that the savory dumplings are made fresh every morning and that each day's batch gets tasted by one lucky chef before it's served, leaving us with only one question: How can we get that guy's job? 3053 N. California Ave., 773.583.0500, [urbanbellychicago.com](http://urbanbellychicago.com).

**MARKET** House-made dough wrappers and a hefty dose of butter make chef Joe Rosetti's chicken and jack cheese dumplings a hit, but the real treat is that you don't need silverware to tackle this dish. In a creative riff on a drumstick, Rosetti sticks a chicken bone out of each dumpling to turn it into party-perfect finger food. He credits his many years working with creative chef David Burke for his whimsical style. We've got no bones to pick with that. 1113 W. Randolph St., 312.929.4787, [marketbarchicago.com](http://marketbarchicago.com).

**OLD TOWN BRASSERIE** If you want to get an idea of the menu new executive chef Andy Motto is cooking up at Old Town Brasserie, his veal cheek dumplings with sesame dandelion salad are a good place to start, he says. For the app, Motto combines molecular gastronomy (sous vide cooking) with traditional French technique (yielding a wonderful Périgueux truffle sauce) to create a cheeky mix of classic and modern cuisine. 1209 N. Wells St., 312.943.3000, [oldtownbrasserie.com](http://oldtownbrasserie.com).

CONTINUED...