

Vive Le Francais!

Your Metra ride gets sweeter this month with the opening of the Chicago French Market, a 15,000-square-foot, year-round, European-style market in Ogilvie Station. Part of MetraMarket, a new street-level mall connected to Ogilvie, the French Market will feature more than 25 vendors selling goodies ranging from organic produce and fresh-baked pastries to made-to-order sandwiches and cheeses. Sebastien Bensidoun, president of market mogul Bensidoun U.S.A. (the French counterpart boasts close to 100 markets in France, including Marche Raspail, the largest certified organic outdoor market in that country) was picky in selecting vendors, wanting those that had seductive stories and shared his family's lifelong passion for food. Those that made the cut include Pastoral, Canady Le Chocolatier, Vanille Patisserie, Flip Crepes and Sweet Miss Giving's. 131 N. Clinton St., chicagofrenchmarket.com. —L.S.



Chocolates from Canady Le Chocolatier. Right: Wine from Pastoral.



Q&A Paul Virant, Iron Chef?

Iron Man

Vie chef/owner Paul Virant, the king of preserving and pickling local ingredients, takes on sushi master Masaharu Morimoto on Food Network's *Iron Chef America* on November 1. —*Michael Nagrant*

How did you prepare for the show? For six weeks we cooked a bunch of potential menus against a timer at the restaurant. The first couple of times we finished in an hour, but the last few minutes were always a disaster.

Were you nervous? I'm pretty good about keeping stress to a minimum until it's game time. We went to Café Boulud the night before to relax. Of course, I'm speaking for myself. Nathan [Vie's sous chef] maybe didn't sleep that night.

Did you want to face Morimoto? The guy's been an Iron Chef forever, so it's intimidating. He came up to us before the taping and he told us he'd been looking at Vie's menu on the website. He's a gamer. We also heard this was his last battle. If that's the case, it'll be cool to be part of it.

NOSH NEWS



Roti's falafel.

Openings, openings, openings! We spotlight eight exciting new restaurants from the Loop to Wicker Park. —L.S.

SWINE TALES It'll be hog heaven—deep-fried pig tails, pickled pig tongue—at **Purple Pig**, a new wine bar from Jimmy Bannos Jr. (Lupa, Emeril's) and industry vets papa Jimmy (Heaven on Seven), Scott Harris (Mia Francesca) and a bigwig mystery chef. Look for artisan cheeses and plancha-grilled seafood, too. *Opens mid-November. 500 N. Michigan Ave.*

TACO BELLE To Terry Alexander: Try as you might to convince us that **Big Star**, in the old Pontiac spot, is “just a honky-tonk bar with a tacqueria,” we're not buying it. Especially when Paul Kahan and Avec sous chef Justin Large have created the tacos, and obscure tequilas, whiskeys and microbrews dominate the drink list. *Opens early November. 1531 N. Damen Ave.*

SHACK ATTACK At **Belly Shack**, Urban Belly's Bill Kim and wife Yvonne Cadiz-Kim are creating a new cuisine that defies labels. Let's just call the Asian meatballs stuffed into locally made pita and hot-and-sour hominy soup delicious. Save room for dessert: soft serve ice cream with toppings from Hot Chocolate's Mindy Segal. *Open now. 1912 N. Western Ave., bellyshack.com.*

MEAT AND GREET Say a hearty hello to **DMK Burger Bar**, a joint venture burger joint from mk's Michael Kornick and David Morton of the Morton's Steakhouse family. Top-quality meat meets specially made buns (“light

enough to not overtake the ingredients but sturdy enough to hold up,” says Kornick), artisanal beers and house-made sodas. *Opens early November. 2954 N. Sheffield Ave.*

BRICK HOUSE To make sure his pizza oven at **Nella Pizzeria Napoletana** is the real deal, Scott Harris (Mia Francesca) imported 12,000 pounds of volcanic brick from Mt. Vesuvius—and brought over “Italy's best oven maker” to create it. Naples native Nella Grassano, a former pizza-maker from Spacca Napoli, will put it to good use. *Opens early November. 2423 N. Clark St., 773.327.3400.*

PARTY HEARTY Television darlings The Hearty Boys (Dan Smith and Steve McDonagh) call their food “comfort revisited,” but you won't find a 1950s mom in the kitchen at new spot **Hearty**. Their tuna casserole is *très* 2009, pairing panko-crustured ahi tuna with wild mushrooms and egg noodles in a saffron cream. *Opens November 4. 3819 N. Broadway St., 773.244.9866, heartyboys.com.*

POWER PUFF Are cute, custard-filled puff pastries the new cupcake? **Beard Papa's**, a cream puff import from Japan, hits the Loop's Block 37. *Opens mid-November. 108 N. State St., muginohousa.com.*

PITA PATER With a mantra of made-fresh healthy Mediterranean food—build-your-own salads, grilled salmon kabobs—**Roti's** new location across from the Sears Tower serves a lunch you'll go Loopy for. *Open now. 310 W. Adams St., 312.236.3500, rotiusa.com.* ■



A cream puff from Beard Papa's.