

at  
zeroes  
end

# Chicago Restaurants 2000-2009 By Michael Nagrant

SINCE 2000, CHICAGO HAS GONE FROM being a Rat Pack-worthy steak-and-potato-slinging stereotype to a destination for international culinary travelers. Chicago's affordability, its diners' willingness to suspend disbelief and its proximity to the sublime bounty of the Midwest all play a role in that transformation. Most important to the renaissance are the places that put everything together to inspire our collective culinary imagination, the best restaurants that opened in Chicago this decade.

## Alinea



Photography by Lara Kastner  
Courtesy of Alineabook.com

The history of cuisine was written in the kitchens of millions of chefs, but we only remember a few by name, guys like Escoffier, Careme and Robuchon. There are probably only three Chicago chefs, as of now, who have a shot at making that list: Jean Banchet, Charlie Trotter and Grant Achatz. Though Achatz started making a name for himself at Trio, Alinea was the game changer, the restaurant where every aspect of dining from menus and silverware to the wine service and emotional content of the food was reimaged.

## Avec



Credit: Doug Fogelson/DRFP

Love it or hate it, this was ground zero for what is now today's communal table free-for-all. More importantly, Avec was the place that launched a thousand salumi, the fringe of Chicago's now-burgeoning charcuterie movement. Koren Grieson's restrained soulful style is still the late-night hang of choice for chefs.

## Avenues



You probably don't remember Gerhard Doll or David Hayden, the chef-stewards who drove the good ship Avenues through a successful seafood-driven era, but there's no doubt you won't forget the Pop Rock and foie-lollipop fantasia, the convenience-store chic of Graham Elliot Bowles. Without Bowles' whimsical, accessible style, the emotional roller coaster of Grant Achatz's cooking and the theater at Homaro Cantu's Moto likely wouldn't have quite captured the nation's imagination, nor garnered Chicago cuisine the countless magazine features it received mid-decade. Today, Curtis Duffy, the culinary love child of Achatz, Thomas Keller and Alice Waters, is executing some of the most exciting cuisine Chicago has to offer.

## Chilpancingo

In 2000, most people thought mole was that cute mark on Cindy Crawford's face, not the layered earthy Oaxacan traditional sauces that Geno Bahena introduced a whole generation to at this River West spot. Sadly, because he sells his name to every new Mexican spot in town as a consultant, you can't really count on the Bahena name anymore. But, thanks to the road he paved, you can score great mole at a lot of local spots today including his brother-in-law's Sol de Mexico.

## Green Zebra



The temptation is to go with Spring, the first of Shawn McClain and Sue and Peter Drohomysky's restaurants (also Custom House) and where Top Chef Stephanie Izard once worked. But, until Jill Barron's Mana opened, Green Zebra was really the only restaurant of its kind, a meat-substitute-eschewing vegetable-focused gourmet restaurant that delighted carnivores and vegans alike.

## L20



Chef Laurent Gras reminds me of "Rocky IV" villain Ivan Drago. He's ruthless, a tireless worker and insanely precise. After recovering from a bicycle accident that shattered a bunch of bones and punctured a lung last year, he's also seemingly indestructible. However his robotic technical prowess and attention to detail yields some of the most breathtaking innovative seafood dishes anywhere, including those found at seafood superpower Le Bernadin.

## Mado



Head-to-tail dishes are all the rage, but the truth is most places serve maybe one or two courses of the stuff. Who can blame 'em? You gotta stay in business, and though the dining public is more accepting, it's not quite chucking back bull's testicles like popcorn, yet. Chef Rob Levitt somehow didn't get the memo and so he serves whatever odd parts he damn feels like.

Along with his wife Allison, they've created one of the most soulful BYOB places around.

## Matsumoto

This restaurant closed over three years ago, but only because it was ahead of its time. Maybe it was the chilled monkfish liver or sea urchin with quail egg yolk, but Chicago just wasn't ready for Chef Seijero Matsumoto's exquisite, authentic, seasonal Japanese kaiseki experience. Drop Matsumoto in Manhattan with the right investor and he'd have a go at Masa Takayama. The good news is he's back at Mizu Yakitori in Old Town and will prepare kaiseki for a minimum of six people with five days advance reservations. So grab your friends and don't miss out in the next decade.

## Mercat a la Planxa



Iron Chef Jose Garces may live in Philly, but the Chicago native can be a culinary carpetbagger anytime he wants. Though places like Ba Ba Reeba, Emilio's and Café Iberico serve decent food, this was the first tapas spot I wasn't depending in some part on syrupy sangria and the comfort of a big group of friends to make the night unforgettable. Honorable mention in the Spanish arena would go to Del Toro, though it's now closed and wasn't really a tapas spot, as much as it was a deep-fried chickpea-serving, house-cured blood-sausage-and-bacon-curing proving ground for top chefs Andrew Zimmerman (Sepia) and Rob Levitt.

## Moto

With chefs as waiters, laser-burned vanilla beans and edible menus, this was the first place to successfully execute dinner as edible performance art. Homaro Cantu and his partner-in-crime pastry chef Ben Roche make their hero Salvador Dali proud. Dali was famous for saying "The *only* difference between me and a madman is that I am not mad." I'm still not sure the same can be said for Cantu and Roche.

## Naha



Chef Carrie Nahabedian's neighbor across Clark street, Rick Bayless, demonstrated that you could successfully reintroduce diners to an



authentic luxury version of once marginalized and diluted ethnic cuisine. However, we all had tacos as a reference point, while merging southern California sensibility with pre-communist Armenian culinary history was a little trickier. Eight years later, it's still one of the few places in the city I could eat at every night.

NoMI

This was one of the first spots outside of Charlie Trotter's that didn't define luxury as old-school French or lobster tails as big as a whale. Opening chef Sandro Gamba offered a Michelin-star level of quality that attracted European foodies. The tradition continues today under Christophe David and sommelier Fernando Beteta.

Opera



I hesitate to include this spot, because it really doesn't stand the test of time, but when Paul Wildermuth was at the helm this was my favorite jewel in the Jerry Kleiner empire. While it never really reached the ideal of celebrating authentic regional Chinese food, it was one of the most successful interesting upscale versions of Chinese food in the city.

Publican

Though this is not a best-beer-lists-of-the-decade piece, the Publican is the most important beer spot to open in the city since Hopleaf back in 1992. The Publican also boasts the city's first beer sommelier in Michael McAvena and his stewardship has been impeccable. Likewise Brian Huston's cuisine, including cider-glazed pork rinds or foie gras-topped deep-fried French toast, is precisely the kind of thing you'd like to eat at three in the morning when you're raving drunk and you have access to a top chef.

Riccardo Trattoria



There may be a red-sauce joint on every corner, but half of them are slinging lesser fare than the Olive Garden and relying on fake stories about Nonna or Momma's recipes. And certainly none of them are ballsy enough to serve tripe (veal stomach) Florentine. This is like-

ly the best neighborhood Italian restaurant in the city.

Schwa

In his own parlance, chef Michael Carlson is one talented cat. He's also operates like the love child of Johnny Rotten and Ferran Adria, and is probably the most idiosyncratic restaurateur on the planet (Jerry Kleiner, who I once interviewed while he wore a sweatsuit and white snakeskin boots, is a very close second). Carlson closes when he wants, answers the reservation line when he wants, and might just swap out your bottle of BYO wine for another bottle in his private restaurant stash to provide a more suitable pairing with your course. He's also the only dude who makes sea urchin ice cream in pine-flavored ice-cream cones that will blow your mind.

Vie



With his commitment to canning, preserving and sausage making, Chef Paul Virant is the modern manifestation of Ma and Pa Ingalls from the Little House books. No word on whether he makes his own candles or soap, but one thing's for sure, this is probably the only suburban fine-dining restaurant most people leave the city to eat at.

West Town Tavern

This is the Ferrari of neighborhood restaurants, a friendly high-quality value-conscious hang from talented restaurant folks opened in a time when very few places like this existed. It's the precursor for spots like The Bristol, Mado and David Carrier's promising new spot in Lincoln Park, Kith and Kin. Chef Susan Goss whips up heartwarming classics like crispy duck confit and beer cheese, while her husband, Drew Goss operates one of the best affordable by-the-glass wine programs in the city.

Xoco



Lots of chefs say they're focused on serving seasonal and local inputs, but what they really mean is they buy one box of greens at the farmer's market and mix that with stuff from commercial vendors. Bayless serves 750 or so people a day at this, his new street-food outpost, and almost every single ingredient he

offers is local, artisanal and/or consciously grown. His volume and his dedication to local farms created jobs and a market for well-raised food that didn't exist before 1990. The quality of the bread alone (though we sure don't mind the wood-fired in-house-butchered achiote-rubbed suckling pig that comes with it) is worth the price of the sandwich.

**The Rest:** Cafecito, Cemitas Puebla, Double Li, fRedhots and Fries, Hoosier Momma Pie Company, Katy's Dumpling House (Westmont), Kuma's Corner, Lagniappe, Pasticceria Natalina, Smoque, Spaccanapoli, Uncle John's BBQ and Violet Hour also deserve a mention. Places like Hot Doug's, Kahn BBQ and Sun Wah BBQ which re-opened or remodeled spots in the last ten years, but were open prior to the beginning of the decade were not considered for this list.

# at zeroes end

## Dance in Chicago 2000-2009 By Brian Hieggelke

**DANCE EXPLODED IN THE ZEROES**, fueled on by successful transitions at major establishments and the opening of significant new venues. Any consideration of dance in Chicago starts with our world-renowned homegrown company, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago (HSDC), which commenced the decade with the transition in its artistic leadership from Lou Conte, who'd founded the group in 1977 and built it into one of the city's leading cultural exports, to Jim Vincent. Vincent didn't miss a beat, building on Conte's foundation, and greatly expanding the company's formerly rather limited performance presence in its hometown by expanding to quarterly Chicago engagements, thanks in part to the opening of the perfectly sized Harris Theater for Music and Dance in November 2003. By 2008, HSDC had grown to a seven-million-dollar operating budget and Vincent himself was moving on, returning to the Netherlands Dans Theater, where he'd spent much of his career as a performer, passing the artistic reins at HSDC to his former associate, Glenn Edgerton.

Meanwhile, Chicago's national reputation as a dance center was being augmented by its resuscitation of the esteemed Joffrey Ballet, which, in a state of financial crisis in the mid-nineties, had thrown something of a Hail Mary pass by departing the nation's cultural capital of New York to see if it could make it in Chicago (it had long been extremely successful here on its tours, a tradition mirrored today by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, which sold a whopping 14,416 tickets to its annual engagement at the Auditorium Theatre in 2009). Make it here it did, and by the dawn of this decade, it had established itself as a pillar of Chicago's cultural community, even becoming the subject of a Robert Altman film, "The Company," in

2003. In 2007, company co-founder and long-time artistic director Gerald Arpino retired (he died soon after), to be succeeded by Ashley Wheater. A year later, the company moved into the Joffrey Tower at the edge of the downtown theater district, establishing the Joffrey Academy of Dance at the beginning of this year. The bottom line? Joffrey Executive Director Christopher Clinton Conway says this decade's shown growth by 33 percent, both in budget and audience.

The opening of the Harris Theater at Millennium Park, the city's first new multi-use arts theater since 1929, was designed specifically to meet the needs of Chicago's itinerant emerging and medium-sized dance and music presenters. In addition to HSDC, it hosts the likes of Muntu Dance, Luna Negra, River North Chicago Dance, Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago, Chicago Human Rhythm Project and select touring companies that it books in its own subscription series.

Further south along Michigan Avenue, another major force in Chicago dance was going through its own transitions at the turn of the century. The Dance Center of Columbia College founder and longtime director Shirley Mordine stepped down in 1999 (her own company, still going strong, celebrated its fortieth birthday in the spring of 2008), giving way to Bonnie Brooks, and the Dance Center opened its own space in the South Loop, connecting its campus with its performances. Newly charged, The Dance Center played a critical role in the growth of the city's dance culture by programming a series that was both contemporary and global in its nature, while cultivating rewarding relationships with the likes of now-deceased dance legend Merce Cunningham. With a similar sized



and similarly new facility, the performance series at the Museum of Contemporary Art brought a comparable quality of curated touring dance; where the Dance Center's focus was global, the MCA's was experimental, as befitting its home at the art museum. Out on the dance/performance frontier, Links Hall recently celebrated its thirtieth birthday as the city's sandbox for cutting-edge, experimental work.

If the larger forces give the medium its foundation, the smaller and mid-sized companies offer its soul, and the decade was marked by a new stability for dance companies, as the aforementioned Mordine & Co. and Muntu Dance are both into their forties now as companies. Jan Bartoszek's Hedwig Dances notches 25 years in 2010, Zephyr Dance and River North Chicago Dance just turned 20, Chicago Human Rhythm Project has launched its 20th season, Thodos Dance Chicago turned 15 in 2007, Molly Shanahan Mad Shak turned 15 in 2009. On the cutting edge, Breakbone Dance Co. and Same Planet Different World both started in 1997 but really came into their own in the zeroes, as did Lucky Plush Productions, which debuted in 1999. This decade might not have seen as many noteworthy debuts, but Chicago Dance Crash and The Seldoms have quickly emerged among the very best, artistically, in town. Few success stories in the decade compare to that of Luna Negra, though, which was founded by Eduardo Vilario in 1999 and was packing in crowds at the Harris within the decade. Ironically, Vilario left the company he founded in 2009 for the helm of Ballet Hispanico in New York, replaced by Gustavo Ramirez Sansano.

And then there are the festivals. Dance Chicago ended the decade with the fifteenth version of its sprawling extravaganza, outliving its co-founder, Fred Solari, whose untimely passing in 2006 led some to believe the festival too would see its finale. And the Other Dance Festival created a showcase for emerging companies to show their work in intimate environs. But the Chicago Dancing Festival really made its name in a hurry, by showing world-class dance companies, many from outside of Chicago, in a free festival in Millennium Park.

One other major initiative of the decade was The Excellence of Dance Initiative, created by the Chicago Community Trust in 2001, which led to the launch of SeeChicagoDance.com in 2006 as a nonprofit hub for this burgeoning dance scene. At decade's end, we count 107 Chicago dance companies listed in the directory on SeeChicagoDance.com. Sure, some might be irregular and some in limbo, but 107 Chicago dance companies!

With so many companies now fomenting a meaningful dance culture in Chicago, what now? What sets Chicago apart? With all due respect to the accomplishments of the Joffrey and other touring classical ballet companies, Chicago is a contemporary/modern dance town, infused with a multicultural essence befitting the diversity of its residents. Chicago dance is not diverse as a mission statement, it's diverse at its core. Some, like Chicago Dance Crash founder Mark Hackman, see the fusion of contemporary dance with the multicultural styles derived from the street as a uniquely Chicago thing. "More often than not, this contemporary view is usually taking street styles (house, breaking, waving, hip-hop, krumping) and putting them in a theater with concert tech-

niques like modern, ballet or jazz," Hackman says. "Our generation is getting established enough to start producing our own work and all these new TV shows and movies have hit this decade that have ballerinas onstage with

breakers, it seems like it's an approach that's only going to gain popularity into the 2000-teens and well beyond that."

What better coda for an extraordinary decade: even better, on the horizon?

Luna Negra



Hubbard Street Dance Chicago



Chicago Dance Crash



Joffrey Ballet





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## Best Films 2000-2009 By Ray Pride

### 1. "In the Mood for Love," Wong Kar-Wai, 2000



Repetition, proximity, music, exchange of glances. Looks of desire, clouds, rain. Unconsummated romance = cinema.

### 2. "Yi Yi," Edward Yang, 2000

Perfection. It's taken for granted because it seems so simple, so easy, so natural. Family as lovingly detailed soap opera; at just under three hours, the late Taiwanese master made a multigenerational epic worthy of a novel. And, strangely befitting his background in computer science, he knew precisely where to place the camera for the most dynamic effect.

### 3. "Before Sunset," Richard Linklater, 2004

Linklater knows there's grandeur in the smallest of shared, skittery moments. This couple that never was, with dreamy memories of their one-night stand, are different people now, older, oft-disappointed, yet despite underlying melancholy, still straining for a moment of genuine contact.

### 4. "Once," John Carney, 2006



Were we talking about romance? One of the shittiest-looking great movies, "Once" is a singularity. Let's make music together, all right? Fair play.

### 5. "United 93," Paul Greengrass, 2006

In the years after 9/11, with the months it takes mood to seep from streets to the movie screen, a weariness set into movies that weren't gimcrack whirligigs that escaped that nightmare. Greengrass hopes to plunge directly into that fearful day: bleak, jangly, necessary.

### 6. "The New World," Terrence Malick, 2005

And what fresh world is this? As the British come to Jamestown, the natives discover a new world, as well. Nature and naiveté surround them all. Onrushing like a river, "The New World" is a heartfelt glossary of poignant delights.

### 7. "Lilja 4-Ever," Lukas Moodysson, 2002

Moodysson began as a poet and his films fix on our responsibilities to the children of the world. As 16-year-old Lilja, Oksana Akinshina has a heartbreaking face, innocent, still a child. In fallen Russia, she's prey. She's exploited and all she wants to do is die. How do you make a heartwrenching, beautiful film of this? By listening to Rammstein on your way to heaven.

### 8. "Beau Travail," Claire Denis, 2000

Man's fate as elliptical dance musical: based, sketchily, on Herman Melville's "Billy Budd," French Foreign Legionnaires linger under the blinding desert sun of Djibouti. Inevitable masculine conflicts, whether violent or homoerotic, are doused in mood and inchoate myth. The men work, strain, sweat; we are immersed in the routines of these sinewy Sisyphuses, enacting anachronistic masculine rituals.

### 9. "Regular Lovers," (Les amants réguliers) Phillippe Garrel, 2004

A three-hour, black-and-white, full-screen portrait of Garrel's own experience of Paris '68. Less mirror than emotional kaleidoscope, "Regular Lovers" also boasts a great dance scene at a party to The Kinks' "This Time Tomorrow." Wes Anderson wept.

### 10. "Man on Wire," James Marsh, 2008

Philippe Petit is a ginger trickster, and Marsh's film, propelled by a library of Michael Nyman's music, captures romance, daring, innocence, yet never invokes the fate of Petit's complex edifices. 9/11 never happened. *Jouissance*? It's the life force.

### 11. "A Christmas Tale," Arnaud Desplechin, 2008

Christmas is coming and the buffet is getting fat: Desplechin is a major maximalist of the past decade, and his deceptively rich tapestries reward re-viewing. You could start with performances he gets from the likes of Emmanuelle Devos, Mathieu Amalric and Catherine Deneuve... and... and... Tres belle.

### 12. "The Dark Knight," Christopher Nolan, 2008

But what's more maximal than Chicago by night from the sky in IMAX? Few things: even Heath Ledger's Joker can't match its gleam. Why so delirious?

### 13. "Millennium Mambo," Hou Hsiao-hsien, 2001

A druggier delirium: "This took place ten years ago, around the turn of the century..." Hou's fixations on youth culture, gangster culture and wide-eyed actress Shu Qi come to dreamy, hypnotic form in this languorous neon romance.

### 14. "The Death of Mr. Lazarescu," Cristi Puiu, 2005

Man goes to heaven. An angel wishes him Godspeed, laving his ancient, overstuffed, nude form. It's the final frames of Puiu's three-hour descent into the lowest circles of Bucharest healthcare after nearly three hours of a man's slow expiration. Along the way, men are hapless, but the women-neighbors, EMTs, doctors-compassionately lead him on his way. A leading light of the 2000s most startling "New Wave," from Romania.

### 15. "Reprise," Joachim Trier, 2006

With visual style to outstrip Tykwer at his twentieth-century ADD-est, "Reprise," by a former Norwegian skateboarding champ, is a dazzling formal display, but it works best as a portrait of two writers in their early twenties who want success as novelists. Life, in the form of girls and madness, intercedes. As audacious in its time as "Shoot the Piano Player" must have been in its time.

### 16. "The Lives of Others," Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006

A man listens. Camera watches. Ulrich Mue is one of the decade's great listeners. Like a scenarist or theater director, his East German spy diagrams the intrigues of artists he shadows, knows intimately, can never know.

### 17. "Head-On," Fatih Akin, 2004

But there is room for German maximalism: Birol Unel's performance as a middle-aged Turkish-German who gets involved with a Turkish woman (Sibel Kekilli) makes for a volcanic portrait of self-deception and self-destruction.

### 18. "The Darjeeling Limited," Wes Anderson, 2007

A tossed-off "Would you look at those assholes?" changes a world weighted by liberal-like guilt. A film about three jerk American brothers traveling India resonates with underlying critique and simultaneous embrace of their puny follies, their hapless misunderstanding of exotic worlds beyond their reach. Plus, savor "Hotel Chevalier," the James Salter-like wafer that raises the curtain.

### 19. "Stevie," Steve James, 2002

Through the Big Brother program while in graduate school at Southern Illinois, future "Hoop Dreams" director James mentored a 10-year-old ball of confusion named Stevie Fielding. Years later, he follows up. Soon after,

Stevie commits a crime. James continues to visit him for four years as his case progresses, hoping to understand the boy who became the man he cannot help. Faulknerian in the dimensions of its tragedy, there are still hopeful words, particularly on why "nobody should be lonely," a moment of radiance, even transcendence.

### 20. "Mulholland Drive," David Lynch, 2001



Transcendence from terror: the sense of a self that can never be whole against a Hollywood backdrop: the madness of performance and the astonishing birth of Naomi Watts' career.

### 21. "Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy," Adam McKay, 2004

"I love carpet. I love lamp. I *love* lamp." I love "Talladega Nights," but "Anchorman" may be the movie that out-Apatows Apatow, taking only absurdity seriously.

### 22. "Children of Men," Alfonso Cuaron, 2006

2027 is a bit of a wreck: Cuaron's dystopic world, however, gleams, an imaginative hurtle through what comes after what comes next, a few years after "Collapse," a few years before "Avatar."

### 23. "Donnie Darko," Richard Kelly, 2001

What a movie to open in the weeks after 9/11, just starting with the airplane engine crashing into the bedroom. Kelly's puzzle-box of teen self-pity and self-formation entertains even while never quite coming to lucidity.

### 24. "Demonlover," Olivier Assayas, 2002

A movie that adopts the perspective not only of an ADDled teenaged boy but of the internet itself: a jangle of warring narratives fueled by chilly greed and cold-hearted lust. Or a dream shared by a dozen European satellite channels on an icy night... Assayas' gentler films, such as "Summer Hours," are fine, but his freak-outs are best.

### 25. "There Will Be Blood," Paul Thomas Anderson, 2007

The height and death of auteur cinema in the studio system: a howling anomaly of sound, vision and non sequitur. Paul Thomas Anderson drinks your milkshake. And with "Punch-Drunk Love," he milks your migraine. There will be cinema.



# BIG BANG: NEWCITY’S GUIDE TO NEW YEARS EVE 2009

## BARS, NIGHTCLUBS, HOTELS AND MORE

### Crimson Lounge

Crimson Lounge is doing an international travel theme for this year's \$135 bash. The fourth floor of Hotel Sax features DJs spinning in themed rooms, including Dubai and Paris. Premium cocktails, wine, beer, appetizers, champagne and a midnight balloon drop are included in the admission. Get your "passport" (hardy har har) stamped in all five of the rooms and you'll be entered to win one night at the hotel. VIP table reservations are available and start at \$500 for three people. 333 N. Dearborn, (312)923-2473.

### Crobar

Enjoy a four-hour open bar, a midnight champagne toast, balloon drop and party favors. 1543 N. Kingsbury, (312)266-1900.

### C-View

Starting at 9pm, the rooftop lounge located on the 29th-floor will have a premium open bar, hors d'oeuvres, a champagne toast and more for \$79. 166 E. Superior, (312)523-0923.

### Debonair Social Club

Dance the night away at this Wicker Park hotspot. Bar packages start at \$65. 1575 N. Milwaukee, (773)227-7990.

### Drake Hotel

Chicago Scene hosts this bash at the Drake Hotel, featuring four ballrooms, a premium open bar (9pm-1am) staffed by 45 bars and bartenders, gourmet hors d'oeuvres, a live cover band, DJs spinning dance, disco, hip hop, house and more, a champagne toast, balloon drops at midnight AND coffee and dessert after the ball drops. If you go for a VIP ticket (\$200-\$275), you'll be able to access private areas in two of the ballrooms with private seating and servers. Tickets usually sell out in advance, so head to chicagoscene.com to find out more info and buy tickets. 140 E. Walton, (312)787-2200.

### Evil Olive

Enjoy a premium open bar, dinner buffet, party favors, balloon drop and midnight champagne toast. 1551 W. Division, (773)235-9100.

### Excalibur

Ring in the New Year at Excalibur with five dance floors, a four-hour open bar, three huge balloon drops and two light shows. Better yet, you can choose how much you're willing to spend as packages range from \$40 (basic admission and cash bar) to \$59 (open bar from 7pm-11pm and buffet from 7pm-9:30pm) to \$99 (premium open bar from 8pm-12am and access to private party rooms) to \$125 (same as \$99 package but you also get access to the VIP penthouse). 632 N. Dearborn, (312)266-1944.

### Green Dolphin Street

Electronic legends The Crystal Method headline Green Dolphin Street's huge club event. Supporting them on the bill will be thirteen other DJs, including Mario Florek and Just Joey. Forty dollars gets you in the door, but you can double it to gain VIP status which includes a three-hour open bar. 2200 N. Ashland, (773)395-0066.

### Hard Rock Hotel

The Lincoln Park Young Professionals host the Hard Rock Hotel's party, which includes four hours of premium open bar, hors d'oeuvres and desserts. 230 N. Michigan, (312)345-1000.

### Harry Caray's Tavern

Head to this Wrigleyville bar from 9pm-2am for An Evening With Bubbles. For \$90-\$100, enjoy the dinner buffet, call drinks, beer, a champagne toast and lots of bubbles. Entertainment will be provided by DJ/VJ Rain. 3551 N. Sheffield, (773)348-0009.

### Hilton Chicago

Rapper Pitbull performs at this Playboy party with three ballrooms filled with gambling, hors d'oeuvres and a four-hour premium open bar. 720 S. Michigan, (312)922-4400.

### Hyatt Regency Chicago

104.3 Jack FM and the Hyatt hosts this party that includes live music from cover band 7th Heaven, a DJ, premium open bar, buffet stations until 11pm, party favors and prizes. 151 E. Wacker, (312)565-1234.

### Late Bar

Dave Roberts and Kristien Hengl will spin New Wave classics until 4am at Late Bar's bash. Admission is just \$10 and gets you party favors and a midnight champagne toast. 3534 W. Belmont, (773)267-5283.

### Lumen

Go back in time to the Roaring Twenties as Lumen transforms into a speakeasy for the night. Throw on your best flapper-style dresses or suits and access a five-hour open bar and buffet. DJ Lil Mikey and a live brass band will perform all night as you play blackjack and craps. Just hope the cops don't show up. 839 W. Fulton Market, (312)733-2222.

### NV Penthouse Lounge

Celebrate New Year's Eve with class at NV Penthouse Lounge. You'll receive a premium open bar, hors d'oeuvres, champagne and dessert at midnight and tons of party favors. Buy tickets at [www.newyears.com](http://www.newyears.com). 116 W. Hubbard, (312)329-9960.

### People Lounge

People's \$60 package includes open bar, DJ entertainment, a champagne toast and party favors. For \$40 more, you can enjoy a four-course dinner of Mediterranean salad, scallops with saffron orzo, blue cheese-crusted skirt steak and dark chocolate sorbet. 1560 N. Milwaukee, (773)227-9339.

### The Shrine

DJs Mark Fullaflava and 33 1/3 will be spinning all night and playing music videos. Guests can enjoy food all night as well as a midnight champagne toast. To gain VIP status, which includes express entry, a bottle of champagne and special seating, you'll have to shell out \$120. 2109 S. Wabash, (312)753-5704.

### Signature Room at the 95th

The New Invaders, The Tony Calderisi Trio and SODA will perform at this New Year's bash. The \$200 per person ticket includes a gourmet buffet and an open bar from 8pm-1am. Cocktail acquire is required. 875 N. Michigan, (312)787-9596.

### Vision Nightclub

Ring in the New Year at Vision with five entertainment rooms playing dance, hip hop, pop and retro hits as well as the Bad Boys of LIVE Late Night in the Cabaret."Comedy There will be three huge balloon drops and a multimedia countdown to 2010. Better yet, you can choose how much you're willing to spend as packages range from \$40 (basic admission and cash bar) to \$59 (open bar from 7pm-11pm and buffet from 7pm-9:30pm) to \$99 (premium open bar from 8pm-12am and access to private party rooms) to \$125 (same as \$99 package but you also get access to the VIP penthouse). 632 N. Dearborn, (312)266-1944.

## RESTAURANTS

### N9NE Steakhouse & Ghostbar

The early-bird special doesn't start so early here. From 5:30pm-7pm, all of N9NE's favorite steak and seafood creations are on the non-pre-set menu (Reservations require a \$40 pre-payment per person). The second seating (\$80 pre-payment per person) goes from 8pm-10pm and includes free Ghostbar admission after 11pm. From 9pm-11pm,

Ghostbar hosts its own style of celebrations with hors d'oeuvres, a complimentary glass of champagne and a dance floor and DJ for \$20.10. After 11pm, the tunes continue until the New Year. Keep in mind that all reservations must be prepaid with a credit card, so call (312)575-9900 to book your table, or contact Tricia G. at [Tricia@9groupchicago.com](mailto:Tricia@9groupchicago.com). 440 W. Randolph, (312)575-9900.

### NoMI

A five-course tasting menu composed by Executive Chef Christophe David is super fancy and priced accordingly at \$195. Creations include sushi and sashimi or Alaskan King Crab with sunchoke, celery and smoked caviar; truffled beef consommé with foie gras and puff pastry; and pasta carbonara, prime beef tenderloin with black trump, roasted marrow and sauce Bordelaise, or butter-poached Maine lobster. A cheese, nuts and chocolate course as well as desserts round out the menu. For an additional \$80 per person wine pairings are available. 800 N. Michigan, (312)239-4030.

### one sixtyblue

Fill up on Chef Michael McDonald's rich five-course menu. For \$75 per person, indulge in chilled Florida stone crab, house-made saffron linguini, seared Sonoma foie gras and more. 1400 W. Randolph, (312)850-0303.

### Uncommon Ground on Devon

The Fatum Jazz Quintet will be performing all evening for diners at Uncommon Ground. Early birds can be seated at 5pm or 5:30pm and be treated to Chef Brian Millman's special holiday menu for \$60 per person. If you'd rather stop by later, it'll cost you \$75 per person. 1401 W. Devon, (773)465-9801.

### West Town Tavern

Chef Susan Goss has planned a special a la carte menu for West Town Tavern's New Year's Eve festivities this year. The regular menu will also be available, but here's a peek at the specials: Lobster macaroni and cheese; pan-roasted pork saltimbocca wrapped in Benton's country ham with polenta, sage and preserved lemon; baby spinach with tangerines, marcona almonds, dried cherries and orange-honey vinaigrette; winter vegetable risotto with poached apricots, toasted walnuts and fried sage; and pumpkin-spice doughnut holes with rum custard sauce. Wine pairings are available. 1329 W. Chicago, (312)666-6175.

### Zocalo

This River North Mexican restaurant will be hosting seatings this New Year's Eve at 7pm and 9pm. For \$45, patrons will be treated to a four-course meal along with a glass of cava. The huge menu features everything from crispy confit duck legs to sweet corn masa crepes with squash blossoms and cheese. Diners at the second seating will be treated to live music, and at 11:30pm the party begins. A DJ will spin, and there will be a champagne or tequila toast. Drinks specials last until 2am. 358 W. Ontario, (312)302-9977.

*Assembled by Kelley Hecker. For more NYE events, visit [newcity.com](http://newcity.com)*

## MUSIC

### →Crystal Castles

In 2008, Toronto electro-punk duo Crystal Castles released their highly anticipated self-titled debut LP. Many of the tracks had been floating around for years, either in demo form or on sold-out seven-inches, but this official release pushed them into the spotlight. Unfortunately, it also meant anything Ethan Kath and Alice Glass did was made public, which didn't exactly paint them in the best light, from the feud with artist Trevor

Brown to the last-minute cancelation at Dallas' Granada Theater this year, which led staff to call the duo "pre-madonnas," to kicking supporting band VEGA off their tour in April, accusing them of theft, to Glass trashing the stage and throwing a punch at security at Barcelona's Sonar Festival because the sound sucked. Point is: they're a pretty polarizing pair. You either put their shit aside and enjoy the music or think they're talentless pricks. I fall into the former category and "Crystal Castles" was one of my favorite albums of 2008. I saw the band live in 2007 and found it to be an intense experience. Though Kath is the brains behind the band, 21-year-old vocalist Glass is the entertainer, completely unpredictable and seemingly batshit crazy. Whether writhing on the floor, diving into the crowd, climbing whatever she can or playing with strobe lights, you can't take your eyes off her. This'll definitely be an interesting, albeit slightly creepy, show. Just don't go if you're prone to seizures. (Kelley Hecker) Logan Square Auditorium, 2539 N. Kedzie, (773)252-6179. 8:30pm. \$50.

### →The Fiery Furnaces

Matthew Friedberger, half of the Brooklyn-via-Oak Park indie-rock duo The Fiery Furnaces, is taking a break from starting idiotic feuds with Radiohead and Beck to help ring in the New Year at the city's newest venue. After releasing its debut album, "Gallowsbird's Bark," in 2003, Matthew and his sister Eleanor have continued to release one or two albums a year since, each of them vastly different yet quirky in that often hard-to-digest Fiery Furnaces way. 2004's "Blueberry Boat" was too scattered for me and I found it nearly impossible to sit through. 2005's "EP," on the other hand, I loved: short, focused pop songs that went down easily. Of course, they followed that up later that year with "Rehearsing My Choir," an album that featured their grandmother Olga Sarantos telling stories about her life. I'm sure it was meaningful for the Friedbergers to make, especially now that Sarantos has passed, but it was completely unlistenable for others. In the past, the pair would rearrange songs and turn their sets into one long jam session, but lately they've been playing a more straightforward rock show where fans can actually differentiate between songs. Still, this band's wordy, schizophrenic style can be hard for some people to take in large doses, me included. If you're a big fan, this show will most likely leave you satisfied. If not, skip it. (Kelley Hecker) Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln, (773)525-2501. 9pm. \$20 (\$25 at the door).

### →Girl Talk

Mash-up master Gregg Gillis' live performances consist of him hunched over a laptop, yet Girl Talk shows have become legendary for one simple reason: the man knows how to throw a killer dance party. His third LP, 2006's "Night Ripper," brought Gillis national attention, earning him rave reviews from blogs and music magazines alike as he continued to work a day job as an engineer in Pittsburgh. He quit that in 2007 to focus on music, a move that allowed him to tour more and build his reputation as a must-see performer. Last year Gillis' highly anticipated follow-up to "Night Ripper," "Feed the Animals," was released and met with equal acclaim. Girl Talk shows are all about getting drunk and dancing your ass off with friends and strangers. Dozens of people swarm the stage while others wildly flail their limbs about on the sweat-drenched dance floor. This is without a doubt the wildest dance party taking place in the city this NYE and not to be missed. (Kelley Hecker) Congress Theater, 2135 N. Milwaukee, (773)276-3600. 9:30pm. \$35.

### →The Jesus Lizard

For anyone concerned that The Jesus Lizard's psychotic frontman David Yow has lost a step over the years, consider this: during the first night of the band's two-evening stint at Metro over Thanksgiving weekend, Yow's in-the-crowd antics cost him a fall to the ground, a ride in an ambulance and a visit to the hospital. Trooper that he is, the band played the next night with equal amounts of piss and vinegar. Of all the classic rock bands of the eighties and nineties reuniting these days—Pixies, My Bloody Valentine and now Pavement (yay!)—The Jesus Lizard foursome is surely the most violent, unrelenting and power-housing. On New Years Eve, with all this stupid, fuck-all night entails, expect blood. And a little bit of stage-diving. Disappears opens. (Tom Lynch) Metro, 3730 N. Clark, (773)549-0203. 10pm. \$51-\$61.

### →Umphrey's McGee

People have traditions, and certainly this local band has theirs, once again heading home for their annual year-end hometown jam during a three-day Chicago residence at The Vic Theatre and The Aragon Ballroom. Though Umphrey's McGee have much in common with other groups within the jam-band community (ever-changing set lists, open-taping policies), the music they make clearly comes from a somewhat different place—instead of simply being Dead or Phish copycats, they seem to borrow from more progressive sounds, 1960s rock and jazz. An example of this is the inclusion of Vince Guaraldi's iconic "Linus and Lucy" among the handful of covers included on their sets. Well over a decade into their careers the band has evolved into an accomplished group with incredible musical chops. They never stopped including covers on their setlist—favorites include guitar-heavy version of The Beatles' "I Am The Walrus" and The Who's "Baba O' Riley" with recognizable elements from the original recordings while also showcasing the band's improvisational skills, which in their case comes in spades. (Ernest Barteldes) Aragon Ballroom (with Prefuse 73), 1106 West Lawrence, (773)561-9500. \$65.

### OTHER SHOWS:

Beck's Music Export: Mark Ronson, The Airborne Toxic Event, The Virgins, The Drums @ River East Arts Center

Big Head Todd and the Monsters @ House of Blues

Black Keys, Kurt Vile and The Violators @ Riviera Theatre

Bobby Bare Jr., David Vandervelde, Ben Clarke @ Schubas

Crystal Method @ Green Dolphin Street

Future Rock @ Kinetic Playground

Infamous Stringdusters, Uncle Earl @ Old Town School of Folk Music

Jens Lekman @ Empty Bottle

Local H, Electric Six, White Mystery @ Double Door

Margot & the Nuclear So and So's, Wild Sweet Orange @ Subterranean

Model Stranger @ Elbo Room

Pegboy @ Beat Kitchen

Pretty Lights @ Vic Theatre

Santiago, the Hood Internet, John Patterson, Sassmouth, Bald E., Nate Manic @ Smart Bar

Smoking Popes @ Durty Nellie's

Todd Hembrook & The Hemispheres @ Bottom Lounge

Tossers, Yakuza, Teen Idols, Scott Lucas, the Married Men. @ Reggie's Rock Club

Urge Overkill @ HOB Back Porch Stage