

Breaking down the Panama Papers **6** Baseball + Democracy = A home run **8**



LENNY GILMORE/REDEYE

Monday
APRIL 11, 2016

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A Chicago Tribune
publication



**WHETHER THEY FEATURE
FOIE GRAS, CAVIAR, EGGS OR
PLAIN OLD BUTTER, CHICAGO'S
FANCY TOASTS ARE TOPS 10-11**

eat & drink

**Bread and butter at
Cellar Door Provisions**
LENNY GILMORE/REDEYE FILE



Get toasted

CHICAGO'S 6 BEST FANCY TOASTS, FROM AVOCADO TO FOIE GRAS

By Michael Nagrant | FOR REDEYE

Tacos, burgers and pizza.

These are the three super food groups on which trends are built. As much as chefs might like it to happen, things with confusing and cutesy French names rarely make it past the appetizer section of a single high-end restaurant. You'd think that might also be the case with the tartine.

When I first heard the term, I thought it was a euphemism for a diminutive Victorian-era lady of ill repute. In reality, it's a French word for an open-faced sandwich, usually served on toast. As I've dined out over the past six-plus months, I've encountered

almost as many tartines as I have slabs of pork belly.

It's no surprise that toast is having a moment. Whether it's painted with avocado, dripping with foie gras and jam or piled high with caviar, it's hard to find a menu in Chicago that doesn't offer at least one. But for every hit, there's a sad excuse for a baguette that's made with the same ingredients as a yoga mat. You must be careful what you chew.

To help you in that quest, here are six of the best things we've seen on crispy, crunchy bread in the past few months.

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY EAT & DRINK EDITOR MORGAN OLSEN.

MICHAEL NAGRANT IS A REDEYE CONTRIBUTOR. REPORTERS VISIT RESTAURANTS UNANNOUNCED, AND MEALS ARE PAID FOR BY REDEYE.



POACHED EGGS WITH AVOCADO ON MULTIGRAIN \$12 AT THE ALLIS

113 N. Green St. 312-521-8000

You might be thinking to yourself, "Oh, gawd. Not another piece of avocado toast." That's a valid concern, but you'll be a born-again believer after stepping into Soho House's lobby restaurant and bar, The Allis, and ordering the avocado toast. Hearty hunks of tender avocado mingle with red chili flakes, fresh basil and a gloriously plump poached egg. You'll break that egg and watch the yolk dribble down to the thick, crusty multigrain bread below (who knows, you might even Instagram it). It sounds simple enough, and it is, but this avocado toast is one of the purist versions of the trend in the city.

CHICKEN LIVER TOAST \$12 AT BAR MARTA

2700 W. Chicago Ave. 773-697-4489

In the past few years, Humboldt Park has become somewhat of a breeding ground for great chicken liver. The stuff served at Rootstock (954 N. California Ave. 773-292-1616) is so silky and rich—and not too funky—that I swore it was actually pricey foie gras the first time I had it. But late last year, some friendly competition moved in down the street when Jeff Pikus and the crew over at Bar Marta brought chicken liver of the gods to the neighborhood. Tufted slathers of the stuff ooze with boozy cognac, and notes of sherry grace the crusty bark of fermented house-baked sourdough bread. Spicy red chili slivers, crispy splinters of chicken skin and wintergreen-wafting sprigs of parsley burst in each bite. Had the foie gras ban proposed by Ald. Joe Moore (49th) stuck here in Chicago, I would've been fine with this stuff as an alternative.



MICHELLE KANAAR FILE PHOTO FOR REDEYE

CAVIAR BRIOCHE \$8 AT SINK SWIM

3213 W. Armitage Ave. 773-486-7465

Toast is the ultimate finger food; if you're using a fork and knife, you're probably doing it wrong. But Sink Swim, a refined and cozy seafood haven in Logan Square, has managed to make the handheld trend even more accessible with this snack-sized brioche. Each toasted round is topped with onion caramel, a small mound of smoked salmon roe and bits of cured egg yolk. The end result is buttery, tangy and melt-in-your-mouth delicious. And with five per order, you'll be tempted to pop them in your mouth one after the next, but logic will tell you to slow down and savor every last bit. And maybe lick your fingers when it's all over.



TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/TRIBUNE FILE



LENNY GILMORE/REDEYE

FOIE GRAS TOAST \$9 AT BUNNY, THE MICRO BAKERY

2928 N. Broadway

Not since J.K. Rowling unleashed Harry Potter mania on the masses have owls been so fetishized. Enter Iliana Regan, owner of Elizabeth and most recently Bunny, the Micro Bakery in Lakeview. At Bunny, Regan has taken her owl-philia to new heights by pressing foie gras into intricate owl molds. Those bird-shaped nuggets of cured liver later rest atop thick slices of brioche and a schmear of lustrous raspberry jam. People say there's nothing better than butter, but when this foie gras melts into the warm bread and swirls around with that sweet jam, it sure makes a case for butter-beating goodness. Even if the toast didn't taste good, which isn't the case here, it's the cutest and most curious thing I've seen since Leo DiCaprio vaping at the Screen Actors Guild Awards.

WHITEFISH TARTINE \$13 AT GREENRIVER

259 E. Erie St. 312-337-0101

The whitefish tartine at GreenRiver in Streeterville is so pretty that the folks there printed a picture of the dish on a postcard they hand out with your bill. But it's more than just a pretty open-face sandwich. Translucent curls of celery, wispy-thin slivers of radish and smoky, creamy whitefish dunes are all perched on top of a crackling piece of bread. It's an edible symphony of satisfying contrasts: smoky and acidic, sweet and bitter, soft and crunchy. It's fit for ladies-who-lunch fare or a pre-dinner treat to soak up the boozy bar program that shouldn't be missed.



BREAD AND BUTTER \$3 AT CELLAR DOOR PROVISIONS

3025 W. Diversey Ave. 773-697-8337

The most efficient path between two points might be a line, but sometimes the most satisfying path is the long and winding one. Such might be the philosophy behind Logan Square's Cellar Door Provisions. The owners and bakers here are old school in the best way possible. If there's a hard way to do something, they've likely dedicated themselves to it. Their bread is shaped by hand, cured for days and baked individually in cast-iron pans. The process is so painstaking that they don't sell loaves to go, only because they just have time to make enough for daily service. So here's what you'll do: Go in the morning, fork over \$3, crunch down on the mahogany crust, inhale the yeast that lies deep within the soft innards of this warm bread and repeat. The first time one of my pickiest (and most social) friends tried this stuff, he stopped talking to me mid-sentence and remained silent for at least three minutes after.