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WEEK OF  
MARCH 23, 2017

# UP YOUR DELIVERY GAME

ORDER IN LIKE A FOOD CRITIC  
WITH THESE TRIED AND TRUE  
TAKEOUT SPOTS. PAGES 6-8

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# Fast food

## OUR FOOD CRITIC PICKS HIS FAVORITE DELIVERY PLACES IN CHICAGO

By Michael Nagrant | FOR REDEYE

I'm shameless and deeply studied in the ways of delivery. And I am now ready to share what I've learned to help you achieve the best delivery experience in Chicago. This list is based on my experiences ordering from my home in Logan Square, as well as ordering from locations in the Loop, West Loop, Bronzeville and other areas. These spots came out on top. I've tried to make recommendations that cover a broad selection of neighborhoods, but check your local delivery site to make sure these spots serve you (Grubhub and Postmates tend to have wide reaches throughout the city).



LENNY GILMORE/REDEYE FILE

### DELIVERY EGG ROLL

#### 1. Lee's Chop Suey

2415 W. Diversey Ave. 773-342-7050

There's a particular style of egg roll—a hefty cylinder more reminiscent in size of a Chipotle burrito than a short cigar—that has all but disappeared. It's dappled and pock-marked with fry oil, and because it's sealed with peanut butter (yep), it wafts a nutty perfume when you cut in to it. Lee's is one of the last places making such a roll. For bonus points, they ship those rolls with a neon orange plum sauce, which has hints of orange and a silky finish unlike the gloppy plastic packets of sweet chili sauces most Chinese restaurants give you. The ranguon here are also the size of mini-sailboat spinners and the Mongolian beef is righteous. **Price range: \$9-\$18**

### DELIVERY SESAME CHICKEN

#### 2. Orange Garden

1942 W. Irving Park Road 773-525-7479

As my rules dictate, the closer you live, the more likely you are to experience the crisp crust on the sesame chicken. However, if you live a little ways away, you'll still appreciate the vinegar tang that cuts through the richness of the fried and sugar-sauce soaked chicken, a touch missing from most takeout sesame chicken dishes. **Price range: \$6-\$18**

### DELIVERY THAI

#### 3. TAC Quick

1011 W. Irving Park Road 773-327-5253

Pad thai does not travel well, and you don't want that from TAC Quick. You want the stuff from the "secret menu" (which is no longer secret, as it's printed on their regular menu). You want stuff like fiery som tum Thai, comforting kao soy curry and crispy on choy—tempura-fried watercress with shrimp doused in a bright limey chili sauce. Normally a fried dish like this would be forbidden, but TAC smartly separates the sauce from the fried stuff when they deliver. **Price range: \$8-\$14**

### DELIVERY INDIAN

#### 4. Rangoli

2421 W. North Ave. 773-697-7114

The butter chicken is so creamy, you can feel it wrapping around your aorta. The palak paneer features firm fresh cheese cubes and a heady aroma of garam masala. The samosas are flaky and light. The only problem is that on multiple occasions I have been told that my order is on the way only to have it arrive hours later. The staff plays fast and loose with delivery times, but this is some of the best around, and worth the wait. **Price range: \$10-\$16**

### DELIVERY PHO

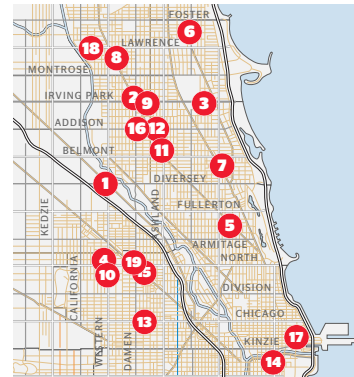
#### 5. Fuh

2218 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-270-4418

With a name like Fuh, you're probably

### Nagrant's picks

Food critic Michael Nagrant's picks for best delivery choices in the city. Note that this list is not necessarily his picks for best food in the city, but the food that travels the best.



RESTAURANTS WITH MULTIPLE LOCATIONS WERE NOT INCLUDED DUE TO SPACE LIMITATIONS.

thinking, "WTF, no way is this place good." It is. The broth is thick, slightly sweet and deeply savory. It's perfumed with star anise and unlike many places, which modify existing bases, the soup is made from scratch. If you're one of those folks who usually go for the pho dac biet or the special pho stuffed with everything, you're gonna want the Holy FUH! Bowl which includes chicken, rare steak, juicy brisket and beef meatballs. **Price range: \$9-\$14**

#### 6. Pho 888 (via Caviar)

1137 W. Argyle St. 773-907-8838

A few years ago, I tried 18 different bowls of Pho from Argyle Street Vietnamese restaurants. 888, which slurped like an elegant beef tea, was the clear winner. I still believe it's the best broth around. **Price range: \$5-\$13**

### DELIVERY TERIYAKI

#### 7. Glaze

3112 N. Broadway 773-697-3580

This is the place I've ordered delivery from the most in the last year. It's quick. It's reasonably priced. And it's tasty. The chicken thighs are juicy and the steak is hearty. The carrot dressing on the side salad tastes garden fresh. I feel like I'm sorta being healthy, except when I break down and also order the charred pork rib lacquered with sticky sweet BBQ sauce. **Price range: \$8-\$10**

### DELIVERY SOUTHERN

#### 8. Luella's Southern Kitchen

4609 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-961-8196

The peanut-butter colored roux on the gumbo is swampy and spicy. You'd think delivery grits would be a gloppy mess, but thanks to an infusion of cream cheese infusion, they're almost a flowing Velveeta-smooth nest for thick grilled shrimp. Just skip the po boy, as the bread to interior ratio is way off. **Price range: \$8-\$15**



**DELIVERY BRITISH CHOCOLATE AND IRISH PUB FOOD****9. Mrs. Murphy & Son's Irish Bistro**

3905 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-248-3905  
Cadbury in America is owned by Hershey, and their candy bars are chalky and terrible. Cadbury in the UK is owned by Mondelez and their wares feature rick milky chocolates and some of the more innovative candy bars around. I'm especially fond of Crunchie, which features a toffee crisp center. The crumbly Flake bar is pretty rad too. The UK bars are tough to find, but Mrs. Murphy's will deliver them to your house along with pretty righteous bangers and mash and shepherd's pie. On Fridays, they also do a seafood stew that hits the spot, if you're like me and sometimes crave delivery bouillabaisse. **Price range: \$10-\$17**

**DELIVERY EMPANADAS****10. Joey's Shrimp House**

1432 N. Western Ave. 773-772-1400  
Empanadas, like samosas and egg rolls, tend to fare well as fried foods go, and one of my favorites is the pineapple and cheese-stuffed half moon-shaped pies from Joey's. The creole shrimp ones are good too, but the cheese ones are like a killer-Hawaiian pizza calzone. **Price range: \$6-\$28**

**5411***Various locations*

I'm partial to the caramelized onion empanada, which tastes like French onion soup stuffed in a great pastry. But you can't really go wrong with any of the selections from this spot, which was borne from one of the OG Loop food trucks. **Price: \$2.75 per empanada**

**DELIVERY SEAFOOD SOUP (AND LOBSTER ROLL)****Soupbox***Various locations*

Most of the soups are good, but the lobster bisque has an addictive hint of wine that gets me every time. **Price range: \$6-\$12**

**11. New England Seafood Company**

3341 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-871-3474  
The clam chowder stuffed with hunks of creamy potato and flecks of bacon is quite the bowl, but so is the lobster bisque with its sherry nose. You will be tempted to order the fried clam basket, but trust me, only eat those in store. The lobster roll, however, travels like a pro. **Price range: \$12-\$30**

**DELIVERY TURKISH****12. Café Orchid**

1746 W. Addison St. 773-327-3808  
Middle Eastern cuisine is one place where the ratings fail. They're almost all rated



Spring rolls at Fuh. LENNY GILMORE/REDEYE FILE

four stars. I like that Orchid has a very specific Turkish point of view, instead of being some generic spot to get hummus. The imam biyaldi or stuffed baby eggplant is like an eggplant parm without the crispy bits. The feta wraps are like Turkish egg rolls oozing with warm crumbly cheese. The cig borek is a homemade savory lamb pie that tastes like it was baked an hour ago by a very gifted culinary-trained grandma. **Price range: \$6-\$11**

**DELIVERY SUSHI (AND RAMEN)****13. Arami**

1829 W. Chicago Ave. 312-243-1535  
Sushi is best enjoyed omakase from a great chef at the counter. As such, I almost put this on the banned from delivery list, but while it's not optimal, sushi travels remarkably well. There are plenty of great neighborhood spots, but the quality of the fish and the skillful cuts offered by Arami are just a notch above. The Arami ramen is also one of the best delivery ramens (Furious Spoon is another) out there. **Price range: \$5-\$16**

**DELIVERY TURKEY SANDWICH****14. Capriotti's Sandwich Shop**

174 N. Wabash Ave. 312-344-1695

I am not a turkey guy. On Thanksgiving, I always order a country ham for the feast. Ham and swiss on rye or a good salami always come before turkey. And yet, I love The Bobbie from Capriotti's. I think it's because this sandwich—made with hand pulled real roast turkey (not formed mystery deli meat), cranberry dressing, savory stuffing and mayo—is the essence of what's great about turkey day, aka the next day transformation of leftovers. Just make sure you ask for the mayo and cranberry to be delivered on the side, or you're taking a trip to sloppytown. **Price range: \$8-\$16**

**DELIVERY MEXICAN STEAK SANDWICH****15. Fonda Frontera**

1471 N. Milwaukee Ave. 872-829-3821  
If you've ever dreamed of a mashup between a Philly cheesesteak and a green chili burrito, this pepito torta overflowing with silky beef short rib, caramelized onion, pickled jalapenos and artisan jack cheese will fulfill your wildest fantasies. **Price range: \$12-\$25**

**DELIVERY PIZZA****16. Bartoli's**

1955 W. Addison St. 773-248-0455  
Most deep dish crusts are crumbly and cardboard-like. This one is buttery and

you're likely not to leave the ends behind. In between the tip and the crust, you'll find a zesty tomato sauce that kicks the drool receptors into overdrive. Also, the owner of Bartoli's once told me that the trick to good delivery deep dish is to leave the pie intact and let the customer cut it at home. If you cut the pizza in the restaurant, the ingredients weep moisture all over and disintegrate the crust. So while it's more work for you, tell the pizza shop to keep the knives away when you order out. **Price range: \$10-\$18**

**Jet's***Various locations*

I always thought I loved this pizza because I grew up in Michigan (where Jet's was founded) and I'm homer and subject to serious nostalgia, but it turns out the Detroit style crust with the halo of caramelized cheese resonates with so many of my friends who didn't grow up in "the D." **Price range: \$8-\$17**

**Pizano's***Various locations*

Like Bartoli's, the crust is magnificent, and the crushed sweet and peppery tomato sauce is one of my favorites. Whatever you do, get the thick hunks of crumbled sausage on this pie. **Price range: \$15-\$30**



Dove's Luncheonette's "Come back to Life Cocktail"  
ABEL URIBE/TRIBUNE FILE

### 17. Robert's Pizza Company

355 E. Ohio St. 708-536-4597  
Robert's pizza crust has a crispness that was built for delivery. Just be careful not to order up the sloppy, egg-laded huevos ranchero pizza, and stick with caramelized onion and mushroom instead. **Price range:** \$16-\$23

#### DELIVERY BANH MI

### 18. Nhu Lan

2612 W. Lawrence Ave. 773-878-9898  
With almost all the sandwiches priced below \$6, it's tough to meet the \$20 order minimum, but you'll find a way. Start with the lemongrass tofu. Though it's vegetarian, it eats like soy-spiked steak served on a fresh baguette. **Price range:** \$4-\$7

#### DELIVERY TACO EXCEPTION

### Cemitas Puebla

Various locations  
There is one taco I've had that makes the delivery cut, and that's the taco arabe from

Cemitas Puebla. That's also because technically it's not a taco. Its thick, soft pita-like tortilla makes this more of a burrito overflowing with spicy spit-roasted pork, dripping with chocolate-colored smoky chipotle sauce. The namesake cemita sandwiches, especially the al pastor with its sesame-studded house baked bun, also make a trip fairly well. **Price range:** \$7-\$18

#### DELIVERY FRIED EXCEPTION

### 19. Dove's Luncheonette

1545 N. Damen Ave. 773-645-4060  
Sometimes it feels like 2 a.m. in your brain, either due to lack of sleep, high consumption of alcohol or both. If you can't get to a diner, but you crave diner food, Dove's pozole rojo—red chili stew overflowing with tender brisket and chewy hominy—will hit the spot. Also, remarkably, the chicken fried chicken arrives still crispy, even though it's smothered with thick chorizo verde gravy. **Price range:** \$10-\$16

Michael Nagrant is a RedEye freelancer.

## 8 tips to become a pro at ordering food delivery

By Michael Nagrant | FOR REDEYE

Sometimes you feel like dining in your underwear. After all, Chicago only really has two inhumane climates: frozen and swampy. Spending significant time outside is often an irrational endeavor in our fair city. In fact, I've always thought because of the home-bound experience of our citizenry, Chicagoans would make great pioneers in the colonization of Mars, where going outside would be certain death.

Even if you love the cold and heat, you've probably already spent several hours commuting avoiding manspreaders, errant Cheeto dust and Slurpee slicks left behind. You've bundled and unbundled from the bulky goose down and hot damn, "Stranger Things" Season 2 is coming out in October. You, my friends, will be dining on the couch at some point.

The good news is while I spend hundreds of hours inside restaurants, I also spend probably thousands of hours on Grubhub. Here are some rules to becoming a master at ordering delivery.

### Respect the delivery people

While you may want to dine in your underwear, no delivery person wants to see your boxer briefs. Take delivery while appropriately clothed. Also, while beer may sound like a good tip, your driver wants cold hard cash. Because said person has indeed braved challenging weather, and has maybe done so in a 2005 Honda Civic that doesn't run so well, don't tip less than \$5. I know you're thinking, "But the order was only \$10!" If you think like that, then you should also be getting takeout from the corner that you pick up yourself.

### Do not order fried food

The shrimp will be soggy. The fries will be limp. The hot wing skin will be saggy like discarded pantyhose. No matter how close the restaurant is, fried food, like passengers on a plane filled with snakes, does not travel well. I find, however, exceptions can be made for egg rolls, samosas and tempura combos from the corner sushi joint.

### Noodle mileage may vary

Like fried foods, pasta can get downright gluey during delivery. I have yet to find a pad Thai that travels well.

### Use the distance sort on the delivery website of choice

Anything from a restaurant over three miles away is gonna be lukewarm and,

depending on traffic and time of day, likely take over an hour to arrive. If you're ordering at Friday night at 6:30 p.m., you may not see that delivered food until 9:30 p.m. (Hi, Rangoli!)

### Sort by ratings with caution

Of course you want food from a five-star Mexican joint! Except, consider that right now, of the 500+ spots that deliver to me according to Grubhub, 416 of them have a rating of four stars or higher. Pay attention to the qualitative things people are saying in a review. Look for consistent mentions of "late delivery," "soggy" and "terrible" food. On the quantitative side, because most restaurants have four stars or more, the ones that drop into the three-point range likely have some serious issues and should probably be avoided.

### Caviar is a luxury

Don't get me wrong. I love Grubhub, especially during Yummy Rummy season, but sometimes you don't want to flip through all 700 spots that deliver to you. Caviar features a more focused and curated list of some of Chicago's best food delivery options.

### Be picky about pizza

Neapolitan pies generally get droopy in a hot box. Cracker crisp and substantial bread crusts do well. Note, my recommendations are not Chicago's best pizzas, places like Coalfire or Spacca Napoli, but places which make pizzas that still have integrity after they've stewed in a cardboard box for an hour.

### Let's taco 'bout it (what's not in this guide)

**Tacos:** Wrapped in foil, a taco becomes a steamy mess encased in a dried-out shell. I have never seen the Lochness Monster or had tacos that survived delivery well.

**Nicer sit-down restaurants:** I've had some good stuff from The Radler delivered and even Yusho, but generally I've avoided ordering delivery from restaurants where the sit-down experience is part of the charm.

**BBQ:** You'd think something that spent all day in a smoker could survive a 15-minute drive in the car, but brisket and pork dry out and ribs lose their crispy bark, so no BBQ.

**Burgers:** Beef dries out and the bun ends up a soggy mess, even if you ask for the mayo on the side.

**Fried chicken:** Nope.

Michael Nagrant is a RedEye freelancer.