



NIGHT MOVES Clockwise from left: The view from the sunken patio; strings of Edison bulbs outside; lemongrass chicken thigh with sautéed shishito peppers, peekytoe crab, and watermelon; the packed patio at dusk; hairloom tomatoes with Brunkow blue cheese and Thai basil; the restaurant's interior. Below: Chef Troy Graves

Garden Party

The Door shuts on Duchamp—and opens on a new neighborhood dining destination.

| By Michael Nigrant | Photography by Anthony Tablier |

Red Door, a new Bucktown restaurant helmed by chef Troy Graves (Meritage, Tallulah, Eve), blends two must-haves for Chicago summer dining: great food and a charming outdoor area. Sure, a few diners are eating inside the rustic wood-trimmed space on the night my wife and I stop by, but most have opted to dine on the spacious outdoor deck with its modern montage of wooden benches and brick pavers. And who can blame them? With a tangle of bare Edison bulb string lights overhead, a pulsating iPod electronica mix in the background and plenty of excellent beer, the Red Door patio is the perfect place to be on a warm Chicago evening. (The owners say it will remain open as long as the weather permits.)

While the ambience is certainly a draw for the crowd of young Bucktown couples and Wicker Park hipsters, the top-notch food makes the spot that much more enticing—and more than just a summer fling. Graves' predominantly small-plates global gastropub menu is full of crave-worthy, carb-heavy comfort food inspired by traditional Indian, Latin and Asian dishes. Such heaviness might seem like a disaster during this sweltering summer, but Graves' greatest trick is that he lifts most of his dishes with something light and contrasting.

Case in point: On the "Snack" portion of the menu

you'll find poutine, a traditional French Canadian dish of fries topped with gravy and cheese curds. Here, Graves ups the ante by adding silky chicken confit and spicy curry. The hail of crisp, cool spring peas refreshes what might otherwise turn into a cardiac-threatening event.

In the "Seafood" section, buttermilk-fried oysters wrapped in salty tasso ham seem tailor-made for a drunken New Orleans post-bar bender. But buttery lettuces and lightly pickled scrimps of cucumber cut through the fat delightfully. And the rabbit schnitzel, a golden-fried panko-crust plank perched over sauerkraut, would be better suited for winter were it not for the bright whole grain swoosh of honey mustard underneath. Other menu standouts include cardamom-and-maple-glazed carrots and a hefty corned beef tongue Reuben sandwich.

All these salty bites require some nice beer, and while there are many solid beer lists around town, few are as good as Red Door's, which offers stunners like a sour Petrus Oud Bruin Wild Ale from Belgium that is so light it makes you rethink that dark beer must be heavy. Few also have a hoppy Uinta Wyld pale ale from Utah infused with apricot. But because the bar is inside the restaurant up a small staircase, our waitress takes forever to bring the bottles to us. Then again, that just leaves more time to linger out on this magnificent patio sucking up whatever's left of this glorious summer night.

Red Door

2118 N. Damen Ave.
773.697.7221

HOURS

Mon.-Thu. 5PM-2AM,
Fri. 4PM-2AM, Sat. 11AM-2AM,
Sun. 11AM-10PM



Dealmakers

Poutine\$8

Lemongrass chicken thigh\$9

French toast with chocolate ganache and peanut butter ice cream\$9