



Original Rainbow Cone.

JOEL WINTERMANTLE / TRIBUNE FILE

FOOD GUIDE

The South Side

A COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF THE BEST FOOD THE NEIGHBORHOOD HAS TO OFFER

By Michael Nagrant | FOR REDEYE

My favorite thing to do as a food writer is to hop in the car and devote a day to just driving around the city looking for new spots or to rediscover old ones that no one ever talks about anymore. I used to do this once a week, but with two young sons and a full-time non-food job, it doesn't happen as much anymore. Doing this kind of shoe-leather reporting is generally not that big of a deal when covering North Side restaurants, as so many are covered ad nauseam and sometimes even reviewed on Yelp even before they opened.

The South Side, however, is different. Restaurants can be open for a year sometimes before they're discovered. Driving around the South Side looking for chow, I find, still yields discoveries and delightful surprises. Having a rare free day, I recently hopped in my Porsche (OK, truthfully, my trusty Ford Flex dad-friendly SUV) with a laptop, a box of baby wipes and bottles of Gatorade in tow and just drove for six hours. I found spots I'd somehow missed in the past that have been around forever—like Haire's, which definitively serves Chicago's best fried shrimp—and newer places like Nita's, which brews one of Chicago's best gumbos.

I augmented the discoveries of this recent trip with the places I've found on past drives to bring you what I hope is one of the more comprehensive eating guides to Chicago's South Side.

Note: I've deliberately not covered Little Italy, Pilsen and Chinatown spots here, which though technically on the South Side, could be eating guides on their own. I have of course probably missed your favorite secret spot. If I have, please share. We are always looking for the good food here at RedEye.

DOUGHNUTS**Old Fashioned Donuts***11248 S. Michigan Ave. 773-995-7420*

Like Bigfoot or the Loch Ness monster, the apple fritter (\$4) from Old Fashioned is legendary. Unlike those two, it actually exists. The size of at least four regular apple fritters with a fried mahogany-and-marble sugar glazed crust, this is the singular item that made me become a food writer. I couldn't believe something so iconoclastic and delicious existed for maybe decades and I never knew about it. Once I discovered it, I reasoned there must be hundreds of buried edible treasures all over Chicago and to discover. Since then, I have not stopped looking for them.

Poppin Dough*1235 W 95th St. 773-366-3110*

Like Old Fashioned, Poppin has a huge apple fritter. It's decent, but what you really want is the basic glazed (\$1), which features an airy layered interior that reminds you of a sweet croissant. Which is to say, it's basically a cronut, but no one here would ever say that. What they will say as they hand over your bag of fried dough goodies is "Have a popstastic day!"

Dat Donut*8251 S. Cottage Grove 773-723-1002*

You want the giant Texas-sized chocolate glazed (\$3.35). Or if you're not into desserts the size of life preservers, check the blueberry cake doughnuts (\$1.05), featuring a buttery crumb flecked with juicy berries.

Bridgeport Bakery*2907 S. Archer Ave. 773-523-1121*

On paczki day, the lines outside this Bridgeport stalwart look like queues outside an Ed Sheeran concert. Most other times of the year, you can just pop in for maple bacon donuts and fluted crullers. You want the savory bacon bun (\$1)—a yeasty roll stuffed with bacon and pork—so you might want to come early as they often sell out.

GUMBO**Three Chefs***8125 S. Halsted St. 773-483-8111*

Featuring an oil slick dark roux (a cooked mix of fat and flour that thickens gumbo), fat pink shrimp, slivers of spicy caramelized chicken sausage, sweet pepper and cayenne, this bowl is a heartwarmer (\$10.99/small, \$16.99/large). The smothered catfish, scratch biscuits and sweet potato pancakes (\$10.25) are also pretty fine.

Nita's Gumbo*8100 S. Stony Island Ave. 773-734-2788*

Until recently, Three Chefs' was the best gumbo bowl I'd had in Chicago, but there's a case that Nita's bowl, which is stuffed with silky crab and scallops, thick shrimp, and zesty chicken andouille sausage curls is even better. The gumbo (\$10/16 oz. half order) is a recipe passed down from Irving



Doughnuts from Dat Donut.

MICHAEL TERCHA / TRIBUNE FILE

Sheldon Jones to his daughter, the restaurant's namesake, Anita. For 25 years, Anita cooked a huge annual New Year's Louisiana-focused feast that her family refers to as "the chase," where her gumbo was prominent. No longer confined to Anita's family, now all Chicago citizens can taste the chase!

SHRIMP**Haire's Gulf Shrimp***7448 S. Vincennes Ave. 773-783-1818*

This fried shrimp is the bomb, literally, which is to say it comes in two sizes: "the small bomb" (\$11.66) or "large bomb" (\$15.88) bag. The small bomb is akin to most local shrimp shacks half-pound portions. Unlike most shrimp shacks, the shrimp is butterflied, flaky-crust, dusted with a sprinkle of salt and flecked with surprising treasures of black pepper. Fatso's Last Stand has been my standard bearer for Chicago fried shrimp, but after dusting off a small bomb here, I'm convinced this is Chicago's greatest crispy crustacean. Also, Chance the Rapper has been here at least once, as evidenced by the photo of him and the Haire's crew that hangs below the counter.

Calumet Fisheries*3259 E. 95th St. 773-933-9855*

Today it's pretty common to compare addictive food to rock cocaine, but back be-

fore casual drug references in food writing were de rigueur, the smoked shrimp (\$22.99/lb) served here were one of the first foods I ever saw referenced as "crack." Years later, the shrimp and the peppery smoked salmon (\$16.69/lb) are still as enticing as any street drug in existence or yet to be invented.

CHICKEN AND OTHER FRIED GOODIES**Mini Hut***6659 W. Archer Ave. 773-586-2115*

These are not heavy flour-dusted franchise fare. Rather, the golden crisp-skinned poultry (\$8.70/4-piece dinner) shatters to the bite and is more reminiscent of the supper club or homestyle Sunday dinner fried chicken. Once you stop in, you will make it a mission to return before every flight out of Midway.

Hienie's Shrimp House*10359 S. Torrence Ave. 773-734-8400*

The crinkle-cut fries are garden variety frozen Simplot. The shrimp (\$10.30) is decent, but no match for the tender butterfly-cut stuff served at Haire's. The chicken (\$5.40/2 pc. dark) is only about 75 percent as good as the Mini Hut chicken. However, neither of those spots serves their wares with Hienie's neon-orange mustard-spiked tangy hot sauce that is revered so deeply by locals that they walk out with bottles of the stuff.



PHIL VELASQUEZ / TRIBUNE FILE

Chicago Wingz Around the World grapes.

Chicago Wingz Around the World*700 E. 47th St. 872-818-5260*

Any corner shack does Buffalo flavor. But, how many chicken wing spots sling 30-plus sauces, including gems like honey lemon pepper, Parmesan garlic, sweet ginger barbecue and bangin' ranch (\$6.49/6 pc.)?

cover story

Chicago's Home of Chicken and Waffles

3947 S. King Drive 773-536-3300

The chicken is crispy and the thick waffles (\$10-\$20) waft a haunting yeasty perfume, but it's the chicken livers (\$13-\$14), pudding-like rich in the middle and enrobed in a crust that flakes like fine mica, that keep me coming back.

Bronzeville Jerk Shack

5055 S. Prairie Ave. 773-548-5375

Most jerk chicken in Chicago is some kind of arms race to burn the first layer off your tongue with a bucket of scotch bonnet peppers. Bronzeville's juicy-to-the-bone bird (\$7.50/lunch portion) has a slow burn which allows you to appreciate the balance of pepper, allspice and salt that also coats the crisp blackened skin.

LAMB AND GOAT

Birrieria Zaragoza

4852 S. Pulaski Road 773-523-3700

Every culture has a restorative broth, the kind of bowl that fuels you for a day of work or brings you back from the infirmities of a terrible cold. Americans have chicken noodle soup. The Vietnamese have pho. And the Mexicans have birria. Birria is a funky deeply-rich goat bone broth stuffed with tender shredded meat spiked with fiery arbol chilis, a shower of cilantro and a tangy spritz of lime. The bowls served here (\$12.25/small bowl) will make your nose run and your heart beat quicker.

Potsticker House

3139 S. Halsted St. 312-326-6898

You'd think a place named after one of the most famous pieces of dim sum would make killer dumplings. And they are decent, but the dish here that'll blow your mind is the awkwardly named "cumin flavor lamb with bone." The lamb (\$16.95) melts in your mouth but leaves behind a cumin perfume that makes you feel like you chased the meat with a world class shot of chili.

CHINESE

Han 202

605 W. 31st St. 312-949-1314

There may be no such thing as a free lunch, but there is such a thing as a cheap (usually the domain of fussy cheffy \$100-and-up meals) prix-fixe meal. Don't let the price fool you; chef Guan Chen is a top toque with a talent for melding odd ingredient combos like strawberry, beef and lemongrass to upscale Chinese dishes way before Stephanie Izard, Won Fun or Imperial Lamian ever did. Here, \$35 gets you four courses. You're not locked in to the chef's whim either, as most courses offer a plethora of options like rack of lamb with bonito plum sauce or crispy quail with fresh lemon.



Birria with salsa de molcajete at Birrieria Zaragoza.

LENNY GILMORE / REDEYE FILE



JOEL WINTERMANTLE / TRIBUNE FILE

Fried chicken and waffles at Chicago's Home of Chicken and Waffles.

PIE AND ICE CREAM

Jimmy Jam's

1844 W. 95th St. 773-779-9105

You probably remember that scene from Forrest Gump where Bubba talks about all the ways to cook shrimp. It's kinda like that at Jimmy Jam's, but instead of shrimp, you get to explore all the ways to use a sweet potato. There's sweet potato pie, cupcakes, bread, sundaes, sandwiches and baked potatoes stuffed with cheese, peppers and chicken (\$2.75-\$8.75).

Original Rainbow Cone

9233 S. Western Ave. 773-238-7075

Joseph Sapp opened the Original Rainbow Cone in 1926 near the corner of 92nd Place and Western Avenue, serving five flat

slices—not scoops—of chocolate, strawberry, Palmer House (vanilla studded with walnuts and cherries) and pistachio ice cream and orange cream sherbet combined into a rainbow of layers packed atop a wafer-style ice cream cone (\$4.29/small cone). Today, his granddaughter Lynn runs the place, which is now as iconic as spots like Gibson's, Al's Beef or Mario's Italian Lemonade.

ITALIAN BEEF

Pop's

10337 S. Kedzie Ave. 773-239-1243

The wafer-thin green peppers in the giardiniera create a snappy spicy contrast to the juicy paper-thin rolls of beef sandwiched between the gravy-soaked bun (\$5.09). If the fries here remind of you a certain potato product served by a fast food joint known for their golden arches, you're not hallucinating. Pop's fries are factory seconds that McD's rejects for minor visual imperfections.

BARBECUE

Lem's

311 E. 75th St. 773-994-2428

If you're really trying to understand the origins of Chicago-style barbecue—that particular brand of smoked meat featuring rib tips (\$12.25) soaked in sauce and topped with white bread—Lem's is ground zero.

Honey 1 BBQ

746 E. 44rd St. 773-285-9455

Robert Adam's Sr. is the modern generation of Chicago-style smoke-masters. He works his smoker like Jimi Hendrix picked a Fender Stratocaster, turning out firm juicy ribs (\$12.99/half slab) with a thick cracklin' bark and juicy hot links (\$3.99).

CARIBBEAN

Garífuna Flava

2518 W. 63rd St. 773-776-7440

Let's say it's one of those Chicago winters when cars get frozen on Lake Shore Drive and you're suffering from major seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and you don't know how to escape the doldrums. One surefire way is to hop over to this bastion of Caribbean cuisine for a taste of the islands or, in the case of the juicy Belizean chicken, a taste of Central America. Don't miss the panades (\$5.95), which are basically fried empanada-like dumplings that come with fizzy pickled cabbage that offsets their carb-tastic richness.

KOREAN POLISH

Kimski

954-960 W 31st St. 773-823-7336

Feast on Kopo Wangs (\$8), which are smoked, roasted and deep-fried, producing a chicharron-like crispy skin. The interior flesh oozes with "AP" sauce with sweet and



ZBIGNIEW BZDAK / TRIBUNE FILE

Dad and Daughter Honey soft serve with Marcona Almond and Herbs de Provence at A10 in Hyde Park.

fizzy gochujang, a red chili paste. Also, don't miss the Ko-Po beef (\$13), a Philly cheesesteak run through the Korean larder, featuring marinated grilled bulgogi, golden caramelized onions, grassy ribbons of shishito pepper and gochujang red chili butter.

UPSCALE ITALIAN

A10

1462 E. 5rd St. 773-288-1010

With his Logan Square spots Billy Sunday and Yusho, Matthias Merges has proven himself a solid curator of cool. At A10, he's a bit more classic, with his crew turning out nonna-worthy pastas and airy focaccia. Though his wares here aren't as hipster-baity as they are up north, they're so impeccable, you'll still fall hard for toothsome bucatini carbonara (\$19) dripping with egg and cured pig jowl, aka guanciale.

BRUNCH

Nana

3267 S. Halsted St. 312-929-2486

Nana is the epitome of great brunch, which is to say it offers excellent super-savory hangover helpers like huevos rancheros (\$13), but also dessert-worthy breakfast like strawberry rhubarb French toast dripping in vanilla cream (\$13). Dinner and lunch—which skew local, sustainable and organic—are also pretty top notch.

BLUE COLLAR GOURMET

Duck Inn

2701 S. Eleanor St. 312-724-8811

Not only does he have maybe the greatest head of hair amongst Chicago chefs, chef/partner Kevin Hickey has a way with duck. His rotisserie duck (\$65) is lip smacking

complemented by crispy duck fat roasted potatoes and a lightening assortment of baby kale, citrus and radishes. If you still need calories after consuming this baby, I suggest the fried cheese curds (\$8), served with bloody mary ketchup and hop-infused mayo.

COLLEGE HANG AND CAFE

LSTC Refectory

1100 55th St. 773-256-0702

Medici on 57th has been the de facto lunch spot for UChicago kids and professors for generations. It's still pretty good, and I find myself craving their garbage salad a few times a year, but these days, all the UC faithful are now heading over to this spot for blackened catfish, puerco pibil tacos and old school reubens (menu and prices vary). It's kind of like an eclectic dorm cafeteria headed by good cooks.

SOUL FOOD

Pearl's Place

3901 S. Michigan Ave. 877-275-5852

Before all the cool restaurant groups started pimping "meat and three" cafeteria-style restaurants serving soul food classics, there was Pearl's, where you will gorge yourself on fried tomatoes (\$6), creamy grits and shrimp (\$9), and short ribs (\$24) smothered in gravy, peppers and onions.

BREW PUB

Horse Thief Hollow

10426 S. Western Ave. 773-779-2739

Score World Beer Cup medal-winning brews and juicy grass-fed burgers (\$10.99).

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