

## Family-Friendly Dining

Chicago has come into its own as a major dining destination, and that's not limited to the chic, see-and-be-seen spots. Plenty of options await families, too. In addition to those stylish restaurants, you'll find an amazing array of steakhouses, family-style Italian restaurants, and just about every kind of ethnic cuisine you could possibly crave. You'll be surprised at the number and range of restaurants that welcome kids in Chicago. Even restaurants that don't offer a specialized kids' menu often will provide half-size portions for children. Whether you're looking for a restaurant for your family's big night out or simply a no-frills spot to dig in, in this chapter you'll find places the locals go to when they want to eat well.

Chicagoans have a passion for two foods your kids are probably passionate about, too: hot dogs and pizza. Don't run out to buy a case of antacids just yet—options for adult stomachs also exist. And although I've covered the obvious family-friendly choices

like Rainforest Cafe and Ed Debevic's, in this chapter I've tried to focus more on unique dining ideas that are Chicago's own.

**A NOTE ON PRICES** Unfortunately, Chicago is no longer the budget-dining destination it once was. (Hipness doesn't come cheap.) I've divided restaurants into three price categories: "Expensive" means that dinner for a family of four will cost \$75 and up; "Moderate," \$40 to \$75; and, at an "Inexpensive" place, you'll pay about \$40 or less. But just because the prices have risen doesn't mean that the attitude has. Restaurants in Chicago might have gotten trendy, but we're still friendly.

To find out more about restaurants that opened since this book went to press, check out the *Chicago Tribune's* entertainment website ([www.metro-mix.com](http://www.metro-mix.com)), the website for *Chicago* magazine ([www.chicagomag.com](http://www.chicagomag.com)), and the entertainment/nightlife website [www.chicago.citysearch.com](http://www.chicago.citysearch.com).

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**2 The Loop**

Chicago's business power center isn't exactly attuned to family dining—what you'll find here are corporate types on expense accounts. (Because of the area's business orientation, keep in mind that some of the downtown eateries are closed on Sun.) But in case you're spending the day touring the Loop's many attractions, we've pegged some great sandwich stops and reasonable dining options. The good news: Just west of the Loop, Little Italy offers inexpensive ethnic dining.

**EXPENSIVE**

**Atwood Cafe** ECLECTIC Colorful and offbeat, this stylish eatery in the Hotel Burnham provides enough fun for kids, and enough sophistication for adults, all while serving up a fresh take on American comfort food. Tuck your

### **Tips Chilling Out with an Italian Ice**

When in Little Italy, do as the Italians do: Cool off with an Italian ice. In a heat wave, **Mario's Italian Lemonade**, at 1068 W. Taylor St., has been the place to chill for 35 years. They're open from 11am to midnight from May to mid-September. Lemon is the most popular flavor, but piña colada, fruit cocktail, or chocolate might appeal to more adventurous kids.

family into a cozy banquet in one of the room's nooks and crannies, and take in the bustle of State Street from the comfort of your own table. Adults won't want to miss the mussels in a garlicky tomato sauce with crusty, grilled homemade bread. Kids will love the banana and white chocolate bread pudding—if they manage to save room for dessert.

1 W. Washington St. (at State St.). ☎ 312/368-1900. High chairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Kids' menu available, \$10. Main courses \$18–\$26. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 7am–10am, 11:30am–3:45pm, and 5–10pm; Sat 8–10am, 11:30am–3:45pm, and 5–10pm; Sun 8am–3pm and 5–10pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Washington/State.

**Tuscany** ★ **NORTHERN ITALIAN** Tuscany is one of the most reliable restaurants on Taylor Street, which is Chicago's version of Little Italy, home to a host of time-honored, traditional, hearty Italian restaurants. In contrast to the city's more fashionable Italian spots, family-owned Tuscany has the comfortable feel of a neighborhood gathering place. Although the food is of high enough quality to draw a fine-dining crowd, the unpretentious atmosphere means you'll find big tables of families, so don't worry about disturbing the peace. As you might expect, the extensive menu features the culinary fare of the Tuscany region, including pastas, pizzas, veal, chicken, and a risotto of the day, and the portions are large. Specials include anything cooked on the wood-burning grill and Tuscan sausage dishes. There's no kids' menu, but half-orders are available. You'll find a second location in Wrigleyville, across from Wrigley Field at 3700 N. Clark St. (☎ 773/404-7700).

1014 W. Taylor St. (between Racine Ave. and Halsted St.). ☎ 312/829-1990. www.stefanirestaurants.com. High chairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses \$9.25–\$27. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11am–3:30pm; Mon–Thurs 5–11pm; Fri–Sat 5pm–midnight; Sun 2–9:30pm. Subway/El: Blue Line to Polk.

## **MODERATE**

**The Berghoff** ★ **GERMAN** Spaetzle and sauerbraten are hot sellers at this longtime German landmark in Chicago's Loop. Having celebrated its centennial in 1998, the immense, 700-seat restaurant is housed in one of the first buildings constructed in the Loop after the Chicago Fire, and one of only two remaining buildings in the city with a cast-iron facade. The Berghoff holds Chicago liquor license no. 1, issued at the close of Prohibition, and it still serves its own brand of beer. (*Good news for kids:* The Berghoff also serves its own root beer.) If you decide to belly up at the stand-up bar, you might notice that the bar clientele is still overwhelmingly male; the stand-up bar at The Berghoff didn't admit women until 1969.

The menu rotates seasonally, but the German standard-bearers are always available. The Berghoff serves hundreds of orders of Wiener schnitzel every day, plus bratwurst, sauerbraten, corned beef, and the like. Sides of choice include spaetzle, creamed spinach, and red cabbage. Because some of us have arteries to worry about, the third and fourth generations of family management have





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added some lighter fare in the form of salads, broiled fish, and vegetarian dishes. There's a children's menu with smaller portions of the dishes on the regular menu. The Berghoff also holds a popular Oktoberfest celebration each year in mid-September, serving brats, chicken, and pretzels, and hosting live music in the street.

17 W. Adams St. (between State and Dearborn sts.). ☎ 312/427-3170. www.berghoff.com. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses \$7.95–\$12 lunch, \$11–\$17 dinner; kids' menu items around \$5. AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–9pm; Fri 11am–9:30pm; Sat 11am–10pm. Subway/El: Red or Blue Line to Jackson or Monroe.

**La Cantina Enoteca** *Value* ITALIAN/SEAFOOD La Cantina is the most casual and moderately priced of the three restaurants in the Italian Village. It makes the most of its basement location by creating the feel of a wine cellar. During the day the restaurant attracts a daily regular clientele of lawyers, judges, and the like, many of whom eat at the bar. During preheater dining hours, you'll find plenty of other families eating here. Specializing in seafood, La Cantina offers at least five fresh varieties every day, plus a fish soup appetizer, macaroni with scallops and shrimp in a garlic pesto sauce, and seafood-filled ravioli. Nonseafood items include your basic pasta favorites (there are no surprises where the pasta is concerned—all the reliable standards are here) and some beef and veal dishes. The dinner menu offers a big-time bargain: A la carte dishes (most under \$20) include a salad, and for \$2 more you also get soup, dessert, and coffee.

71 W. Monroe St. (between Clark and Dearborn sts.). ☎ 312/332-7005. www.italianvillage-chicago.com. Sassy seats. Reservations recommended. Main courses \$11–\$23 lunch, \$12–\$27 dinner. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2:30pm; Mon–Thurs 5–11pm; Fri–Sat 5pm–midnight; Sun 4:30–8pm (seasonally). Subway/El: Red or Blue Line to Monroe.

**Rosebud on Taylor** ★★ *Value* ITALIAN If you want a real Chicago dining experience, this is it: At Rosebud you'll be surrounded by locals, not tourists. The old-style, dark rooms are filled with families celebrating birthdays and older couples who have been coming here for years. If your kids are on the verge of a hunger meltdown, ask for some breadsticks to tide them over: You can expect to wait well beyond the time of your reservation. Rosebud is known for its enormous helpings of pasta, served up in massive white bowls. Expect to walk out with a doggy bag, or—even better—have your whole table share a few dishes. But the portions aren't just large, they're delicious. Most pastas lean toward heavy Italian-American favorites: deep-dish lasagna and fettuccine Alfredo that defines the word rich. But the menu has been hipped up with more modern takes on Italian cooking. Any of the pastas with vodka sauce are out of this

### *Finds* The Italian Village

The building at 71 W. Monroe St. houses three separate Italian restaurants, collectively known as the Italian Village, a downtown dining landmark. Each restaurant has a unique take on Italian ambience and cooking; they also share an exemplary wine cellar and fresh produce grown in a family garden. Each of the three restaurants in the Italian Village is detailed in this section. Families with young children will be most comfortable at moderately priced La Cantina Enoteca; if you have older kids, they might enjoy the atmospheric Village, designed to re-create a dining experience in the Italian countryside. Vivere is the most upscale of the three restaurants.



world. Rosebud also offers pasta lovers five different *cavatelli* dishes, a house specialty, and a tempting selection of *secondi*—meat, fish, and poultry dishes.

If you don't feel like trekking to the original, Rosebud offers another, trendier version just off the Mag Mile at 720 N. Rush St., at Superior Street (☎ 312/266-6444).

1500 W. Taylor St. (1 block east of Ashland Ave.). ☎ 312/942-1117. High chairs, boosters. Reservations recommended, especially on weekends. Main courses \$5.95–\$13 lunch, \$11–\$30 dinner. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–10pm; Fri 11am–11pm; Sat 5–11pm; Sun 4–10pm. Subway/El: Blue Line to Polk.

**South Water Kitchen** ★ AMERICAN Although South Water Kitchen isn't breaking any new culinary ground, it deserves a mention as one of the few places in the Loop that welcomes kids while featuring food sophisticated enough for discerning moms and dads. The dining room evokes the spirit of an old-fashioned city saloon, and the menu goes the retro route as well. Entrees include modern twists on familiar favorites, including a pork chop with sage bread pudding; free-range chicken fricassee with herb dumplings; and a different “blue-plate special” every night (at \$14, it's an excellent deal for the neighborhood). The restaurant provides not only kids' menus but also games to keep the little ones occupied. Best of all, half the proceeds of all children's meals go to the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

In the Hotel Monaco, 225. N. Wabash Ave. (at Wacker Dr.). ☎ 888/306-3507. www.swk.citysearch.com. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations accepted. Main courses \$8–\$17 lunch, \$14–\$22 dinner; kids' menu items around \$5. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2:30pm; daily 5–9pm. Subway/El: Red Line to State/Lake.

**The Village** ★ SOUTHERN ITALIAN Upstairs in the Italian Village is The Village, with its charming interpretation of al fresco dining in a small Italian town, complete with a midnight-blue ceiling, twinkling “stars,” and banquettes tucked into private, cavelike little rooms. It's the kind of Pan-Chicago place where you might see one man in a tux and another in shorts. The massive 200-item menu includes some time-warp appetizers (oysters Rockefeller, shrimp *de jonghe*) and the old-time, hearty southern Italian standards. This is old-school Italian: eggplant *parmigiana*, a heavy spaghetti *alla carbonara*, veal scaloppini, calves' liver, and yes, even pizza. The food is good rather than great, but what sets The Village apart as a place for families is the bordering-on-corny faux-Italian atmosphere that will delight your kids, and an old-time waitstaff that somehow keeps up with the nonstop flow of patrons.

71 W. Monroe St. (between Clark and Dearborn sts.). ☎ 312/332-7005. www.italianvillage-chicago.com. Sassy seats. Reservations recommended (accepted for parties of 3 or more). Main courses (including salad) \$8–\$20 lunch, \$10–\$30 dinner. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–midnight; Fri–Sat 11am–1am; Sun noon–midnight. Subway/El: Red or Blue Line to Monroe.

**Vivere** ★ REGIONAL ITALIAN On the main floor of the Italian Village is Vivere, the Italian Village's take on gourmet cooking. Teenagers might enjoy this upscale—but not snobbish—take on Italian fare. The bold interior, with rich burgundies, textured walls, spiraling bronze sculptures, and fragmented mosaic floors, makes dining a theatrical experience. No spaghetti and meatballs here: The pasta dishes feature upscale ingredients, from the *pappardelle* with braised duck to the *agnolottini* filled with pheasant. Fresh fish is always on the menu (a recent entree selection was salmon with spiced carrot broth), along with a good selection of meats and game. Grilled venison medallions are served with foie gras ravioli, while roasted duck is accompanied by a potato terrine and sautéed spinach.

71 W. Monroe St. (between Clark and Dearborn sts.). ☎ 312/332-4040. www.italianvillage-chicago.com. Sassy seats. Reservations recommended. Main courses \$11–\$22 lunch, \$12–\$33 dinner. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2:30pm; Mon–Thurs 5–10pm; Fri–Sat 5–11pm. Subway/El: Red or Blue Line to Monroe.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Heaven on Seven** ★★ *Finds* CAJUN/DINER Kids will love the “every day is Mardi Gras” feel of this highly popular spot, a favorite of local office workers. Just check out the lunchtime crowd that packs the restaurant, located on the seventh floor of the Garland Building, across from Marshall Field’s. Chef/owner Jimmy Bannos’s Cajun and Creole specialties come with a cup of soup, and include such Louisiana staples as red beans and rice, a catfish po’ boy sandwich, and jambalaya. If your kids don’t have a taste for Tabasco, the enormous coffee-shop-style menu covers all the traditional essentials: grilled-cheese sandwiches, omelets, tuna, the works. Indulge in chocolate pecan pie or chicory coffee crème brûlée for dessert. Usually open only for breakfast and lunch, on the third Friday of the month, Heaven on Seven serves dinner from 5:30 to 9pm. Although the Loop original has the most character, in the past couple of years, more Mardi Gras–infused locations have opened along the Mag Mile at 600 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312/280-7774), adjacent to a cineplex, and in Wrigleyville at 3478 N. Clark St. (☎ 773/477-7818); unlike the original location, both accept reservations and credit cards. Of the newer locations, I’d recommend the Mag Mile restaurant for kids, where you’ll be in the company of many families; the Wrigleyville location attracts big groups and singles.

111 N. Wabash Ave. (at Washington St.), 7th floor. ☎ 312/263-6443. Kids’ menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Menu items \$3.95–\$13; kids’ menu around \$5 (includes soda and an ice cream sandwich). No credit cards. Mon–Fri 8:30am–5pm; Sat 10am–3pm; 3rd Fri of each month 5:30–9pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Washington/State.

**Lou Mitchell’s** ★★ *Finds* BREAKFAST/DINER Lou Mitchell’s is the genuine article and a Loop dining institution, located across the south branch of the Chicago River from the Loop, a block farther west than Union Station. A French food critic passing through Chicago rated Lou Mitchell’s the number-one breakfast spot in America, home of the “five-star breakfast.” Quirky touches bound to amuse kids are everywhere: If the waiter discovers you’re from out of town, don’t be surprised if a table flag of your home state or country is plopped down on your table.

Don’t worry about the line to get in; female patrons get boxes of Milk Duds, and everyone gets free donut holes while they wait. Turnover is continuous and service efficiently attentive. If your kids are old enough, you might shorten the wait for a table by grabbing a counter seat. One specialty here is the airy omelets served in sizzling skilllets; you’ll double your pleasure (and cholesterol) with Mitchell’s use of double-yolk eggs. Orders arrive with thick slabs of toasted Greek bread and homemade marmalade. You might also have the best bowl of oatmeal you’ve ever eaten—deliciously creamy. Orange juice and grapefruit juice are freshly squeezed. At the end of your meal, a small paper cup of vanilla soft-serve ice cream will be offered up, gratis. If you eat breakfast here, you’ll likely be full enough to make it practically to dinner without even noticing that you missed a meal.

565 W. Jackson Blvd. (at Jefferson St.). ☎ 312/939-3111. High chairs, boosters. Reservations accepted for groups of 8 or more. Breakfast items \$1.95–\$6.95. No credit cards. Mon–Sat 5:30am–3pm; Sun 7am–3pm. Subway/El: Blue Line to Clinton.

**Manny’s Coffee Shop & Deli** ★ *Value* DINER If your itinerary includes a trip back in time, make sure you visit Manny’s, a South Side institution since

## **Moments** **Watching the World Float by from Chicago's Riverwalk**


The outdoor cafes along the banks of the Chicago River's main branch, between Wabash Avenue and Wells Street, are run by restaurants that change from year to year, so we can't recommend specific restaurants or dishes. But food is almost an afterthought: Kids will thrill to the parade of schooners and speedboats cruising along the Chicago River on their way to Lake Michigan. Open seasonally.

1942. Kid highlights include spaghetti, beef stew, rice pudding, German chocolate cake, and the occasional special, from franks and beans to chop suey. Adults can grab a tray and navigate the fast-moving line. Even if they go for more standard fare, kids will be awed by the carving station known for its enormous corned-beef sandwiches (about half a lb.), Reubens, world-class hot pastrami, and steamship rounds the size of VW Beetles. Gruff yet friendly staff in paper hats take their *métier* seriously, and the effect—and the food—is absolutely reassuring. Seat yourself and snarf down knishes, borscht, liver and onions, meatloaf, tongue, and stewed prunes. Introduce your kids to the old-fashioned joys of cream soda and Green River.

1141 S. Jefferson St. ☎ **312/939-2855**. [www.mannysdeli.com](http://www.mannysdeli.com). High chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Main courses \$4.95–\$8.95. No credit cards. Mon–Sat 5am–4pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Roosevelt.

**Mrs. Levy's Delicatessen** SANDWICHES Should you be planning a trip up the Sears Tower, here's the perfect place to stop and fortify your family first. This retro deli displays signed photos of famous patrons and offers up deli staples such as knishes, blintzes, and homemade soups. Sandwiches are piled high and include corned beef, beef brisket, and pastrami; soup of the day might include sweet-and-sour cabbage, chicken matzo ball, or mushroom barley.

233 S. Wacker Dr. (Sears Tower), 2nd floor. ☎ **312/993-0530**. High chairs. Reservations not accepted. All main courses under \$8. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–5pm. Subway/El: Brown Line to Wells/Franklin.

**Potbelly Sandwich Works**  SANDWICHES Ask a Chicagoan where to go for a great sandwich, and he'll invariably point the way to Potbelly. Yes, there's a potbelly stove inside, as well as a player piano and other Old West saloon-type memorabilia, but go here for the mouthwatering made-to-order sandwiches. (That's all they serve.) Prepared on homemade sub rolls stuffed with turkey, Italian meats, veggies, pizza ingredients, and more, and layered with lettuce, tomato, onion, pickles, and Italian seasonings, they're warmed in a countertop toaster oven. Even with all the fixin's, each is around \$5. Tempting milkshakes keep the blender mighty busy. Potbelly has nearly 20 other locations throughout the city, including one in The Shops at North Bridge, 520 N. Michigan Ave. ☎ **312/527-5550**, that is convenient for Loop and Magnificent Mile sightseers and shoppers.

190 N. State St. (at Lake St.). ☎ **312/683-1234**. High chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Main courses \$3.50–\$5.50. No credit cards. Mon–Fri 10am–9pm; Sat 10am–7pm; Sun 11am–6pm. Subway/El: Red Line to State.

**Tufano's Vernon Park Tap** ITALIAN Taking the family to the United Center to suffer along with the Chicago Bulls? Here's a great spot to fortify your family for the long evening ahead. Located on the eastern edge of Little Italy,

Tufano's is a popular place that's been family-owned for 60 years—and it's attracted neighborhood regulars as well as celebrities and politicians. (Check out the wall of photos that includes everyone from Tommy LaSorda to Dolly Parton.)

### **Tips Suburban Safaris**

If you have access to a car, you'll want to explore suburban Chicago's highways and byways. These restaurants alone are worth a special trip:

- **Phil Smidt's**, 1205 N. Calumet Ave., Hammond, Indiana (☎ 800/376-4534; [www.froglegs.com](http://www.froglegs.com)). Northwest Indiana is just a hop, skip and jump across the Chicago Skyway (and close to the Indiana gambling boats). The fried perch dinners (all-you-can-eat, a boon for families with growing kids) will make your kids reconsider their preference for frozen fish sticks. For dessert, try the tart gooseberry pie. Closed on Monday.
- **White Fence Farm**, 11700 Joliet Rd., Lemont, Illinois (☎ 630/739-1720; [www.whitefencefarm.com](http://www.whitefencefarm.com)). For the best fried chicken north of the Mason-Dixon line, Chicagoans in the know head to White Fence Farm. And what better kid-pleaser than a fried chicken dinner with all the fixings?
- **Robinson's No. 1 Ribs**, 940 Madison St., Oak Park, Illinois (☎ 708/383-8452; <http://rib1.com>). Backyard Chef Charlie Robinson parlayed a win in the late Chicago journalist Mike Royko's first annual rib cook-off into this large and extremely popular venue. After a day touring the Oak Park's architectural gems, go low-brow and dive right in to a plate of smoky ribs slathered in a secret sauce made with 17 herbs and spices.
- **Hecky's Barbecue**, 1902 Green Bay Rd., Evanston, Illinois. (☎ 847/492-1182; [www.heckys.com](http://www.heckys.com)). When in Evanston, do as the locals do and indulge at this rib joint. Since the place isn't big on atmosphere (there is a dining room, two doors down the street, so you must pick up your food and go), the best plan is to get dinner to go, head back to your hotel and dive in (don't skimp on the napkins). Other specialties include hot pork links, chicken and turkey drumsticks. If your travel plans don't include a visit to Evanston, head to Hecky's new Chicago branch, at 1234 N. Halsted St. (☎ 312/377-7427).
- **Homer's Ice Cream**, 1237 Green Bay Rd., Wilmette, Illinois. (☎ 847/251-0477; [www.homersicecream.com](http://www.homersicecream.com)). Homer's is the kind of place where you feel good about feeding your kids burgers and ice cream. And in fact, Homer's is all about the ice cream, which is the best I've had. (Adults should try the cappuccino chip; kids go for peppermint stick.) Seasonal flavors might include pumpkin in the fall, and prairie berry and peach in the summer. The burgers, hot dogs and chicken sandwiches are fresh and grilled to order. The red-and-white signage outside and matching decor inside evokes good old ice cream parlor fun. Homer's is a convenient stop after a tour of the North Shore and a welcome relief from the usual fast food.

The bar is a Chicago classic, and the cuisine is Italian. The traditional pasta dishes and Tufano's lemon chicken with potatoes are always good bets. On the weekends, go for the homemade ravioli and cavatelli. On Friday, regulars choose the seafood salad.

1073 W. Vernon Park Place. ☎ 312/733-3393. High chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Menu items \$7–\$13. Cash only. Tues–Thurs 11am–10pm; Fri 11am–11pm; Sat 4–11pm; Sun 3–9pm. Subway/El: Blue Line to UIC/Halsted.

### 3 The Randolph Street Market District & Greektown

Much of the Market District is about the “scene”—and when traveling with kids, making the scene ranks pretty low. But you might want to make a trip to the district just to dine at **Wishbone**, or to experience adjacent **Greektown**, filled with cheap eats and noisy, boisterous restaurants where kids blend right in. Greektown sits on the district's eastern border. There's nothing much to do here besides eat—but if you have a few days in Chicago, try to make it here for at least one meal.

Transportation to Greektown and the Market District is easy, by the way—it's about a \$7 cab ride from Michigan Avenue or a slightly longer trek by bus (no. 8 or 9) or El, with stops at Halsted and Lake, a block from the restaurants. The walk from the Loop is very pleasant and totally secure in the daytime, but at night, save your stroll for Michigan Avenue.

#### MARKET DISTRICT

**Wishbone** ★★☆☆ SOUTHERN/CAJUN/BREAKFAST This Southern-style restaurant has much to recommend it for families. First, it's a homegrown restaurant, not a chain, with a casual ambience. Second, children can be kept busy looking at the large and surrealistic farm-life paintings on the walls or reading a picture book, *Floop the Fly*, loaned to diners (written and illustrated by the parents of the owners). The food is diverse enough that both adults and kids can find something to their liking, but there's also a menu geared just to children. The sprawling, loft-style space is quirky enough to be fun (plenty of folk art), but still relaxed and attitude-free.

Known for Southern food and big-appetite breakfasts, Wishbone's extensive, reasonably priced menu blends hearty, home-style choices with healthful and vegetarian items. Brunch is the 'Bone's claim to fame, when an eclectic crowd of bedheads packs in for the plump and tasty salmon cakes, omelets, and red eggs (a lovely mess of tortillas, black beans, cheese, scallions, ancho chile sauce, salsa, and sour cream). Brunch can be a mob scene, though, so to avoid a long wait, try lunch or dinner; offerings run from “yardbird” (charbroiled chicken with sweet red-pepper sauce) and blackened catfish to hoppin' John or Jack (vegetarian variations on the black-eyed-pea classic). Variety is Wishbone's strong point: Every entree comes with a choice of sides, so diners can mix and match to their hearts' content. The restaurant provides outdoor seating in nice weather.

There's a newer location at 3300 N. Lincoln Ave. (☎ 773/549-2663), but the original location has more character.

1001 Washington St. (at Morgan St.). ☎ 312/850-2663. www.wishbone.epagecity.com. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations accepted, except for weekend brunch. Main courses \$5.25–\$9.50 breakfast and lunch, \$6.95–\$14 dinner; kids' menu around \$6. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 7am–3pm; Sat–Sun 8am–3pm; Tues–Fri 5–9pm; Sat 5–10pm.

#### GREEKTOWN

A short cab ride from the Loop across the south branch of the Chicago River will take you to the city's Greektown, a row of moderately priced and inexpensive

Greek restaurants clustered on Halsted Street between Van Buren and Washington streets. Many restaurants have wonderful outdoor seating and spectacular views of the city—plus, long tables of families and shouts of “Opa!” make quite a ruckus that will keep your kids entertained. **Greek Islands**, 200 S. Halsted St. (☎ 312/782-9855); **Santorini**, 800 W. Adams St., at Halsted Street (☎ 312/829-8820); **Parthenon**, 314 S. Halsted St. (☎ 312/726-2407); and **Costas**, 340 S. Halsted St. (☎ 312/263-0767), are all good bets for gyros, Greek salads, shish kabobs, and the classic moussaka. My top pick for families is **Athena**, 212 S. Halsted St. (☎ 312/655-0000), which has a stunning three-level outdoor seating area, a fantastic choice for a warm summer evening. It’s paved with brick and landscaped with 30-foot trees, flower gardens, and even a waterfall. Best of all: an incredible view of the downtown skyline with the Sears Tower right in the middle. **Pegasus**, 130 S. Halsted St. (☎ 312/226-3377), has a rooftop patio serving drinks, appetizers, and desserts. **Artopolis**, 306 S. Halsted St. (☎ 312/559-9000), is another casual option offering up tasty Greek and Mediterranean specialties, wood-oven pizzas, and wonderful breads and French pastries.

#### 4 The Magnificent Mile & the Gold Coast

Yes, the Mag Mile is all about designer shopping—and designer eating—and you’ll be pleasantly surprised to discover that plenty of those eateries welcome kids. In fact, a great many families who visit Chicago never stray far from the Magnificent Mile and the adjoining Gold Coast area. From the array of restaurants, shops, and pretty streets in the area, it’s not hard to see why.

#### EXPENSIVE

**American Girl Place Cafe** ★★☆☆ AMERICAN Dining with dolly has never been done in a more appealing manner than at the cafe located inside the American Girl Place store. Not to be sexist, but most boys will be less than thrilled about spending time here surrounded by girls, dolls, and dresses: It’s really best for a girls’ day out. With an eye-popping black, white, and red polka-dot-and-stripe decor, the cafe has loads of kid appeal. The view of the water tower and surrounding street life from the third-floor cafe is wonderful. Parents and daughters can bond over lunch, dinner, or tea, and dolly (only of the American Girl species, of course) can join in, settled on a special booster seat. Treats on the menu include fresh cinnamon buns, frittata quiche, chicken fingers, macaroni and cheese, and tic-tac-toe pizza. Top your meal off with a sugar cookie, carrot cake, or chocolate pudding flowerpot, and wash everything down with a pink lemonade or hot chocolate. American Girl Place is a destination for many families visiting Chicago, so plan well in advance to avoid disappointing the American girl in your life. The cafe recommends booking 8 to 12 weeks in advance.

111 E. Chicago Ave. ☎ 877/247-5223. High chairs, boosters. Reservations required. Prix-fixe menu (includes gratuity) lunch \$17, tea \$16, dinner \$18. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Lunch seatings 11am and 12:30pm daily; tea seatings 2:30 and 4pm daily; dinner 5:30 Mon–Thurs, 7:30 Fri–Sat. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago/State.

**Bandera** SOUTHWESTERN The open-range ambience here is created by the chicken roasting over a hickory-burning fire. Some complain that the room even gets a bit too smoky from that open fire, but in the wintertime it gives Bandera a cozy rustic Western feel. If your kids will eat cornbread and roasted chicken with mashed potatoes, they’ll do fine here. Menu offerings include roasted prime rib, pork tenderloin with barbecue sauce, Western beef back ribs, and wood-roasted salmon. This is a national chain, so the restaurant might look

awfully familiar, but a location on Michigan Avenue that affords views of the street life below makes this branch particularly well situated.

535 N. Michigan Ave. ☎ 312/644-3524. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Main courses \$15–\$25; kids' menu \$5–\$10. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–11pm, Sun noon–10pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Grand. Bus: 151 and 157.

**Mike Ditka's Restaurant** 🍴 STEAKHOUSE For many Chicago football diehards, the glory days of former coach “Iron” Mike Ditka, who led the Bears to victory in Super Bowl XX in 1985, are still alive and well. Football memorabilia lines the walls of this restaurant, filled with amber light and dark wood. Kids who are at all into the game might inadvertently get a little history lesson—even the Bears' 1985 victory, seemingly still fresh in the minds of Bears' fans who love to relive the glory days, probably qualifies as ancient history to your kids. Televisions in the posh bar allow patrons to simultaneously sip Scotch and pray for “da Coach” to return. Upstairs, there's a cigar lounge that gets pretty pungent: Families would be best off in the downstairs dining room. The hamburger here (really, a chopped steak burger) is one of the best in the city and easily feeds two. Appetizers here are called “Kickoffs” and include a “Duck Cigar,” a hand-rolled pastry with a hearty duck-and-mushroom filling, and a “Souper Bowl” of corn chowder. There are lots of salads, pastas, and seafood dishes to choose from, but why be a wimp? Go for the “Fullback Size” filet mignon, with spinach and homemade onion rings, or “Da Pork Chop,” surrounded by warm cinnamon apples and a green peppercorn sauce.

100 E. Chestnut St. (in the Tremont Hotel, between Michigan Ave. and Rush St.). ☎ 312/587-8989. www.mikeditkaschicago.com. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Main courses \$9–\$13 lunch; \$15–\$30 dinner; kids' menu around \$8. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–10pm; Fri 11am–11pm; Sat 10am–11pm; Sun 10am–10pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago Ave.

**Oak Street Beachstro** 🍴 AMERICAN/ECLECTIC Could a location be more prime? Settled on the curve of Oak Street Beach, this bistro offers tables on the sand. (The cafe is open in warm weather only and opens in early May.) Take a dip in the lake with your family, then head up the beach for specialties such as the grilled salmon sandwich, Cobb salad, and salmon filet. Less exotic offerings such as salads, sandwiches, and pasta should please kids. For the grown-ups, beer and wine is available, and frozen drinks can be made sans alcohol for the kids. Outdoor seating provides some of the best people-watching around. Saturday and Sunday you'll find a breakfast buffet from 8 to 11:30am. Come at twilight and you'll be treated to a beautiful violet sky.

1001 N. Lake Shore Dr. (at Oak Street Beach). ☎ 312/915-4100. High chairs, boosters. Reservations accepted for parties of 6 or more only. Main courses \$15–\$25. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. May–Oct (weather permitting) Mon–Fri 11am–9:30pm; Sat–Sun 8am–9:30pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago. Bus: 145, 146, 147, or 151.

**Ron of Japan** JAPANESE The heyday of teppanyaki dining (you know, Japanese chefs chopping and grilling at your table, with the accompanying flashing knives and flying shrimp tails) passed decades ago, but the show is still a kid-pleaser. Specialties include shrimp with egg yolk sauce, filet mignon, prime rib served on a samurai sword, and Shogun dinner (lobster and steak). Grilled on an iron plate set into each table, the food is cut, seasoned, and served by chefs who dish up amazing flair as well as flavor. The restaurant has 14 such tables—larger ones accommodate up to 10 diners, the smaller ones, six or so. As knives and pepper shakers fly through the air, meats sizzle on the hot iron plate. Above each grill/table is a retractable hood that keeps smoke out of everyone's eyes.

### **Tips Dining Out in Peace**

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- **Set the ground rules.** Before entering a restaurant, remind kids that you are going to a special place and that a few key rules apply, such as inside voices and good manners.
- **Bring entertainment.** Crayons, markers, paper, stickers, etc. will give your children something to do while awaiting their food. If the kids are old enough, bring postcards for them to write.
- **Try word games.** “I Spy” is a good one. Another word game involves one person naming something in a category, such as food. The next person names a word in the same category that starts with the last letter of the previous word. (For example: orange, eggplant, tomato, onion...)
- **Remember the value of conversation.** Talk with your kids about what you did during the day or what you have planned for the next one. That will help pass the time and encourage restaurant-appropriate behavior.
- **Decide who’s “on duty.”** Decide ahead of time which adult will have to interrupt his or her meal, should a child act up. Take turns at each meal.
- **Use time-outs.** If your normally polite child acts up, immediately and quietly take him or her outside. This will avoid embarrassment, and will be a lesson to the child. You shouldn’t have to do this more than a few times before your child gets the message.
- **Make exceptions.** Your child may normally drink milk with dinner. Permit him or her to have a Shirley Temple (7Up and grenadine with a cherry). This will make dinner out seem special.
- **Use rewards and bribery.** Tell kids that if they behave well and eat their dinner, they’ll get a bowl of vanilla ice cream for dessert.
- **Be flexible.** If the kids are tired, skip the appetizers or order food that is quick to prepare. If they’ve reached their limit, have one parent take them outside to stretch their legs or hunt down a dessert spot while the other parent pays the bill.
- **Slow down.** Before dinner, take them back to the hotel for a nap to rest up or to a playground to let loose some pent-up energy.
- **Eat early.** If you plan to eat at a more elegant restaurant or if it’s the weekend, arrive early, before the restaurant gets full. (Plan a post-dinner walk or activity, such as strolling Navy Pier in summer or the John Hancock Center’s Christmas tree in winter.)
- **Do lunch.** Some of the city’s finer restaurants are open for lunch. Why not make lunch your special meal of the day? The ambience may be more kid friendly, the prices lower, and your children better behaved. Then you can all have pizza for dinner, and you won’t feel you’ve missed out.
- **Relax.** Chicagoans are very friendly, and most restaurants are delighted to have children dining with them.



230 E. Ontario St. ☎ 312/644-6500. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations accepted for parties of 8 or more only. Main courses \$15–\$25; kids' menu \$13–\$15. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 5–9:30pm; Fri 5–10:30pm; Sat 5–10pm; Sun 4:30–9pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago/State. Bus: 151 or 157.

## MODERATE

**Bistro 110** ★★ BISTRO/CONTINENTAL Bistro 110 enjoys a prime location just half a block west of North Michigan Avenue. A neighborhood crowd gathers here for the bistro's changing weekly specials, posted on a chalkboard, where you can also check out the weather forecast and other local news. This popular spot opened in 1987, putting it on the cutting edge of the bistro-style dining trend. The restaurant is much larger than an authentic bistro would be, with plenty of hustle and bustle that helps families fit right in.

The menu covers a broad price range and several bistro classics, such as escargots in puff pastry, mussels in white-wine sauce, French onion soup, cassoulet, and steak au poivre. More ambitious items include a spice-rubbed lamb (roasted and braised for 18 hr.), and wood-roasted Maine sea scallops over spinach and basmati rice. Chicago holds Bistro 110 dear for the roasted heads of garlic served with crusty bread and its wood-roasted meats and vegetables. (The wood-roasted items, including a delicious, savory half chicken and a bountiful roast vegetable plate, are among your best bets here—some of the other items can be inconsistent.) The kids' menu ranges from beef tenderloin to grilled cheese. Sunday brunch, complete with a jazz trio from New Orleans, is a good time to bring your kids. (Yes, the trio will visit your table and “serenade” you—rather loudly.) Brunch is extremely popular, so get there early to avoid a long wait.

110 E. Pearson St. (just west of Michigan Ave.). ☎ 312/266-3110. www.levyrestaurants.com. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Main courses \$13–\$28; kids' menu \$6–\$14. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Wed 11:30am–10pm; Thurs–Sat 11:30am–11pm; Sun 10am–10pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago/State.

**Cheesecake Factory** AMERICAN It really must take a factory to produce the 34 flavors of cheesecake offered here. While this restaurant is one of the usual “kid-friendly” suspects, a handy location on Michigan Avenue and the prospect of outdoor dining on the John Hancock Center Plaza makes this better than your average chain dining experience. The restaurant is big and noisy, and be prepared for your name to be added to a long list when you arrive. (You'll be given a pager for the wait.) The odd decor, with copper-colored metal sculpted into aerodynamic shapes that overhang the entryways, gives kids plenty to gawk at while you wait.

Even picky eaters will find something to order on the enormous menu. There's no kids' menu, but the regular menu features chicken strips and minicheeseburgers, among other tot treats. Baja chicken tacos, barbecued ranch chicken salad, and avocado egg rolls are a few of the items on the wide-ranging menu. And the cheesecake! Save room for white chocolate raspberry truffle, chocolate peanut butter cookie dough, or seasonally, pumpkin cheesecake. Why they also serve fudge cake, carrot cake, and ice cream sundaes, I'll never know—apparently some misguided diners don't opt for cheesecake!

875 N. Michigan Ave. (in the plaza of the John Hancock Center). ☎ 312/337-1101. High chairs, boosters. Main courses \$8.95–\$16. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–11pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–12:30am; Sun 10am–11:30pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago/State.

**Coco Pazzo Café** ★ NORTHERN ITALIAN Here's the perfect combination for families: food sophisticated enough for grown-ups, simple enough for kids. An added plus is a scenic sidewalk cafe for that rare perfect-weather day in

Chicago. The cafe is the more casual version of Coco Pazzo restaurant. The decor is colorful, with ceramic tile, wall murals, and a copper-topped bar. Cuisine is rustic Tuscan and northern Italian. The menu includes focaccia, thin-crust pizza, seafood, veal, chicken dishes, and pasta. For adults, specialties include fish *cartoccio* (fresh fish in parchment paper), gnocchi with tomato and basil, and tagliolini with wild mushrooms. Sunday brunch features a fixed-price menu that varies every week.

636 N. St. Clair St. ☎ 312/664-2777. High chairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses \$8–\$15. AE, DISC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–10:30pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–11pm; Sun 11:30am–10pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago. Bus: 3, 157, 151, 145, 146 or 147.

**ESPN Zone** AMERICAN Kids will love it, but grown-ups prone to indigestion might want to tread carefully. (Maybe you'll want to skip dining here and just hit the arcade?) The frenetic activity inside this temple of televised athletics will likely please your kids (and please you, too, if you have trouble keeping them entertained) but can be a bit overwhelming. Every wall is covered with television screens or sports art, with a full-on visual and audio assault on your senses. This massive 35,000-square-foot sports-themed dining-and-entertainment complex features three components: the Studio Grill, designed with replicas of studio sets from the cable networks' shows (including *SportsCenter*); the Screening Room, a sports pub featuring a 16-foot screen and an armada of TV monitors and radio sets carrying live broadcasts of games; and the Sports Arena, a gaming area with interactive and competitive attractions. Good news for adults: The food here is better-than-average tavern fare, including quite a few salads and upscale items such as a salmon filet baked on cedar and served with steamed rice and grilled vegetables.

43 E. Ohio St. (at Wabash Ave.). ☎ 312/644-3776. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Main courses \$7.25–\$20; kids' menu \$5–\$8. AE, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 11am–midnight; Fri–Sat 11am–1am. Subway/El: Red Line to Grand.

**Jack Melnick's Corner Tap** AMERICAN This casual neighborhood pub provides a comfortable, welcoming, and fun environment—a local hangout where folks can “come as they are.” Specialties include burgers done seven ways, chopped salads, and home-style specials such as barbecued ribs and chicken. A 50-foot old-fashioned bar is the epicenter of Jack's, featuring an extensive bottle and tap beer selection from around the world “from Old Style to Newcastle.” Patrons can catch just about any sporting event from baseball to hockey on the 16 screens featuring DirecTV, or play a game of darts. The dining room has always been one of my favorite spots on the Magnificent Mile, with a screened-in porch area that lets in the lake breeze in the summer, and a stone fireplace and deep booths that make for cozy dining in the wintertime. Desserts include apple pie, banana cream pie, and a chocolate-chip-cookie skillet sundae. On Sunday catch brunch from 11am to 3pm.

41 E. Superior St. (at Wabash Ave.). ☎ 312/266-0400. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations only accepted for parties of 10 or more. Main courses \$8–\$15; kids' menu \$4. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Wed 11:30am–midnight; Thurs–Sat 11:30am–2pm; Sun 11am–11pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago/State.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Big Bowl** ★ *Value* ASIAN You know you're in a kid-friendly Asian restaurant when you sit down and crayons and a bowl of white rice are brought to the table. Big Bowl also has a great kids' menu—no cheeseburgers, just smaller portions of the same Asian food the adults eat. Okay, so the restaurant is yet another creation of Rich Melman's Lettuce Entertain You empire. But it's friendly, affordable, and

the kind of place that's got dishes so addictive, I dare you to only go once during your visit. Start with a glass of the signature fresh ginger ale or a fresh-brewed fruit-flavored iced tea; either will wake up your taste buds. The menu covers a range of Asian specialties, including Chinese pot stickers, Thai curries, and Vietnamese spring rolls. The indecisive can go with one of several combinations, each offering a mix of soup, salad, appetizers, or noodles. The straightforward crunchy sesame chicken is a reliable standby, mixing crispy chicken pieces with fresh Asian vegetables in a light soy sauce. Other good bets are the teriyaki beef and spicy flat noodles with tofu and veggies. You can also put together your own mix of flavors at the large stir-fry bar. If you're looking for delivery, Big Bowl will rush pot stickers to your hotel, no problem. Big Bowl has another Chicago location, which recreates the same upscale diner decor, at 60 E. Ohio St., just off the Magnificent Mile and near kid-frequented spots such as ESPN Zone (☎ 312/951-1888).

6 E. Cedar St. (at Rush St.). ☎ 312/640-8888. www.bigbowl.com. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Main courses \$8–\$15; kids' menu \$5–\$8. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 11:30am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–11pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Clark/Division.

**Billy Goat Tavern** ★ *Value* BURGERS/BREAKFAST “Cheezeborger, Cheezeborger—No Coke . . . Pepsi.” Viewers of the original *Saturday Night Live* will certainly remember the classic John Belushi routine, a moment in the life of a crabby Greek short-order cook. The comic got his material from the Billy Goat Tavern, located under North Michigan Avenue near the bridge that crosses to the Loop (you'll find it by walking down the steps across the street from the Chicago Tribune building). Just BUTT IN ANYTIME says the sign on the red door with the picture of the billy goat on it. The tavern has traditionally been a hangout for the newspaper workers and writers who occupy the nearby Tribune Tower and Sun-Times Building, but its *Saturday Night Live* fame attracts droves of tourists, a la the *Cheers* bar in Boston. The tavern offers beer and greasy food (including, of course, “cheezeborgers”). Families will feel most at home during lunchtime, when tourists and office workers pop in for a quick burger.

430 N. Michigan Ave. ☎ 312/222-1525. Kids' menu. Reservations not accepted. Menu items \$4–\$8; kids' menu \$2–\$4. No credit cards. Mon–Fri 7am–2am; Sat 10am–2am; Sun 11am–2am. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago/State.

**California Pizza Kitchen** PIZZA Way, way back in the early 1990s, “CPK” was plying its new concept of exotic toppings made on individual-size pies. The concept is a bit stale, but kids still get a kick out of creating and swapping pieces of their individual pizzas. Names like tandoori chicken, Hawaiian, BLT, Peking duck, and grilled burrito might cause an “Ewwwww!” reaction from your kids, but you'll likely be safe with tamer options such as barbecued chicken. Traditional meat-and-cheese pizzas are also available, as are soups, salads, pasta dishes, and desserts. If all else fails, there's a children's menu with pepperoni pizza; Caesar salad topped with cheddar goldfish crackers; buttered noodles; and brownies. There are three additional Chicago locations, at 52 E. Ohio St. (☎ 312/787-6075), in the Shops at North Bridge, 520 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312/327-2300), and 939 W. North Ave. (☎ 312/337-1281).

835 N. Michigan Ave. (Water Tower Place, 7th floor). ☎ 312/787-7300. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Menu items \$7–\$10; kids' menu items \$5. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–10pm; Sun noon–9pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago/State.

**Charlie's Ale House on Navy Pier** ★ AMERICAN One of several outdoor dining options along Navy Pier, this outpost of the Lincoln Park restaurant wins for lip-smacking pub fare and a great location on the southern promenade overlooking

the lakefront and Loop skyline. It's a great vantage point for Wednesday- and Friday-night fireworks, too. The Navy Pier location is handy for sightseers; kids will like the burgers, meatloaf, and, maybe, the chicken potpie. The original location in Lincoln Park triumphs with a wonderful beer garden, which is welcoming to families. (The restaurant says everyone is welcome—except dogs!) It's spacious, surrounded by tall ivy-covered brick walls, and buzzing with activity and good vibes. The Lincoln Park restaurant is at 1224 W. Webster Ave. (☎ 773/871-1440); take the Red Line to Sheffield.

700 E. Grand Ave. ☎ 312/595-1440. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations accepted only for parties of 15 or more. Main courses \$11–\$17; kids' menu \$5. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11am–midnight; Sat–Sun 11am–1am. Subway/El: Red Line to Grand/State; transfer to Navy Pier's free trolley.

**Corner Bakery** BREAKFAST/SANDWICHES In case of emergency hunger meltdown, it's a good idea to locate the nearest Corner Bakery ahead of time. A very popular destination (and justifiably so), there are about 40 outlets in Chicago and its suburbs. It's easy to get addicted to the coffee and sweets here: In fact, when my former office mates and I counted up our visits each week, we decided to dub our local branch “Corner Bankruptcy.” Sandwiches, salads, fruit, and amazing baked-good desserts are highlights. (Try the lemon bars dusted with powdered sugar, or the peanut butter brownie, or the mini caramel Bundt cake—try anything!) The homemade chips sprinkled with Parmesan are impossible to resist. Grilled panini with turkey, bacon, and cheese, or homemade mac and cheese will appeal to kids. Some of the main locations include one in River North at 516 N. Clark St. (☎ 312/644-8100), attached to Melman's Maggiano's Italian restaurant; and a location east of Michigan Avenue at 676 N. St. Clair St., at Erie Street (☎ 312/266-2570).

1121 N. State St. (at Cedar St.) ☎ 312/787-1969. High chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Menu items \$7–\$10. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 7am–8:30pm; Fri–Sat 7am–9pm; Sun 7am–8pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Clark/Division.

**Flapjaw Café** BURGERS This down-home bar and grill is quite a find just off the Mag Mile: a low-key place serving burgers and grilled turkey sandwiches in baskets with fries. The bar-in-the-round with outlying tables and stools has a comfortable atmosphere. Although many young professionals come here for lunch and for a drink after work, it's a bustling, friendly place where kids are welcome. However, because tables are high—most seats are bar stool height—this restaurant is better suited for kids over age 3, who can comfortably sit in a booster. The menu is very simple and straightforward: California-style pizza, grilled sandwiches, salads, soups, and appetizers—all fairly cheap. Sit outside for a nice view of street life around the Loyola University campus.

22 E. Pearson St. ☎ 312/642-4848. High chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. All menu items under \$10. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11am–10pm; Sat 11am–6pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago/State.

**foodlife** ★★ *Finds* ECLECTIC Yes, another successful concept courtesy of Lettuce Entertain You's Rich Melman: a food court with a healthy twist. Located on the mezzanine of Water Tower Place, just outside the entrance of the Mity Nice Grill, foodlife consists of a dozen or so kiosks offering both ordinary and exotic specialties—a total of 700 different items. Four hundred seats are spread out cafe-style in a very pleasant environment under realistic boughs of artificial trees festooned with strings of lights in the shapes of grapes and other fruits.

The beauty of a food court, of course, is that it tries to offer something for everybody. At foodlife the burger-and-pizza crowd will be satisfied, but so will

vegetarians and diners looking for, say, a low-fat Caesar salad. Diners here can also choose south-of-the-border dishes, an assortment of Asian fare, and veggie-oriented, low-fat fare. Special treats include the Miracle Juice Bar's fresh orange juice and raspberry fruit smoothie, as well as a host of healthy or gooey desserts, and, at a booth called Sacred Grounds, various espresso-based beverages. A lunch or a snack at foodlife is basically inexpensive, but the payment method (each diner receives an electronic card that records each purchase for a total payment upon exit) makes it easy to build up a big tab while holding a personal taste-testing session at each kiosk.

In Water Tower Place, 835 N. Michigan Ave. ☎ 312/335-3663. High chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Most items \$5–\$10. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Breakfast kiosk daily 7:30–10:30am. All other kiosks Sun–Thurs 11am–8pm; Fri–Sat 11am–9pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago/State.

**Oak Tree** 🍌 AMERICAN/BREAKFAST Tucked away on the sixth floor of the 900 N. Michigan indoor mall (home of Bloomingdale's), Oak Tree isn't exactly high-profile. But it's one of my favorite places for a meal during a day of Magnificent Mile touring. The cafe decor is bright and cheery (with nature-inspired murals to help you momentarily forget that you're inside a mall). If you can, get a table along the windows that look down on Michigan Avenue. Oak Tree's draw is the enormous, varied menu. You'll find something for everyone in the family: a large salad selection, Asian noodles, sandwiches that range from meatball to duck breast, Mexican quesadillas, and even blue-plate specials such as turkey hash or a patty melt. The breakfast menu is just as extensive. Oak Tree can get quite crowded at prime time, with hefty waits, so try to time your visit accordingly.

900 N. Michigan Ave., 6th floor ☎ 312/751-1988. High chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Main courses \$7.95–\$12. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 7:30am–6:30pm; Sat–Sun 7:30am–5:30pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago/State.

### Indulging Your Interest in Baking

While it's not exactly "baking," **Eli's Cheesecake World** does enable dessert fanatics to see the process of baking a Chicago favorite. A visit to the 62,000-square-foot state-of-the-art bakery starts with a sneak peek at Eli's bakers busy at work, and ends with a slice of cheesecake. The bakery also offers a cafe and cheesecake bar, where over 30 different flavors are on sale by the slice each day. The cheesecake you'll see being made is served up at Eli's, the Place for Steak, 215 E. Chicago Ave., at Fairbanks Court (☎ 312/642-1393), a Chicago institution founded 50 years ago by the late Eli Schulman, who opened a neighborhood delicatessen serving central European comfort foods like potato pancakes and liver and onions.

Eli's Cheesecake World, located on the city's northwest side at 6701 W. Forest Preserve, at the corner of Montrose Avenue (☎ 773/736-3417), hosts tours Monday through Friday at noon (although reservations aren't necessary, call to make sure the bakery isn't closed for periodic maintenance). The 40-minute tour costs \$3 for adults, \$2 for children under 12, and special packages are available for groups of 10 or more. For more information, check out [www.elis cheesecake.com](http://www.elis cheesecake.com).

## 5 River North

Most families visiting Chicago will find themselves heading for dinner in River North at least once during their stay. The city's hot spot for family dining, River North offers an ever-growing, something-for-everyone array of restaurants—from fast food to theme and chain restaurants (plus some of the most fashionable dining destinations, so parents might want to hire a sitter one night and return for “date night”). Whether you seek a quick dog or burger, a casual French meal, or contemporary American fine dining, River North has it all.

### EXPENSIVE

**Brasserie Jo** 🍷 ALSATIAN/FRENCH Brasserie Jo, the casual dining destination from partnership Jean Joho (whose upscale Everest restaurant is one of the city's longtime gourmet destinations) and Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises, is a popular spot for convivial meals of robust fare in a Parisian, retro-chic setting. It's big and bustling enough to welcome kids, and once you explain that a croque-monsieur is really a toasted ham and cheese, your kids will find something wonderful on the menu. For the adults, following in the tradition of the classic Alsatian brasserie (meaning “brewery”), Brasserie Jo makes a malty house brew, and diners are welcome for a quick stop-in snack with a glass of wine or a full five-course meal.

You can order a hearty Alsatian *choucroute*, but the menu focuses more on casual French classics: Favorites include onion soup, mussels marinière, *salade niçoise*, croque-monsieur, and steak frites. One house specialty is the “famous shrimp bag,” a phyllo pastry filled with shrimp, mushrooms, and herb rice garnished with lobster sauce. Save room for the delightfully decadent crepes *magnifique*, which live up to their name with an amazing alchemy of thin crepes, bananas, and chocolate. Or bypass the dessert menu and indulge in the bountiful “cheese chariot.”

59 W. Hubbard St. (between Dearborn and Clark sts.). ☎ 312/595-0800. www.brasseriejo.com. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses \$12–\$26; kids' menu \$7–\$9. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 5:30–10pm; Sat 5–11pm; Sun 5–10pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Grand, or Brown Line to Merchandise Mart.

**Harry Caray's** 🍷🍷 AMERICAN/ITALIAN A shrine to the legendary Cubs play-by-play announcer, this landmark building near the Chicago River is a repository for the staggering collection of baseball memorabilia that Harry amassed, and it covers almost every square inch of the place. Even the bar is a nod to baseball: At 60 feet, 6 inches long, it's the distance from the pitcher's mound to home plate.

But you don't have to be a baseball lover to appreciate Harry's. The dining rooms have an old-Chicago feel that is comfortable and familiar, with high tin ceilings, exposed brick walls, and red-checked tablecloths. It would be easy to lump Harry's with other celebrity restaurants, but as one reviewer pointed out, the food is better than it has to be. The portions are enormous; unless you want leftovers for days, plan to share. Main-course offerings run from traditional items such as pastas with red sauce to chicken Vesuvio, veal, and a variety of seafood choices. Harry's is also a good place to order big plates of meat: dry-aged steaks, lamb, veal, and pork chops. And from the list of side dishes, be sure to order the signature Vesuvio potatoes. The desserts are rich and decadent.

33 W. Kinzie St. (at Dearborn St.). ☎ 312/828-0966. www.harrycarays.com. Kids' menu, high chairs. Main courses \$11–\$33; kids' menu around \$7. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–2:30pm; Mon–Thurs 5–10:30pm; Fri–Sat 5–11pm; Sun noon–4pm (lunch bar only) and 4–10pm. Subway/El: Brown Line to Merchandise Mart, or Red Line to Grand.

**MODERATE**

**Carson's** 🍴 AMERICAN/BARBECUE A true Chicago institution, Carson's calls itself "The Place for Ribs," and, boy, is it ever. The barbecue sauce is sweet and tangy, and the ribs are meaty. Included in the \$20 price for a full slab of ribs are coleslaw and one of four types of potatoes (the most decadent are au gratin), plus right-out-of-the-oven rolls.

For dinner there's often a wait, but don't despair. In the bar area you'll find a heaping mound of some of the best chopped liver around and plenty of cocktail rye to go with it. (Kids who turn up their noses at chopped liver should start with a kiddie cocktail instead.) When you're seated at your table, tie on your plastic bib—and indulge. In case you don't eat ribs, Carson's also barbecues chicken, salmon, and pork chops, and the restaurant's steaks aren't bad either. But ribs are the house specialty, so make sure that at least someone in your group orders them. (The waitstaff will be shocked if you don't.) If by some remarkable feat you have room left after dinner, the candy-bar sundaes are a scrumptious finale to the meal. Carson's popularity has led to something of a factory mentality among management, which evidently feels the need to herd 'em in and out, but the servers are responsive to requests not to be hurried through the meal.

612 N. Wells St. (at Ontario St.). ☎ 312/280-9200. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations accepted only for groups of 6 or more. Main courses \$8.95–\$30; kids' menu \$6–\$14. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–11pm; Fri 11am–12:30am; Sat noon–12:30am; Sun noon–11pm. Closed Thanksgiving. Subway/El: Red Line to Grand.

**Houston's** AMERICAN/STEAKHOUSE Here's a casual steakhouse that's always packed with families. Located next to the Lenox Hotel and Suites, Houston's is cavernous and dark, filled with deep booths lit by overhead fixtures that barely illuminate the tables. The place has a dark-wood-and-brass, 1980s feel to it. (Fittingly so, since it opened here in 1987—today there are 40 Houston's nationwide.) Houston's attracts a mix of tourists, conventioners, and locals. It's a comfy space, and the booths have the advantage of giving everyone a feeling of privacy. Toasted cheese bread will be a hit with kids, and they'll make chicken fingers and hamburgers to keep the kids happy. For adults, the restaurant offers an extensive list of more than 40 wines collected mostly from California. At dinnertime there's live piano music in the bar.

616 N. Rush St. ☎ 312/649-1121. High chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Main courses \$15–\$25. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–10pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Grand. Bus: 145, 146, 147, 151.

**Leona's** ITALIAN/PIZZA This Chicago-based home-style Italian food chain has a vast menu, good pizza, and budget-friendly prices. With 16 locations and still family-owned and -operated after 52 years, Leona's is a real Chicago restaurant success story. All food is fresh and made from scratch. The River North location features a large, open dining room. Be prepared for huge portions and unusually warm and hospitable service in a very family-friendly setting. The menu (actually, it reads more like a book) runs the gamut and includes ribs, chicken wings, steak sandwiches, burgers, pasta, pizza (deep dish or thin crust), and salads. If that's not enough, Leona's also has a children's menu featuring spaghetti marinara, chicken strips (fried, grilled, or barbecued), 6-inch pizzas, lasagna, fettuccine Alfredo, and more.

646 N. Franklin St. ☎ 312/867-0101. Kids' menu. Main courses \$9–\$25; kids' menu \$5–\$8. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–11pm; Fri 11:30am–midnight; Sat noon–midnight; Sun noon–10pm. Subway/El: Brown Line to Merchandise Mart; Red Line to Grand. Bus: 65 or 22.



**Maggiano's** 🌟 ITALIAN A great pick for large groups, Maggiano's is a shrine to family-style Italian dining. Like many of its fellow Lettuce Entertain You restaurants, Maggiano's feels a bit contrived, with traditional Italian red-checked tablecloths and old family portraits (which family, we'll never know), designed to create the feel of Little Italy throughout the nine separate dining rooms. Still, heaping plates of pasta meant to be shared make Maggiano's a good choice for a large and budget-conscious family. In fact, everything on the menu is supersize. Steaks are all more than a pound, and most pasta dishes weigh in over 25 ounces. You're expected to share dishes, pass things around, and try a little bit of everything. The menu is vast and features Italian pasta classics such as chicken and spinach manicotti, eggplant Parmesan, and meat or marinara lasagna, plus chicken, veal, steaks (try the Prime New York Steak al Forno Gorgonzola, a strip steak served with caramelized onions and melted Gorgonzola cheese), chops, and seafood. There's no kids' menu, but the kitchen will accommodate with smaller portions. Downstairs, there's a banquet room that accommodates parties of 20 to 200. On holidays Maggiano's has live music.

516 N. Clark St. ☎ 312/644-7700. High chairs, boosters. Main courses \$11–\$33. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–11pm; Sun noon–10pm. Subway/El: Brown Line to Merchandise Mart; Red Line to Grand. Bus: 65 or 22.

**Reza's** 🌟🌟 *Value* MIDDLE EASTERN Whether your kids are already avid eaters of Middle Eastern food or you want to start exposing them to it, Reza's is a good option. With high ceilings and exposed brick, this warm and family-friendly restaurant is housed in a former microbrewery. Specialties include a deliciously rich chicken in pomegranate sauce, and kids might go for one of a variety of kabobs. Despite the menu's meat-heavy emphasis, there's a full selection of vegetarian options, too. The appetizer combo is a nice option for families; it includes hummus, stuffed grape leaves, tabbouleh, and other standbys nicely presented in a red lacquer bento box. Reza's has another location in Andersonville, at 5255 N. Clark St. (☎ 773/561-1898), but the River North spot is the most convenient for visitors staying downtown.

432 W. Ontario St. (at Orleans St.). ☎ 312/664-4500. High chairs, boosters. Main courses \$9.95–\$17. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Daily 11am–midnight. Subway/El: Red Line to Grand.

**Scoozi** 🌟 REGIONAL ITALIAN Families should plan to visit Scoozi on Sunday evening, when the restaurant gives kids “make your own pizza” time from 4 to 5pm. Chefs show kids how to make a pizza, then pop them in the wood-burning oven. Kids dine on their culinary masterworks, and you get a nice stretch of “adult time” at the table while your little chefs are at work.

Scoozi's sprawling loft space has been its home since 1986, the year it opened and began serving up authentic Italian cooking—a real pioneering effort at the time, complete with focaccia in its breadbaskets. Scoozi's menu is no longer unique, but Chicagoans return for its reliable lineup of Italian flavors. Appetizers include an antipasti bar (favorites are orzo with shrimp and wood-roasted mushrooms); deep-fried calamari with basil, aioli, and arrabbiata sauce (a spicy tomato sauce); or small pizzas, such as one smothered with garlic spinach, oven-roasted tomatoes, and goat cheese. Main courses include *petto di pollo* (grilled chicken breast with baby artichokes, red potatoes, and warm coriander-seed vinaigrette); ravioli baked in a wood oven (smoked chicken, Taleggio cheese with smoked bacon, or artichoke); and *gnocchi con salsa rossa* (homemade potato dumplings in a tomato-basil cream). For dessert, head directly for the tiramisu.



410 W. Huron St. (at Orleans St.). ☎ 312/943-5900. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Pasta \$7.50–\$11 lunch and dinner; main courses \$8.95–\$15 lunch, \$9.95–\$25 dinner; kids' menu \$3.25. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 5:30–9pm; Fri 5:30–10pm; Sat 5–10pm; Sun 5–9pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Cafe Iberico** ★★ SPANISH/TAPAS Families should arrive early to ensure getting a table at this wildly popular tapas joint with a festive atmosphere. I'd recommend this place for older kids and teens with adventurous palates. (Get them to try *pulpo a la gallega*—the best fried octopus around!) Cafe Iberico gets very loud, especially on weekends, and on weekdays, crowds begin pouring in at the end of the workday, so if you arrive around dinnertime, expect a wait. Put a dent in your appetite with a plate of *queso de cabra* (baked goat cheese with fresh tomato-basil sauce). When your waiter returns with the first dish, put in a second order for a round of both hot and cold tapas. Then continue to order as your hunger demands. The waiters are pleasant yet can get a little harried, so it sometimes takes some effort to flag them down. A few standout dishes are the vegetarian Spanish omelet, *patatas bravas* (spicy potatoes with tomato sauce), *pincho de pollo* (chicken brochette with caramelized onions and rice), and *pulpo y la plancha* (grilled octopus with potatoes and olive oil). There are a handful of entrees on the menu, and a few desserts in case you're still not sated.

739 N. LaSalle St. (between Chicago Ave. and Superior St.). ☎ 312/573-1510. High chairs. Reservations accepted during the week for parties of 6 or more only. Tapas \$2–\$7; main courses \$7.95–\$13. DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–11pm; Fri 11am–1:30am; Sat noon–1:30am; Sun noon–11pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago/State, or Brown Line to Chicago.

**Dave & Buster's** AMERICAN Good old-fashioned fun of the coin-operated variety means that you may have to tear your kids away from the games to get them to sit down for dinner. At the Chicago outpost of the Dallas-based mega entertainment and dining chain, you can combine casual dining and an evening's entertainment. (Don't send teens by themselves: Kids must be accompanied by an adult 25 years old or older.) The menu is expansive and features bar food, including pasta, burgers, steak, and ribs. Before you sit down to eat, let your kids burn off energy by getting lost in this neon-lit games emporium. You'll find 1950s-era carnival games, Vegas-style casino games, video games, and virtual reality tests. The main attraction is the glitzy Million Dollar Midway on the second level. Do your kids dream of being an Alpine ski racer or driving the Grand Prix? Video games on the Midway let them simulate the experience. Grown-ups might try a computerized version of blackjack or swing away at the indoor golf simulator, a "virtual" golf driving range that uses laser beams to calculate the ball's flight.

1024 N. Clark St. ☎ 312/943-5151. Kids' menu. Main courses \$9–\$20; kids' menu \$3–\$8. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–1am; Fri–Sat 11:30am–2am; Sun 11:30am–midnight. Subway/El: Red Line to Clark/Division. Bus: 22, 70, or 36.

**Ed Debevic's** ★ BURGERS/DINER "Eat at Ed's" is the call to action at this temple to America's hometown lunch-counter culture. Wherever you sit, in an upholstered banquette or booth or the lunch counter stools, you'll be surrounded by 1950s nostalgia. Tunes such as "Duke of Earl" and other vintage oldies fill the air. Food specialties include pot roast, fountain drinks—and meatloaf. Ed Debevic's calls itself the place "where meatloaf is king." There's no kids' menu, but with the entire menu based on burgers and fries, who needs one? The

1950s-costumed waitstaff cracks gum at you and dishes out rude comments along with the food. And when the jukebox strikes up a song, don't be surprised if your waiter leaps onto the counter (or onto your table, if that's where he happens to be), to dance along. It's all a performance, but it works. One nice bonus is a good view of River North and the skyscrapers of the Loop to the south.

640 N. Wells St. ☎ 312/664-1707. High chairs, boosters. Reservations accepted only for parties of 15 or more. All main courses under \$10. AE, DC, DISC, V. Hours: Mon–Thurs 11am–9pm, Fri 11am–11pm, Sat 9am–11pm, Sun 9am–9pm. Subway/El: Brown Line to Franklin.

**Gino's East** 🌟🌟 PIZZA This famous Chicago pizzeria invites patrons to scrawl all over the graffiti-strewn booths. Waiting in the frigid cold (or sweltering heat) to get into Gino's at its former location just west of the Magnificent Mile used to be a Chicago tourist rite of passage. Now that the restaurant has moved into the vast space formerly occupied by Planet Hollywood, there are no more lines out front.

Many Chicagoans consider Gino's the quintessential deep-dish Chicago-style pizza. True to its reputation, the pizza is heavy (a small cheese pizza is enough for two), so work up an appetite before chowing down here. Specialty pizzas include the supreme, with layers of cheese, sausage, onions, green pepper, and mushrooms; and the vegetarian, with cheese, onions, peppers, asparagus, summer squash, zucchini, and eggplant. Gino's also offers salads, sandwiches, and pastas, but I've never seen anyone order them. If you want to take a pizza home on the plane, call a day in advance and Gino's will pack a special frozen pie for the trip.

633 N. Wells St. (at Ontario St.). ☎ 312/943-1124. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Pizza \$8.25–\$17; kids' menu around \$5. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–9pm; Fri–Sat 11am–midnight; Sun noon–9pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Chicago/State.

**Green Door Tavern** BURGERS The Green Door is a neighborhood refuge and a well-needed respite from the many trendy restaurants in River North. At lunch you'll find the advertising and graphic-design types who work in the neighborhood chowing on burgers in the unpretentious atmosphere. The restaurant's wood-frame building was put up temporarily after the 1871 fire, presumably just before the city ordinance that banned such construction inside the newly designated "fire zone." The place began as a grocery store with living quarters on the second floor, and evolved into a restaurant in 1921. Later a speakeasy was established in a downstairs room no longer open to the public. Apparently the original framing crew went light on the bracing timbers in a few places because the whole building leans to the right. About a decade ago a newly constructed building across from the Green Door was consumed with fire and burned to the ground. Firefighters sprayed the Green Door, earning undying gratitude and an annual honorarium called the Golden Helmet Awards from the management.

There's no kids' menu, but regular menu items should please, including the hickory burger, the triple-decker grilled cheese, and the Texas chili. There are even a veggie burger and a turkey burger, and the menu includes some Cajun fare and pasta. Specials, including the Wednesday meatloaf offering, are posted daily.

678 N. Orleans St. (at Huron St.). ☎ 312/664-5496. High chairs, boosters. Reservations accepted only for parties of 7 or more. Main courses \$6.95–\$12. MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2am; Sat 11:30am–3am; Sun noon–9pm. Subway/El: Brown Line to Chicago.

**Hard Rock Cafe** AMERICAN Not just an eatery, Hard Rock Cafe is also one of Chicago's main tourist attractions. (Don't expect to find many locals or members of the over-30 age group here.) A regular rock 'n' roll museum, you could easily

## *Finds* Soulful Brunch

Head to **House of Blues**, 329 N. Dearborn St., at Kinzie Street (☎ 312/923-2000), for its popular Sunday gospel brunch featuring live performances from church groups from throughout the Midwest. To guarantee seating, it's a good idea to reserve 2 weeks in advance. Seatings begin at 9:30am and noon.

spend hours here pouring over the hundreds of drumsticks, concert photos, gold records, or autographed guitars of your favorite artists, including the likes of Mick Fleetwood and George Harrison. (The most popular pieces are a guitar autographed by the members of Nirvana and a motor scooter used in the 1979 movie *Quadrophenia*, which was based on The Who's album.) The food is pretty standard fare, with fajitas and burgers as specialties, plus a children's menu. But who comes here for the food? The round building has a circular bar decorated in a sports motif, with some nice touches: autographed bats by Ryne Sandberg, Mark Grace, Shawn Dunston, and Frank Thomas, among other ballplayers. Interesting restaurant fact: The original Hard Rock Cafe was founded June 14, 1971, in London by Isaac Tigrett and Peter Morton, the son of Chicago restaurateur Arnold Morton of Morton's steakhouse fame. The Chicago location was opened 12 years later.

63 W. Ontario St. ☎ 312/943-2252. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Main courses \$8-\$15; kids' menu \$7. AE, DISC, V. Mon-Thurs 11am-11pm; Fri 11:30am-11:30pm; Sat 11am-midnight; Sun 11am-10pm. Subway/El: Red Line to State/Grand.

**Mr. Beef** ★ *Finds* AMERICAN Mr. Beef doesn't have much atmosphere or seating room, but it's a much-loved Chicago institution. Squeeze in alongside the lunchtime regulars and enjoy the atmosphere (or lack thereof). Families with small children will be happier getting their sandwiches to go, as lack of space means Mr. Beef is not a high chair-friendly place. Its claim to fame is the classic Italian beef sandwich, the Chicago version of a Philly cheese steak. The Mr. Beef variety is made of sliced beef dipped in jus, piled high on a chewy bun, and topped with sweet or hot peppers. Heavy, filling, and *very* Chicago. Mr. Beef really hops during lunchtime, when dusty construction workers and suit-wearing businessmen crowd in for their meaty fix. While you're chowing down, check out the celebrity photos and newspaper clippings covering the walls and you'll see why this place is considered a local monument.

666 N. Orleans St. (at Erie St.). ☎ 312/337-8500. Reservations not accepted. Sandwiches \$5.95-\$8.50. No credit cards. Mon-Fri 8am-5pm; Sat 10:30am-2pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Grand.

**Pizzeria Uno** ★ *Value* PIZZA In 1943 Pizzeria Uno invented Chicago-style pizza, and many deep-dish aficionados still refuse to accept any imitations. Uno is now a nationwide chain, but this location is the original. You may eat in the restaurant itself on the basement level or, weather permitting, on the outdoor patio right off the sidewalk. Salads, sandwiches, and a house minestrone are also available, but, hey, the only reason to come here is for the pizza. (And in fact, 90% of the menu is dedicated to deep-dish pizza.)

Uno was so successful that the owners opened **Pizzeria Due** in 1955 in a lovely gray-brick Victorian town house nearby at 619 N. Wabash Ave., at Ontario Street (☎ 312/943-2400). The menu is identical at both restaurants, although the space at Pizzeria Due is much larger. **Be forewarned:** This pizzeria serves no pizza before its time. Pizza takes a minimum of 45 minutes to prepare.

29 E. Ohio St. (at Wabash Ave.). ☎ 312/321-1000. High chairs. No reservations accepted Fri–Sat. Pizza \$7–\$18. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–1am; Sat 11:30am–2am; Sun 11:30am–11pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Grand.

**Rainforest Cafe** AMERICAN This Minnesota-based chain bills itself as “a wild place to shop and eat.” The restaurant strives to create the feel of a rainforest with the sounds of waterfalls, thunder and lightning, and wild animals echoing throughout the place. Check out the floor-to-ceiling aquarium tanks, and duck to avoid the swinging orangutans. The Mexican and Caribbean-inspired menu features salads, sandwiches, and a range of entrees that will please a family of picky eaters. The “chicken-fried chicken” is a bestseller, as is the “mojo bones” rib appetizer. The kids’ menu features standard burgers, hot dogs, and mac and cheese. The restaurant also sponsors educational programs designed to bring awareness of the planet’s dwindling rainforests.

605 N. Clark St. (at Ohio St.). ☎ 312/787-1501. www.rainforestcafe.com. Kids’ menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses \$9–\$11; kids’ menu \$6–\$8. AE, DC, DISC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–9:30pm; Fri 11am–10:30pm; Sat 11am–11pm; Sun 11am–9pm. Subway/El: Red Line to State/Grand.

**Twisted Spoke** ★ *Finds* DINER Don’t be scared off by the Easy Rider skeleton slowly rotating on a motorcycle atop a tall pole outside the Twisted Spoke: They feed everybody at this laid-back, off-the-beaten-path cafe that caters to the biker crowd but welcomes suburbanites and button-down business folk as well. Co-owners and brothers Cliff and Mitch Einhorn started the Spoke as a “family biker bar” in 1995. The place is filled with antique bike parts and accessories. The food is hearty and well prepared, from the cheese quesadillas to more than a dozen sandwiches, including curry chicken salad, twisted tuna salad, and barbecued chicken. But the Twisted Spoke’s mouthwatering burgers are what draw most people here. The “Biker Brunch” features fare that swings wildly from “Real Oats for Real Men” to fruit salad to steak and eggs. It’s served Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 3pm. Specials include meatloaf on Monday night, pasta on Wednesday, and fish fry on Friday. Enjoy the view from the great rooftop patio, but clear out while the night is still young, before the bar crowd heads up for bargain-priced beers. The patio overlooks the blue-collar corner of Ogden and Grand avenues and offers a unique cityscape view with the Sears Tower in the distance.

501 N. Ogden Ave. (at Grand Ave.). ☎ 312/666-1500. High chairs, boosters. Reservations recommended for large parties. Main courses \$5.25–\$8.50. AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri 8am–2am; Sat 11am–3am; Sun 11am–2am. Bus: 65.

### *Tips* **Rocking & Rolling at the Golden Arches**

The reality of traveling with kids means the occasional fast-food meal can be a real lifesaver. In McDonald’s hometown (corporate headquarters is located in west suburban Oak Brook) I would be remiss in not mentioning the second-busiest franchise in the world. Only McDonald’s in Moscow claims to be more trafficked than Chicago’s **Rock ‘n’ Roll McDonald’s**, located at 600 N. Clark St., at Ohio St. (☎ 312/664-7940). Along with Big Macs, shakes, and fries, you’ll find a storehouse of memorabilia and other 1950s and 1960s tchotchkes, including a restored Corvette parked in the dining room and a collection of Beatles mementos. McDonald’s has big plans for renovating and expanding this outlet, so call ahead to make sure it’s still rocking and rolling while you’re in town.

## 6 Lincoln Park

Singles and upwardly mobile young families inhabit Lincoln Park, the neighborhood roughly defined by North Avenue on the south, Diversey Parkway on the north, the park on the east, and Clybourn Avenue on the west. No surprise, then, that the neighborhood has spawned a dense concentration of some of the city's best restaurants.

### EXPENSIVE

**Geja's Café** ★ FONDUE Are your kids over age 10? Can they sit through a 2-hour meal? If so, they will love Geja's (pronounced *Gay-haz*), an all-fondue restaurant. For some diners, the dark rathskeller decor will be a welcome change from the slick, commercial trattorias and bistros common all over the city. The restaurant has single-handedly preserved the fondue experience in Chicago, providing a fun and welcome break from the ordinary mode of dining.

Choose the Prince Geja's combination dinner, the best Geja's has to offer. The meal begins with a Gruyère fondue appetizer, into which you dip apple wedges and chunks of dark bread. Next, a huge platter arrives, brimming with squares of beef tenderloin, lobster tails, chicken breast, scallops, and jumbo shrimp—all raw—and a caldron of boiling oil to cook them in—the reason why only kids 10 and up are allowed! These delicacies are accompanied by a variety of raw vegetables, and eight different dipping sauces. When the flaming chocolate fondue arrives for dessert, with fresh fruit and pound cake for dipping and marshmallows for roasting, you'll want to beg for mercy. **One word of caution:** You have to work for your fondue—keeping track of how long each piece of meat has been cooking, and taking it out before it burns—so Geja's is not the best choice if you just want to sit back and be pampered.

340 W. Armitage Ave. (between Lincoln Ave. and Clark St.). ☎ 773/281-9101. Reservations accepted every day except late Fri–Sat. 3-course dinners \$20–\$39. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 5–10:30pm; Fri 5pm–midnight; Sat 5pm–12:30am; Sun 4:30–10pm. Subway/El: Brown Line to Armitage. Bus: 22.

**O'Brien's Restaurant** AMERICAN From the looks of the interior, you'd expect O'Brien's to be a rather ordinary restaurant with that standard "Irish pub" feel—dark wood, brass, and hunter green feature prominently. But outdoors, you'll make an amazing discovery: the best alfresco dining in Old Town. And that's saying something, as you'll find multiple options up and down Wells Street. In good weather the chance to kick back outdoors with your kids can make for a much less stressful dinner—who cares if a few fries wind up on the patio bricks? The birds will thank you for it. The outdoor patio has teakwood furniture, a gazebo bar in the center, and a mural of the owners' country club on a brick wall. Order the dressed-up chips, a house specialty. Rib-eye steak, Dover sole, and whitefish are specialties. The bar has a nice assortment of microbrews. Every night from 7pm until midnight, O'Brien's features piano music.

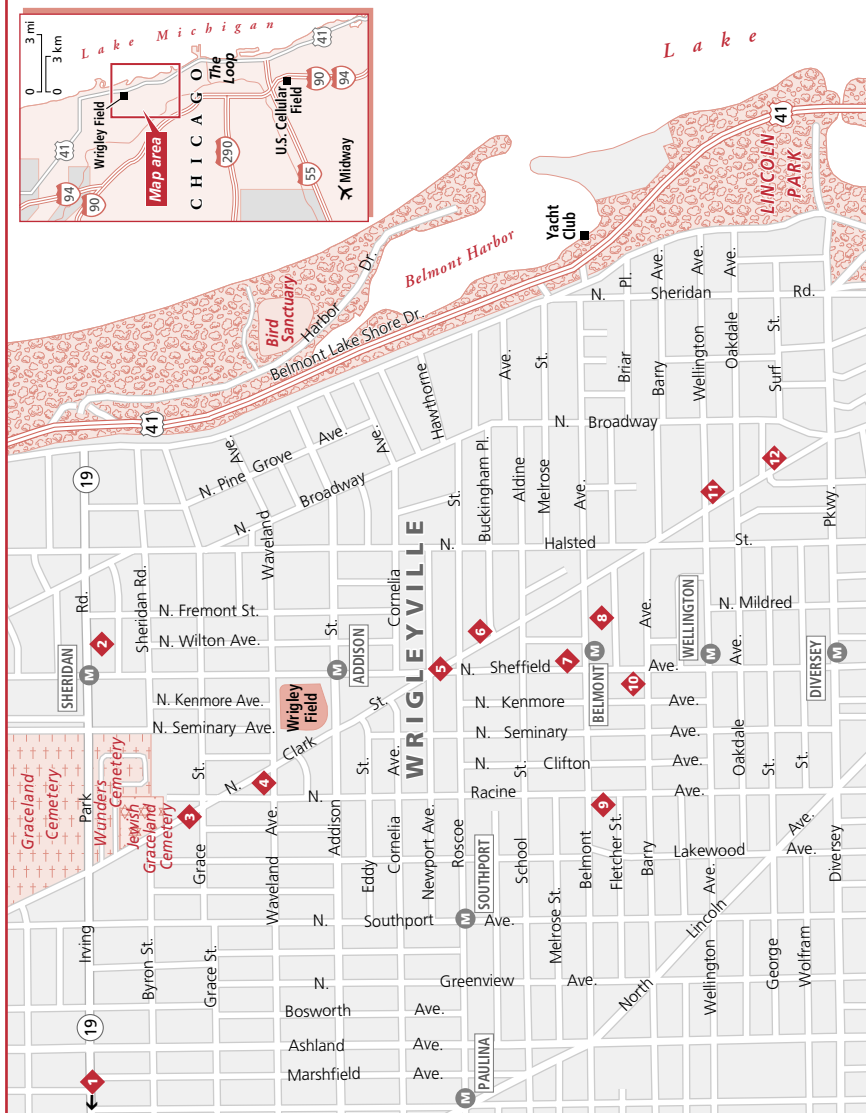
1528 N. Wells St. (2 blocks south of North Ave.). ☎ 312/787-3131. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses \$15–\$25; kids' menu \$5–\$8. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Daily 11am–2am. Subway/El: Brown Line to Sedgwick.

### MODERATE

**Goose Island Brewing Company** AMERICAN Some of the best beer in Chicago is manufactured at this comfy, award-winning microbrewery in the Clybourn corridor. (An impressive cast of professional beer critics agrees.) In the course of a year, Goose Island produces about 100 varieties of lagers, ales, stouts, pilsners, and porters that change with the seasons. But why include a beer-oriented

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joint in a book for kids? Because the food at the Goose is almost as good as the beer on tap, and a separate, casual dining area attracts plenty of families, especially on the weekends.

The cut-above bar food includes burgers (including a killer, dragon-breath-inducing Stilton burger with roasted garlic), sandwiches (pulled pork, catfish po' boy, chicken Caesar), and some serious salads. Goose Island is also known for its addictive homemade potato chips, fresh-brewed root beer, and orange cream soda. The zero-attitude, come-as-you-are ambience is very refreshing for a lazy afternoon pit stop or a casual lunch or dinner. A second location, at 3535 N. Clark St. in Wrigleyville (☎ 773/832-9040), has an enclosed beer garden that welcomes kids.

1800 N. Clybourn Ave. (at Sheffield Ave.) ☎ 312/915-0071. www.gooseisland.com. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations recommended on weekends. Sandwiches \$7.50–\$9.95; main courses \$11–\$17; kids' menu items under \$5. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–1am; Sat 11am–2am; Sun 11am–1am; main dining room closes at 10pm daily. Subway/El: Red Line to North/Clybourn.

**Kabuki** JAPANESE Parents appreciate the laid-back atmosphere at this no-frills sushi restaurant located just off of the busy intersection of Clark and Fullerton. The clientele is mostly Lincoln Park's young professionals, but the atmosphere is welcoming to all. The menu runs the gamut of Japanese foods—sushi, sashimi, tempura, teriyaki, and noodles—in an intimate, 55-seat dining room. Bonsai trees, brush paintings, and window screens decorate a dining room that is dominated by two highly trained sushi chefs from behind their 10-seat sushi bar. Those who want to sample sushi and try a little bit of everything should go for the 11-piece Kabuki combination. Timid beginners may also find a six-piece, cooked sushi platter a low-risk entree into the world of raw fish. For an appetizer, Kabuki recommends the *goma-ae*, a boiled spinach appetizer served cold in a sesame-and-peanut-butter sauce, although your kids might also get a kick out of peeling and eating a pile of salty *edamame* (soybeans cooked in the pod). When Kabuki overflows, you can head to Kabuki II, just a few doors down at 2473 N. Clark. In Wrigleyville visit Kabuki III at 3647 N. Southport (☎ 773/281-9155).

2407 N. Clark. ☎ 773/281-3131. High chairs, boosters. Reservations recommended. Main courses \$8–\$15. AE, MC, V. Sun–Tues 4:30pm–midnight; Fri–Sat 4:30pm–1pm. Closed Wed. Bus: 22 to Clark or 36 to Broadway.

**Sai Café** ★ JAPANESE Here's another good spot to start exposing your kids to the wonders of Japanese cuisine. Despite some upscale sushi bars surfacing in high-profile restaurant districts in the past few years, Lincoln Park's modest Sai Café remains the choice for Lincoln Park residents more interested in food than funky decor. More than 30 varieties of sushi are lovingly prepared and served with élan in this neighborhood setting just off chic Armitage Avenue. And of course, white rice, chicken teriyaki, and shrimp and vegetable tempura are always on the menu, should raw fish prove too daring for your kids. A la carte selections come by the piece or maki-mono style, which pairs anything from tuna and avocado to flying-fish eggs and scallions, and then wraps it all up in rice and a thin sheet of dried seaweed. Combo plates feature different meat, fish, and vegetables that can be dressed in tempura or teriyaki, or served sashimi style. Sai Café also offers a large selection of noodle and rice dishes.

2010 N. Sheffield Ave. (at Armitage Ave.) ☎ 773/472-8080. High chairs, boosters. Main courses \$16–\$24 (a la carte sushi \$3.75–\$6.95 per piece). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 4:30–11pm; Fri–Sat 4:30pm–midnight; Sun 3:30–10pm. Subway: Brown Line to Armitage.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Bourgeois Pig** ★ *finds* BREAKFAST/SANDWICHES Eclectic antiques fill this brownstone that's become a mecca for DePaul University students and



neighborhood families. Bookshelves are packed with literature, and the atmosphere is cluttered and comfy. The menu makes it clear that the Bourgeois Pig caters to an intellectual crowd: “The Sun Also Rises,” “Pilgrim’s Progress,” and “The Old Man and the Sea” are among the menu’s 25 gourmet sandwiches. Kids will enjoy the “build your own sandwich” menu, and staff will accommodate kids’ tastes with less-than-gourmet fare such as American cheese. Baked goods, including ginger molasses cookies, are homemade. The Pig always ranks high in surveys for best cup of coffee in Chicago, so don’t miss one of the four varieties brewed daily, or one of a mind-bending array of espresso drinks. Juices, shakes, and root beer made here are also great bets. You’ll feel comfortable bringing kids in, as there are often a couple sets of parents with strollers parked inside. Treat the kids to an ice cream for dessert.

738 W. Fullerton Pkwy. (at Burling). ☎ 773/883-5282. High chairs, boosters. Main courses under \$10. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 6:30am–11pm; Fri 6:30am–midnight; Sat 8am–midnight; Sun 8am–11pm. Subway/El: Red or Brown Line to Fullerton. Bus: 8, 11, or 74.

**Café Brauer** 🍷 AMERICAN A postcard-perfect view of the skyscrapers on North Michigan Avenue, plus Lake Michigan and the greenery of Lincoln Park make this a step above the average microbrewery. Stop here for lunch during a tour of the park, and grab a sandwich, kabob, or flatbread. (Brats and shrimp kabobs are among my favorites.) This pond-side café is conveniently near the Lincoln Park Zoo and reopened its doors to the public in 1990 after a major restoration. The beer garden, full of flowers and greenery, is perfectly family-friendly.

2021 Stockton Dr. ☎ 312/742-2480. High chairs, boosters. Main courses under \$8. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–8pm, Sun noon–8pm; winter hours for restaurant, 11–5 daily; beer garden Thurs–Sun 11–7. Bus: 151 or 156.

**El Jardin** MEXICAN The staff at this sometimes raucous and always fun restaurant loves to cater to kids. Because it’s just 3 blocks south of Wrigley Field (that’s where the “raucous” comes in), don’t show up after a game unless you’re prepared for a long wait. At other times you’ll be able to walk right in and grab a table in one of the two main dining rooms, the sidewalk café, or the backyard garden. The solid Mexican fare should keep both kids and grown-ups happy. Kids might try tacos, enchiladas, burritos, grilled chicken, or carne asada. Little ones can try *sopa de fideo*, a simple noodle soup. Should you have a special occasion to celebrate, the staff will happily trot out a flan decorated with candles. Don’t confuse this location with El Jardin Fiesta Cantina Bar, a bar/dance club located a few doors north on Clark Street. On Sunday, try the Fiesta Buffet, served from 11am to 3pm. The buffet includes about 20 items, including soups and egg, beef, chicken, and pork dishes for \$9.95.

3335 N. Clark St. ☎ 773/528-6775. High chairs, boosters. Main courses \$8–\$15. AE, DC, DISC, V. Sun–Thurs 11:30am–11pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–midnight. Subway/El: Red, Brown or Purple Line to Belmont.

**Flat Top Grill** ASIAN This create-your-own-stir-fry restaurant often has lines, but never fear, they move quickly. Kids love creating their own dishes, and if you’ve never been here before, you might want to follow the suggested recipes on the giant blackboards. Choose from over 80 fresh ingredients including rice, noodles, seafood, chicken, beef, veggies, and sauces—all for one low price. Best yet, the price includes multiple visits to the food line (a lifesaver if your brilliant culinary combination has gone awry). Other locations are at 1000 W. Washington Blvd. (☎ 312/829-4800) in the Randolph Street Market District, and at 3200 N. Southport Ave. (☎ 773/665-8100) in Wrigleyville.

319 W. North Ave. ☎ 312/787-7676. www.flattopgrill.com. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Main courses lunch around \$9, dinner around \$12; kids' stir-fry (under age 11) \$5. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 11am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11am–11pm. Bus: 76.

**John Barleycorn** AMERICAN/BURGERS Want to get a feel of what it's like to live in a Chicago neighborhood? Stop in to John Barleycorn, which has been a popular neighborhood pub and restaurant since the 1960s. There's a heavy emphasis on food here, so you won't feel like you're taking your kids to a bar. Located in a 19th-century building, the restaurant has that well-worn feel that makes you feel immediately at home. You won't find any pretensions here: Relax with a cold drink and a thick, juicy burger in the outdoor patio. The pub has a storied history, and reputedly served John Dillinger frequently when operating as a speakeasy in the 1920s. A collection of handmade ship models or a quick game of darts should entertain your kids while you're waiting for your food.

658 W. Belden Ave. ☎ 773/348-8899. High chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. All main courses under \$8. AE, DISC, V. Mon–Fri 3pm–2am; Sat 9am–3am; Sun 9am–2am. Subway/El: Red Line to Fullerton.

**John's Place** ★★ AMERICAN This neighborhood favorite combines uncomplicated food with an inviting setting of exposed brick walls and hardwood floors. Families make up a fair share of the crowd at lunch, through the afternoon to early dinner. Although the place wasn't designed to attract kids, it's a natural for the sophisticated 30-something parents who populate the neighborhood and first came to John's while dating. The menu emphasizes vegetarian meals, organic foods, and salads. Some of the highlights of the menu are seafood enchiladas, barbecued-glazed pork tenderloin, and of course, the burgers. The wild line-caught Alaskan salmon, which comes seared as a sandwich at lunchtime, is a knockout. On the weekend, health-conscious eaters will enjoy the free-range Amish chicken eggs served during brunch, and kids are sure to go for pumpkin pancakes and French toast. On a busy afternoon, all 25 of the restaurant's high chairs are put to use.

1200 W. Webster Ave. ☎ 773/525-6670. High chairs, boosters. Kids' menu. Reservations not accepted. All main courses under \$8. AE, DISC, V. Tues–Thurs 11am–10pm; Fri 11am–11pm; Sat 8am–11pm; Sun 8am–9pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Fullerton.

**La Creperie** ★★ *Finds* FRENCH Germain and Sara Roignant have run this intimate gem of a café since 1972, never straying from the reasonably priced crepes that draw repeat customers aplenty. (Hey, a crepe is just a pancake rolled up, right kids?) The decor is heavy on '70s era brown, but if you find the main dining room more dark than cozy, head to the back patio (enclosed in winter), which sparkles with strings of white lights. Onion soup, pâté, and escargots are all good starters, but the highlights here are the whole-wheat crepes—each prepared on a special grill that Germain imported from his native Brittany. Single-choice fillings include cheese, tomato, egg, or ham; tasty duets feature chicken and mushroom or broccoli and cheese. Beef bourguignon, coq au vin, or curried chicken are the more adventurous crepe combinations. Noncrepe offerings are few: orange roughly and steak frites. Don't leave without at least sharing one of the dessert crepes, which tuck anything from apples to ice cream within their warm folds. La Creperie is an especially great option if you're taking in a show at one of the nearby off-Loop theaters, such as Briar Street, where the popular Blue Man Group is in residence.

2845 N. Clark St. (½ block north of Diversey Pkwy.) ☎ 773/528-9050. High chairs, boosters. Reservations accepted for groups of 6 or more only. Main courses \$5.50–\$15. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Tues–Fri 11:30am–3:30pm and 5–11pm; Sat 11am–11pm; Sun 11am–9:30pm. Subway/El: Brown Line to Diversey.

**Nookies** DINER This “chain” of three restaurants is a Chicago favorite for standard breakfast fare. On weekends you’ll find Nookies packed with families and young professionals grabbing pancakes or an omelet after a late night out. This family-owned chain offers breakfast all day, plus soups, salads, and sandwiches. Tables and a lunch counter are available. Nookies has additional branches in Lincoln Park at 2114 N. Halsted St. (☎ 773/327-1400), and in Lakeview at 3334 N. Halsted St. (☎ 773/248-9888).

1748 N. Wells St. ☎ 312/337-2454. High chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. All main courses under \$8. Cash only. Mon–Sat 6:30am–10pm; Sun 6:30am–9pm. Subway/El: Brown Line to Sedgwick.

**Stanley’s** ★★ AMERICAN Here’s another great neighborhood bar and restaurant that stands in the heart of Lincoln Park, normally the epicenter of the young and the restless, but instead caters to families. Stanley’s front room is a bar with several booths, tall tables with old chrome and leather bar stools, satellite- and cable-fed TVs, and a jukebox. The adjacent dining room is an abrupt leap into the family den, decorated with photos, quilts, bowling trophies, and children’s drawings. This popular family spot has a special kids’ menu with corn dogs and PB&J. On Saturday and Sunday there’s an all-you-can-eat brunch buffet, featuring make-your-own omelets, build-your-own Belgian waffles, home-fried potatoes, fried chicken, and mashed potatoes for \$11. Daily specials are posted on the chalkboard out front.

1970 N. Lincoln Ave. ☎ 312/642-0007. Kids’ menu, high chairs, boosters. Main courses \$8–\$15; kids’ menu \$4. Mon–Tues 5pm–2am; Wed–Fri 11:30am–2am; Sat 11am–3am; Sun 11am–2am. Bus: 11 or 73 to Armitage.

**Toast** ★ AMERICAN/BREAKFAST Located in Lincoln Park, Toast is homey yet slightly funky—note the shelf of vintage toasters. Kids are welcome here: The crayons and butcher-block table coverings will keep them busy, and the staff has a reputation for being baby and kid crazy. Breakfast is served all day and includes a twist on the usual diner fare. Pancakes come in all sorts of tempting varieties, from lemon/poppy seed drizzled with honey to the “pancake orgy” of a strawberry, mango, and banana-pecan pancake topped with granola, yogurt, and honey. (Try it: It tastes even better than it looks!). The house specialty is French toast stuffed with mascarpone cheese and strawberry purée. If pancakes equal dessert for you, try one of the omelets or the breakfast burrito. On the side, you can order grilled chicken sausage, apple-wood smoked bacon, or, of course, a stack of toast. Fresh-squeezed orange juice and grapefruit juice are also available. The lunch menu includes a range of creative sandwiches, salads, and wraps. Toast has a second location in at 2046 N. Damen Ave. (☎ 773/772-5600).

746 W. Webster St. (at Halsted St.). ☎ 773/935-5600. High chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Breakfast \$5–\$10. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Tues–Fri 7am–4pm; Sat–Sun 8am–4pm. Subway/El: Red Line to Fullerton.

**Twin Anchors** ★ BARBECUE Come early (around 5pm—later on, there’s more of a bar scene) and experience this Old Town landmark; a fixture since the end of Prohibition, Twin Anchors manages to maintain the flavor of old Chicago. Actually, it also has a flavor of a supper club in northern Wisconsin, which is perhaps why so many transplanted small-town Midwesterners feel comfortable here. It’s a friendly, family-owned pub with Frank Sinatra on the jukebox and on the walls. (He apparently hung out here on swings through town in the 1960s.) This totally unpretentious place has a long mahogany bar up front and a modest dining room in back with red Formica-topped tables crowded close. Of course, you don’t need anything fancy when the ribs—the fall-off-the-bone variety—come

this good. Even non-meat eaters may be swayed if they allow themselves one bite of the enormous slabs of tender baby back pork ribs. (Go for the zesty sauce.) Hamburgers will keep kids happy. Ribs and other entrees come with coleslaw and dark rye bread, plus your choice of baked potato, tasty fries, and the even-better crisp onion rings. For dessert, there's a daily cheesecake selection.

1655 N. Sedgwick St. (1 block north of North Ave.). ☎ 312/266-1616. www.twinanchorsribs.com. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Main courses \$9.95–\$20; sandwiches \$6.75–\$8.75; kids' menu around \$5. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 5–11pm; Fri 5pm–midnight; Sat noon–midnight; Sun noon–10:30pm. Subway/El: Brown Line to Sedgwick.

## 7 Wrigleyville & the North Side

Families visiting the area surrounding Wrigley Field will probably be in the neighborhood for that very reason—Wrigley Field. The area, however, has a long history of being a neighborhood of working-class families. Lately, it's gentrified as developers have built new town houses and apartments, and with that affluence has come a group of new, very popular restaurants spanning a range of culinary offerings and price ranges. Throughout the North Side you'll find a wealth of ethnic restaurants that allow diners to embark on further gastronomic globetrotting.

### MODERATE

**Buca di Beppo** ITALIAN Always fantasized about being part of a wacky, extended Italian family? You'll feel you've found your home at this Italian-American restaurant (part of a national chain). The restaurant serves humongous family-style dishes in a catacomb-like setting of six cozy rooms. (The decor is eclectic, covered with garage-sale-type mementos gathered by the owners in Italy.) The restaurant is a loud, high-energy place with large groups of diners. Request the "Pope Room," which features pontiff memorabilia and one special throne-like chair at its round table that has room for a pope and his 13 bishops. Portions are huge—one order of chicken cacciatore serves up to five people, pizzas are measured in feet, not inches, and meatballs weigh a half-pound each. Even the smaller portions of pasta serve up to three people.

2941 N. Clark St. ☎ 773/348-7673. High chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted, but you can call ahead to put your name on the list before you arrive at the restaurant. Main courses \$7.95–\$21. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 5–10pm; Fri 4–11pm; Sat 2–11pm; Sun noon–10pm. Subway/El: Brown Line to Wellington. Bus: 8.

### INEXPENSIVE

**Ann Sather** ★★ SWEDISH/AMERICAN/BREAKFAST A sign hanging by Ann Sather's door bears the following inscription: ONCE ONE OF MANY NEIGHBORHOOD SWEDISH RESTAURANTS, ANN SATHER'S IS THE ONLY ONE THAT REMAINS. Ann Sather is a real Chicago institution, where you can enjoy Swedish meatballs with buttered noodles and brown gravy, or the Swedish sampler of duck breast with lingonberry glaze, meatball, potato-sausage dumpling, sauerkraut, and brown beans. All meals are full dinners, including appetizer, main course, vegetable, potato, and dessert. It's the sticky cinnamon rolls served at breakfast, though, that make addicts out of diners. Weekend brunch here can get frenzied, so get here before 11am, but the people-watching is priceless: a cross-section of gay and straight, young and old.

There are several other branches that serve only breakfast and lunch: a restaurant in Wicker Park, at 1448 N. Milwaukee Ave. (☎ 773/394-1812), and smaller cafes in Lakeview at 3411 N. Broadway (☎ 773/305-0024) and 3416 N. Southport Ave. (☎ 773/404-4475).

929 W. Belmont Ave. (between Clark St. and Sheffield Ave.). ☎ 773/348-2378. High chairs, boosters. Reservations accepted for parties of 6 or more only. Main courses \$7–\$12. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 7am–9pm. Free parking with validation. Subway/El: Red Line to Belmont.

**O'Donovan's** *(Finds)* AMERICAN This century-old neighborhood restaurant and jovial pub was sold by the Schulien family in 1999, but thankfully the new owners have kept up the tradition that has thrilled kids for decades: Magicians perform tableside tricks on Saturday evenings. (To avoid the bar-oriented rush, come early, at 5 or 6pm.) Although there's no kids' menu, ordering appetizers for the kids works just as well. For adults, burgers are the thing, although options also include steaks, chops, and seafood. As the night progresses, O'Donovan's draws a good mix of late-20-something blue- and white-collar patrons with a healthy selection of microbrews. On Sunday the expansive buffet features all-you-can-eat scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, carved ham, roast beef, waffles, and omelets made to order and biscuits and gravy; it costs \$7.95.

2100 W. Irving Park Rd. ☎ 773/478-2100. High chairs. Reservations not accepted. Main courses \$6–\$16. AE, MC, V. Tues–Thurs 4–10pm; Fri–Sat 4–11pm; Sun 10am–3pm. Subway/El: Brown Line to Irving Park. Bus: 11 or 80.

**Penny's Noodle Shop** ★ *(Value)* ASIAN/NOODLES Predating many of Chicago's Pan-Asian noodle shops, Penny's has kept its loyal following even as others have joined the fray. Penny Chiarnopoulous, a Thai native, has assembled a concise menu of delectable dishes, all of them fresh and made to order—and at prices that will make you do a double-take. The two dining rooms are clean and spare. The Thai spring roll, filled with seasoned tofu, cucumber, bean sprouts, and strips of cooked egg, makes a refreshing starter. Of course, noodles unite everything on the menu, so your main decision is choosing among noodles (crispy wide rice, rice vermicelli, Japanese udon, and so on) in a heaping bowl of soup or spread out on a plate. There are several barbecued pork and beef entrees, and plenty of options for vegetarians. The original Penny's, tucked under the El tracks at 3400 N. Sheffield Ave., near Wrigley Field (☎ 773/281-8222), is small and often has long waits; you stand a better chance of scoring a table at the Diversey Avenue location (address below) or the one in Wicker Park, at 1542 N. Damen Ave. (☎ 773/394-0100).

950 W. Diversey Ave. (at Sheffield St.). ☎ 773/281-8448. High chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Main courses \$4.50–\$7.95. MC, V. Sun–Thurs 11am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11am–10:30pm. Subway/El: Brown Line to Diversey.

**Uncommon Ground** ★ *(Finds)* BREAKFAST/SANDWICHES A living-room atmosphere created by a wood-burning stove and artwork on the walls that rotates frequently (and is always available for purchase), Uncommon Ground is home to local artists, musicians, and writers. (Five nights a week, you can check out a performance in the back room by a local trying to make the big time—highly recommended for families with teens.) Thankfully for families, the atmosphere is 100% smoke-free. Its menu is heartier and more extensive than most Chicago coffeehouses. Indulge in steaming bowls of latte and hot chocolate and some of the yummy baked goods or choose from the menu, which is heavy on breakfast foods like nutty oatmeal with bananas; the “uncommon” breakfast burrito, a croissant with ham, egg, and cheese; and granola piled with fresh fruit and yogurt. One can't-miss choice is the apple-pecan whole-wheat pancakes with cranberry-honey butter. Lunchtime means sandwiches, hummus platter, and offerings of wine and beer. Pick a prime spot on the window seats,

piled with cozy cushions. Teens will get a kick out of the Midwest's alternative press on hand here, from the *Reader* to the *Onion*, for your reading pleasure.

1214 W. Grace St. (at Clark St.). ☎ 773/929-3680. Kids' menu, high chairs, boosters. Main courses \$3–\$10; kids' menu \$2–\$5. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 9am–11pm; Fri–Sat 9am–midnight. Subway/El: Red Line to Addison. Bus: 22.

## 8 Wicker Park/Bucktown

The booming Wicker Park/Bucktown area followed closely in the race to gentrification on the heels of Lincoln Park and Wrigleyville. First came the artists, photographers, and musicians, followed by armies of yuppies and young families, originally following the cheap rents and real estate, and later chasing the cachet that became attached to the neighborhood. Happily, what's now one of the city's hippest restaurant scenes includes a number of fun options for families. Get yourself to the nexus of activity at the intersection of North, Damen, and Milwaukee avenues, and you won't have to walk more than a couple of blocks in any direction to find a hot spot. (*Note to parents of teens:* The house featured on MTV's *Real World Chicago* is just south of this intersection, on North Ave., the north side of the street.) Cab fare is within reason from downtown, or you can take the El's Blue Line to Damen.

### INEXPENSIVE

**Northside Café** ★ *Value* AMERICAN/BURGERS I highly recommend this spot for high-quality cheap eats. Northside cooks up great burgers, sandwiches, and salads, all for under \$10. This is strictly neighborhood dining, without attitude and little in the way of decor. The back dining room looks like a rec room circa 1973, complete with a fireplace, pinball machines, and a pool table. In nice weather Northside opens up its large patio for dining, and a sky-lit cover keeps it in use during the winter. You're sure to be entertained people-watching, as Northside attracts all sorts. During the week it's more of a neighborhood hangout, but on the weekends a touristy crowd from Lincoln Park and the suburbs moves in.

1635 N. Damen Ave. (at North and Milwaukee aves.). ☎ 773/384-3555. High chairs, boosters. Reservations not accepted. Menu items \$5.95–\$11. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Fri 11:30am–2am; Sat 11am–3am. Subway/El: Blue Line to Damen.

**Silver Cloud Bar & Grill** ★ DINER How can kids not feel at home here? Silver Cloud is one of few Chicago restaurants I know that has tater tots on the menu (and naturally, every time I eat here, I work my entire meal selection around this “side”). This Bucktown restaurant's motto is FOOD LIKE MOM WOULD MAKE IF SHE WAS GETTING PAID. Although the food isn't extraordinary, it should please kids. The grilled cheese is made with mozzarella, Monterey Jack, and cheddar on Italian bread and served with a bowl of Campbell's tomato soup. Other favorites are chicken potpie, pot roast, and even sloppy joes. Retro desserts include s'mores and root beer floats. Roomy red leather booths are a hit with families. In good weather sit outside (the seating area is on the side street, so you avoid the noise of Damen Ave.). A sign at the bar asks WHY NOT ENJOY A NICE, RIPE CIGAR?—but never fear, families, there's no lighting up until after 10pm. This place is not a tourist hot spot, so enjoy the people-watching—most customers are neighborhood folks. You might try the Sunday brunch, which is especially popular.

1700 N. Damen Ave. (at Wabansia St.). ☎ 773/489-6212. www.silvercloudchicago.com. High chairs, boosters. Reservations accepted. Main courses \$6.50–\$10 lunch, \$6.50–\$13 dinner. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–11pm; Fri 11:30am–midnight; Sat–Sun 10am–midnight. Subway/El: Blue Line to Damen.

## Dining in Wicker Park/Bucktown



### 9 Only in Chicago

Pizza-loving and hot dog-inhaling kids have it made in Chicago: We've turned them from fast food into art forms. Of course, Chicagoans have their own take on these all-American staples, so to have an authentic taste of Chicago, shun the thin-crust pizza and ketchup as condiment of choice for hot dogs. Try them our way, and I guarantee you'll understand why Chicagoans are passionate about their dogs and pizza.

### PIZZA

To the uninitiated: Chicago-style pizza, also known as deep-dish, is thick-crust and often demands a knife and fork. The thin-crust variety favored in New York is also widely available; a third type, called stuffed, is similar to a pie, with a crust on both top and bottom. Many pizzerias serve both thick and thin, and some make all three kinds. Three of Chicago's best gourmet deep-dish restaurants are **Pizzeria Uno** (p. 129), **Pizzeria Due** (p. 129), and **Gino's East** (p. 128).

In River North **Lou Malnati's Pizzeria** 🍷, at 439 N. Wells St. (☎ 312/828-9800), bakes both deep-dish and thin-crust pizza and even has a low-fat cheese option. **EdwarDO's** is a local pizza chain that serves all three varieties, but with a wheat crust and all-natural ingredients. (Try the tasty spinach pizza, the specialty here.) It has several Chicago locations, including one in the Gold Coast, at 1212 N. Dearborn St., at Division Street (☎ 312/337-4490); one in



Printers Row in the South Loop, at 521 S. Dearborn St. (☎ 312/939-3366); and one in Lincoln Park, at 2662 N. Halsted St. (☎ 773/871-3400). Very near to the Lincoln Park Zoo is **Ranalli's Pizzeria, Libations & Collectibles**, 1925 N. Lincoln Ave. (☎ 312/642-4700), with its terrific open-air patio.

In Wrigleyville, just off Belmont Avenue, are **Leona's Pizzeria**, 3215 N. Sheffield Ave. (☎ 773/327-8861), and **Pat's Pizzeria**, 3114 N. Sheffield Ave. (☎ 773/248-0168), both of which serve all three kinds of pizza. Leona's also has a location in Little Italy, at 1419 W. Taylor St. (☎ 312/850-2222), and Pat's has one downtown in the Athletic Club Illinois Center, at 211 N. Stetson Ave. (☎ 312/946-0220).

For a unique take on the deep-dish phenomenon, try the “pizza potpie” at **Chicago Pizza & Oven Grinder**, 2121 N. Clark St., steps from Lincoln Park Zoo (☎ 773/248-2570); the pizzas are baked in a bowl and then turned over when served, for a distinctive upside-down pizza experience.

## HOT DOGS

Chicagoans like to think that they stand head and skewers above the rest of the world when it comes to hot dogs. The facades of Chicago's hot-dog stands, as if by some unwritten convention, are all very colorful, with bright signs of red and yellow, exaggerated lettering, and comic illustrations of the wieners and fries. The classic Chicago hot dog includes a frankfurter by Vienna Beef (a local food processor and hallowed institution), heaps of chopped onions and relish so green it could be pop art, a slather of yellow mustard, pickle spears and fresh tomato wedges, a dash of celery salt, and, for good measure, two or three “sport” peppers, those thumb-shaped holy terrors that turn your mouth into its own bonfire.

Chicago is home to many standout hot-dog stands and shops, such as **Gold Coast Dogs**, 418 N. State St., at Hubbard Street (☎ 312/527-1222), 2 blocks off North Michigan Avenue. **Fluky's**, in The Shops at North Bridge mall at 520 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312/245-0702), is part of a local chain that has been serving great hot dogs since the Great Depression. **Portillo's**, at 100 W. Ontario St. (☎ 312/587-8910; www.portillos.com), is another local chain that specializes in hot dogs but also serves excellent pastas and salads. **Murphy's Red Hots**, 1211 W. Belmont Ave. (☎ 773/935-2882), is a neighborhood spot not too far from Wrigley Field. Besides hot dogs, Murphy's serves charbroiled Polish sausages, burgers, and tasty hand-cut fries. **The Wieners Circle**, in Lincoln Park at 2622 N. Clark St. (☎ 773/477-7444), is a favorite where rude order-takers are part of the shtick.

But if you ask the locals for their sentimental favorite, we'll most likely steer you to the legendary **Superdawg Drive-In**, 6363 N. Milwaukee (☎ 773/763-0660), at the intersection of Milwaukee, Devon, and Nagle avenues. It's impossible to miss: Mr. and Mrs. Superdawg, in Tarzan and Jane tableaux, beckon the masses from the rooftop, their beady eyes pulsing an electric red. Maurie and Florrie Berman haven't changed a thing about their place—the city's last real drive-in, with its Order-Matic ordering system and female carhops on roller skates—since they opened for business in 1948. Their main attraction still arrives in a red 1950s-design enclosed box that declares on one side, YOUR SUPERDAWG LOUNGES INSIDE, CONTENTEDLY CUSHIONED IN SUPERFRIES.