



February 4, 2009

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SATISFY LATE-NIGHT CRAVINGS AT PIZZERIA-VIA-STATO

February's Pizza-of-the-Month,

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DISH



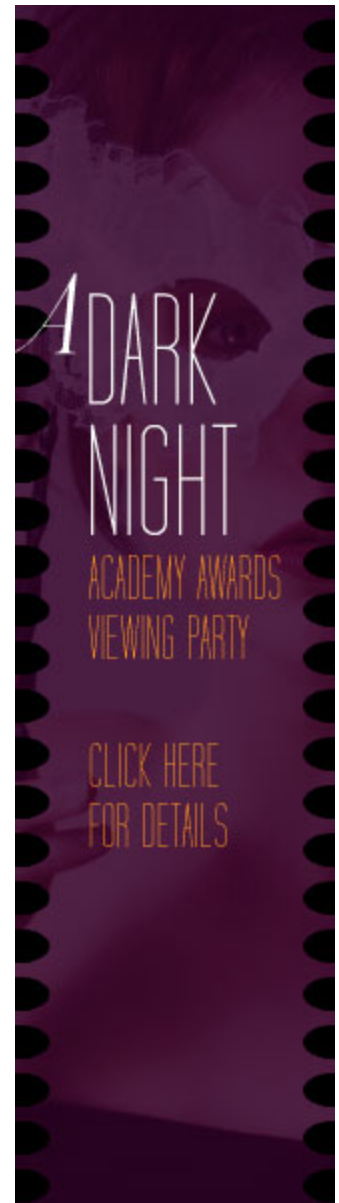
News, Tips, and Inside Information from the Dining Editors of *Chicago* magazine

BY PENNY POLLACK & JEFF RUBY

Turning the Other Chic

Fred's at Barneys, an American brasserie on the ninth floor of New York's famed retailer, plans to open a Chicago version at **15 East Oak Street**, inside the new Gold Coast outpost of Barneys in April. To put a local stamp on the restaurant, every employee will be from Chicago, save one: managing director **Mark Strausman**, the longtime chef of NYC's Fred at Barneys. Strausman's new passion is pizza and breadmaking—"I'm really into yeast right now," he says—and for his Chicago menu he promises plenty of artisan pizzas from a deck oven. "It's not about the oven; it's about the dough," he says. "The pizza has no idea what kind of oven it's in. As long as you can get to 650 degrees, you're OK." The restaurant, on the sixth floor of the building, will have "obstructed views" of Lake Michigan, but Strausman vows it will be beautiful: "In Chicago, nobody would dare to build an ugly building," he says. "In New York, nobody cares."

Quotable



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"Epitaph for a dead writer: God finally caught his eye." –**George S. Kaufman** (1889-1961), American playwright

Taxim Driver

"Most Greek or Mediterranean restaurants serve what people are looking for when they go out for that kind of food," says **David Schneider**, GM/partner/kitchen visionary of **Taxim (1558 N. Milwaukee Ave.; 773-252-1558)**, Bucktown's upcoming 85-seat Greek/Asia Minor spot. "I am going to try to introduce a new array of flavors that are somewhat unfamiliar. My own creations." OK, we'll bite: Like what? Like duck gyros with a pomegranate glaze, garlic mousse, and homemade pita bread. Or braised fava beans with coriander, lamb confit, and a homemade organic Greek-style yogurt. "And I'm making something called satz bread," says Schneider, a veteran of Green Zebra. "It's a thin flat bread from Pontus, a region in Asia Minor, made on a domed iron griddle, basically tossed in the air until it's paper thin and you can see through it." When the place opens—in mid- to late-February—it will be with a mezze/small plate menu, with larger dishes to follow in May.



A Conversation with Terry Gilmer

Gilmer's contemporary American bistro, **Café 36 (22 Calendar Ct., La Grange; 708-354-5722)**, was recently featured on Fox's "Kitchen Nightmares," wherein chef/host **Gordon Ramsay** ripped the 90-seat restaurant—excoriating its slow chef and mocking its outdated décor—to good effect.

D: How were you chosen for the show?

TG: Our sous-chef saw that they were looking for a restaurant in the Chicago area and sent in an e-mail. The producers contacted us, and we didn't want any part of it. They kept contacting us saying that they would really like us to do the show. They had about 1,000 applications from the Chicago area.

D: Why did they want Café 36 so badly?

TG: My wife and I had put everything into the restaurant. It was a different story than they had done in the past. After three months, we decided it would be a great opportunity. Why not listen to a three-star Michelin chef?

D: Then what?

TG: They filmed for a week in February 2008. Gordon was here about four of those days. When you get past the drama for the TV, he is a very good man. We learned a great deal about how to manage the back of the house more profitably.

D: What problems were identified?

TG: Getting the food out in a timely manner. He showed us how to streamline the menu for

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quicker, cleaner presentations. A lot of our recipes were very time consuming. Our new chef is **Jorge Flores**, and we have hired almost a completely new staff. [Note: The décor got a makeover, too.]

D: Any memorable moments with Ramsay?

TG: We did a nice promo at the Brookfield Zoo, made our crab cakes and gave them away. And he had us go to the police station and shoot our old china to get rid of the past. That didn't make it onto the show. And he came to our house and talked to us in great detail. He believes in independent operators.

D: Did the show affect business?

TG: Ever since it aired, we are very busy. We've had people call us from all over the country and Canada to wish us well. We've had people stay in downtown Chicago for business, and drive out to the restaurant.

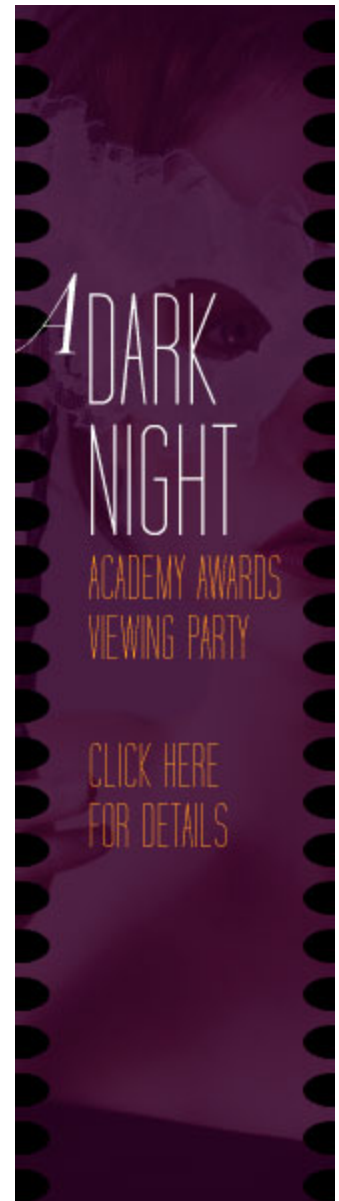
Quick Bite

Caldo? Is **Tocco (1266 N. Milwaukee Ave.; 773-687-8895)** caldo? Pollack felt lucky to score two seats at the communal table one cold dreary weeknight—without reservations. The room exudes cutting-edge cool with its hard surfaces, out-of-control noise level, and red-white-silver-black décor. The food is fun but not always a home run. Grilled radicchio was pleasantly smoky but way salty; gnocco fritto isn't gnocchi at all. Once she got past that, Pollack liked the puffy fried dough paired with Italian salamis, especially the paper-thin prosciutto. In the end, pasta (decadent spaghetti carbonara) and pesce (delicate pan-roasted sturgeon), made the noise, the mediocre bread, and the slow bar service all worthwhile.

Take it from Him

Phillip Foss, the executive chef of **Lockwood (Palmer House Hilton, 17 E. Monroe St.; 312-917-3404)** recently returned from a trip to Israel, and he says that the most authentic falafel in Chicago is at **Old Jerusalem (1411 N. Wells St.; 312-944-0459)**. "The airiness of the falafel is key," says Foss, who was a chef at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem from 2004 to 2006. "But even the worst falafel I've had in Israel is better than anything I've had here. . . . Then again, in fine dining, Israel is where America was in the eighties." For more on Foss's Israeli adventures, check out his [blog](#).

7 Good Prix Fixe Deals



1. **Anteprima (5316 N. Clark St.; 773-506-9990)**: three courses, \$29, every Sunday through Thursday.
2. **Duchamp (2118 N. Damen Ave.; 773-235-6434)**: three courses, \$25, every Tuesday.
3. **Le Colonial (937 N. Rush St.; 312-255-0088)**: dinner for two (one appetizer, two entrées, one dessert), \$20 each, every Wednesday.
4. **MK (868 N. Franklin St.; 312-482-9179)**: three courses, three wines, \$25, every Wednesday night in the lounge. No reservations necessary.
5. **Naha (500 N. Clark St.; 312-321-6242)**: three courses, \$21, all next week. It has something to do with Abe Lincoln's 200th birthday, or something.
6. **¡Salpicón! (1252 N. Wells St.; 312-988-7811)**: three courses, \$29, every Monday and Tuesday.
7. **Vie (4471 Lawn Ave., Western Springs; 708-246-2082)**: soup/salad plus entrée, \$20, plus kids' menu (under 12, pay their age), every Sunday, 3 to 7 p.m.

Dot Dot Dot . . .

An offshoot of **Perry's Deli (174 N. Franklin St.; 312-372-7557)**, the popular Loop lunch spot known for its hulking sandwiches, has opened in University Village at **719 West Maxwell Street**. . . . Throughout February, **The Berghoff (17 W. Adams St.; 312-427-3170)** will give you a \$1 corned beef sandwich if you buy a drink at the bar between 3 and 5 p.m., Monday through Thursday. . . The Loop location of **Pastoral (53 E. Lake St.; 312-658-1250)** hosts a free wine tasting at 6:30 p.m. February 7th. . . . On February 9th, **Baja Sol**, a Minneapolis-based "tortilla grill" chain with a bottomless chips-and-salsa bar, opens its first of several promised Chicagoland outlets. This one is in south suburban Oak Lawn (**5273 W. 95th St.; 708-576-8560**). . . . **Chutney Joe's (511 S. State St.; 312-341-9755)**, a fast-casual Indian spot in the South Loop, opened on February 4th. Can't vouch for the food yet, but we love the name.

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