

[THE RESTAURANT ISSUE 2010]



Watch the action on Lincoln Avenue from LM's unabashedly orange dining room.

◆ RUNNER-UP, THE HOTTEST HIDDEN GEM

THE VERDICT: LE MAGNIFIQUE

Good Lincoln Square restaurants have always been a secret closely guarded by Lincoln Squarers. But we'll let you in: The cheery orange dining room of new French spot **LM** (the initials don't actually stand for *le magnifique*; they stem from the first names of the owners' son and daughter) is worth a trek north. Gracious service swings four-star hotel, and the food often does too: Golden-crusted veal sweetbreads match even those of the Elysian's Jason McLeod. Not everything's perfect. But it's all perfectly enjoyable—especially from the hidden backyard patio. Just launched: LM Catering, specializing in intimate, in-home dinners. 4539 N. Lincoln Ave., 773.942.7585, lmrestaurant.com.

Tip-Top Chefs!

A walk-through of Stephanie Izard's long-awaited **Girl & The Goat** (809 W. Randolph St., 312.492.6262, girlandthegoat.com)—opening, she says, sometime in July—was all kinds of awesome: We stroked the shiny finish on deep black burnt-wood walls (from 555 International, a local firm behind part of the Dallas Cowboys stadium), marveled at a bar backlit with a series of interlocked old iron fireplaces, and almost got wood shavings in our eyes from the roaring buzzsaws. Meanwhile, another *Top Chef* alum, Dave Levitski, has overhauled the décor at **Sprout** (1417 W. Fullerton Ave., 773.348.0706, sproutrestaurant.com) to match the modern French-American fare.

Upper Crust

This one's going to get heated. But even though Nella Grassano left Lincoln Park's **Nella Pizzeria Napoletana**, the flimsy crusted, prosciutto-topped pie is still our new go-to. 2423 N. Clark St., 773.327.3400 pizzerianella.com.

Bringing Home the Bacon

We were over bacon—not as a flavor, just as a fad—but goat bacon? **The Bristol**, Bucktown's still-trendy small plates spot, has our attention. Chef Chris Pandel brines goat belly for three days and then pan-fries ultra-thin strips in their own fat until they're crispy (though never smoked). Get it with charred Green Acres Farm spring onions and mustard rémoulade. 2152 N. Damen Ave., 773.862.5555, thebristolchicago.com.

Sign of the Times

With Logan Square having most of the fun lately, Lincoln Park was definitely in need of a chic new spot. **Gemini Bistro** hit in fall 2009 and has been packed ever since. If you can, snag a spot on the new outdoor patio and order eclectic American dishes like swordfish Provençal, sweet pea risotto and creamless tomato soup from chef Jason Paskewitz. 2075 N. Lincoln Ave., 773.525.2522, geminibistrochicago.com.

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