

From this week's Business of Life

Three more to try for meals in the West Loop



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Avec

*615 W. Randolph St.
(312) 377-2002*

This younger sibling of next door's Blackbird is one of the city's ultimate places for sophisticated after-work lounging. Want a snack or full-on dinner? Up to you.

Take a seat at the bar, stand outside with a glass of wine or settle in next to strangers at the communal tables along the wall. The menu showcases seasonal ingredients in bold and flavorful ways. Among the small-plates fixtures, bacon-wrapped dates stuffed with chorizo (\$9) hit the spot every time, summer or winter. (It's a clear crowd pleaser evidenced by the orders queued up next to the wood-burning oven.) Whipped brandade (\$10), a garlicky salt codfish spread, is generously portioned and requires more than two to share. A dozen cheeses and charcuterie round out the grazing section of the menu. Taleggio cheese-stuffed focaccia (\$14.50) is a rich treat laced with truffle oil and herbs, and also good for sharing.

Alison Neumer Lara

MetroKlub Restaurant

*733 W. Madison St.
(312) 602-2104*

The West Loop's kosher MetroKlub serves mostly business-lunch groups, with peppy dressings and sauces giving personality to basic fare. MetroKlub serves lunch Mondays through Thursdays in a cozy, private dining room and adjacent space carved out of Dine, a non-kosher restaurant in the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Mediterranean salad (\$6) is an excellent, different side for



sandwiches and entrees: Zingy vinaigrette brightens chickpeas, onions and grape tomatoes on iceberg lettuce. Hearty cobb salad (\$12) is topped with grilled chicken and beef frye, a commendable bacon substitute made from cured, smoked beef. Tender, paper-thin slices of corned beef make a juicy sandwich on light rye bread (\$12). The cup of whole-seed mustard is a treat along with a crisp stash of partly peeled, seasoned fries, creamy coleslaw and a pickle. And who knew soy-based turtle cheesecake (\$5), topped with pecans, chocolate and caramel sauces, could taste so good?

Laura Bianchi

Veerasway

844 W. Randolph St.
(312) 491-0844

Veerasway's fresh approach to Indian cuisine offers space, all on one menu, for street snacks, traditional dishes and contemporary cooking in a stylish, accessible, Indian-inspired setting. Street snacks include lentil-and-cheese-stuffed banana peppers coated in chickpea flour batter and fried (\$8). "Hot Bollywood Lollipops" (\$9.75) are crispy, juicy chicken drumsticks on pools of chile sauce and "ranch" raita — a fun play on hot wings, though not nearly as spicy as the menu warned. Coconut milk-



poached scallops (\$13) tasted about as bland and pale as they looked. Lamb rogan josh (\$17.75) and chicken tikka masala (\$15.75) are tamed versions of their Devon Avenue counterparts — perhaps more elegantly turned out,

but certainly on the safe side. Desserts (all \$7), on the other hand, are inspired. Passionfruit curd topped with creamy meringue fills out a cashew pie crust for a great hit of flavor. Coconut sorbet with coconut caramel sauce also caught my eye, but soothing cardamom-scented rice pudding with pistachios won out. A little tradition never hurts.

A.N.L.

Photos by Erik Unger

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