

FOOD



Southport Grocery's steak sandwich.

Epicurious? Inside gourmet groceries

Jewel, Dominick's, and Aldi run rampant over Chicagoland, selling their basic produce and shelf goods; but in Chicago's nicer neighborhoods lurk some gourmet groceries that cater to folks looking for fresh—and sometimes exorbitant—alternatives. *The A.V. Club* took a tour and stumbled onto some hard-to-find culinary delights.

Fox & Obel 401 E. Illinois St.

Weirdest cheese: Parmigiano-Reggiano. Only cow milk produced between May 1 and November 11 is used in the cheese, which is aged for 12 months. It seems like a lot of effort for garnish. **Best café item:** Maine lobster club: lobster with avocado, applewood-smoked bacon, tomatoes, and aioli (French mayonnaise) on fancy bread. **Most predictable gourmet item:** Water. The store sells several brands bottled in nice-looking containers. Meh. **Best bet:** Desserts. Although they're almost too pretty to eat, the 6-inch-long fresh fruit tarts and to-die-for cookies and cupcakes are mouth-watering. **Prices:** \$1.99 for a ginger-snap cookie to a \$66 bottle of Glenlivet. **Worth the gourmet?:** If foodies can't find that what they want here, it probably doesn't exist.

The Goddess And The Grocer 25 E. Delaware Pl. & 1646 N. Damen Ave.

Weirdest cheese: Stilton lemon. Hailing from England, this lavish cheese (\$17.50/pound) comes in either white or blue. Here, it's white with a dash of citrus. **Best café item:** Portofino panini: prosciutto, artichokes, mozzarella, tomatoes, and pesto—it melts in the mouth. **Most pre-**

dictable gourmet item: Pâté. Chicago has enough issues with liver. **Best bet:** Wine. Independent labels stack the place, so don't expect any brand names. Bitch wine, made with cherry and strawberry flavors, doesn't sound bitchy at all. **Prices:** \$4.50 for a pre-made fruit cup to a \$46 bottle of wine. **Worth the gourmet?:** Impressing a hoity-toity wine connoisseur is always worth it.

Southport Grocery & Café 3552 N. Southport Ave.

Weirdest cheese: Pepato cheese—it looks like mildew embedded with peppercorn. **Best café item:** Steak sandwich topped with peppercorn goat cheese, caramelized onion, and crispy onions with a side of tater tots. Do *not* leave without trying one of Southport's divine cupcakes, though. **Most predictable gourmet item:** Deli salads. Just like mom makes, except pricier. **Best bet:** Pasta sauces. Flavors of arrabattia, pink pesto, and Tuscan vodka complement the many types of pasta, such as tagliatelle (wide noodles) made with squid ink. **Prices:** \$2.99 for a container of oyster crackers to a \$32 bottle of champagne. **Worth the gourmet?:** Only if cooking with \$35 extra-virgin olive oil or pouring \$18 Savannah Bee Raw Tupelo honey in tea sounds appealing. —Garin Pirnia

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