

## FOOD



Photo: Sally Ryan

A frozen custard "concrete" (with M&Ms) from **Scooter's**.

## Battle Of The Summer Treats

Even though people don't really *need* an excuse to indulge in frozen goodness, summer heat offers a fine reason. Luckily, Chicago has a wealth of places to get your treat on, whether you seek ice cream, Italian ice, frozen custard, or dairy-free desserts. To help you make an informed decision, *The A.V. Club* stuffed itself to write this report.

### ICE CREAM

#### Margie's Candies

For more than 80 years, this affordable Bucktown institution has made all of its ice cream and candies on-site. A new sibling store in Ravenswood should do just as well. **Flavor tested:** Coffee. **Consistency:** Thick and gooey. **Plus:** The creamy goodness has Häagen Dazs beat. **Minus:** That same creamy goodness causes nausea if you overindulge. **Intangible:** Famous former customers include The Beatles and Al Capone. **How it stacks up:** Definitely worth the long waits and cramped quarters at the Wicker Park location. **1960 N. Western Ave., 1813 W. Montrose Ave.**

### FROZEN CUSTARD

#### Scooter's Frozen Custard

The only frozen-custard joint in Chicago (the 'burbs have many), Scooter's serves custard in several decadent forms, including concretes (toppings mixed in), shakes, sundaes, and pies. It also serves hot dogs, but not in the custard. Unless you ask nicely. **Flavor tested:** Boston Shake (vanilla custard). **Consistency:** Slightly runny. **Plus:** An aggregate of vanilla custard, fudge, milk, and whipping cream, it not only tastes good but also cools the body. **Minus:** Sort of messy. **Intangible:** Frozen custard uses fewer ingredients than ice cream, has less air (which makes it thicker), and uses real eggs to make it smooth and rich. **How it stacks up:** Maybe unbeatable, but with only one location, getting it can be a hassle. **1658 W. Belmont Ave.**

### FROZEN YOGURT

#### Love's Chicago

Love's has franchises in the suburbs, but the recently opened city branch café is

mostly overlooked, even though it offers a diverse menu. **Flavor tested:** Coffee Cognac. **Consistency:** Thick and substantial. **Plus:** Combines two vices, caffeine and alcohol. **Minus:** Needs a more robust flavor. **Intangible:** Across the street is a big lot with free parking. **How it stacks up:** For lo-carb yogurt, it's adequate. **770 N. Halsted St.**

### ITALIAN ICE

#### Tom & Wendee's

Tom & Wendee's offers homemade, all-natural, fat-free Italian Ice in a dazzling array of fruity flavors and many sizes. **Flavor tested:** Pina Colada. **Consistency:** Compact and, um, icy. **Plus:** It's sweet and fruity with real chunks of pineapple. **Minus:** Unidentifiable specks from said pineapple. **Intangible:** Come as you are—Tom & Wendee's allows in-line skates, bikes, strollers, and whatever else. **How it stacks up:** Lives up to its proclamation of "best Italian ice in Chicago." **1136 W. Armitage Ave.**

### SOY

#### Chicago Soy Dairy

The entirely vegan (no animal products of any kind) Chicago Soy Dairy sells its soy ice cream at a few places around town, though it can be hard to find. **Flavor tested:** Chocolate. **Consistency:** Velvety, though chalky, and it melts quickly. **Plus:** It's healthier than ice cream—have you ever read a Ben & Jerry's label? **Minus:** Those bad things taste good, though. This tastes like something Weight Watchers would sell. **Intangible:** No animals were harmed while making it. **How it stacks up:** Unless you're lactose-intolerant, vegan, or just feeling guilty, skip this. **Available at Pick Me Up Café, 3408 N. Clark St., & Whole Foods.** —Garin Pirnia

### NORTH CENTRAL

North Center, Ravenswood, Roscoe Village, St. Ben's

#### Ranalli's Up North

The Ranalli's menu covers a lot of ground, which can be a bad sign at some places, but they do Italian (pasta, chicken parmigiana), Mexican (tacos, burritos), pizza, and sandwiches pretty well. Try the Panzerotti, the house specialty. Similar to a calzone, it wraps veggies, cheese, and a special sauce in a doughy crust. Sound messy? It is, but the homey dining room—decorated with antiques, movie memorabilia, Christmas lights, and Cubs stuff—is relaxed, so you can get sloppy. **Great for:** Dinner before a show at the Metro down the street. **Entrées:** \$7-\$17 **Key:** BYOB, D, OD, V, L. 773-506-8800. **1522 W. Montrose Ave.**

### NORTH LAKE

Andersonville, Edgewater, Rogers Park, Uptown

#### Fireside Restaurant

Part supper club, part neighborhood pub, the Fireside serves up a striking variety of gourmet comfort food with Creole and Italian influences. With items like blackened catfish, ribs, chicken wings, pasta, baked goat cheese, and calamari on the menu, it's also a bit schizophrenic. The place has a gracious waitstaff, and a family-friendly vibe in spite of the fine beer selection. Like the menu, the ambience is all over the map. The dark, loud bar offers darts and the requisite Golden Tee, the dining room boasts a fireplace and décor that can only be described as "middle-aged Midwesterner," and the year-round patio adds a little sparkle to the traditional beer garden. Check out the Sunday brunch, which includes a 110-item Bloody Mary bar. **Bonus:** It delivers beer and liquor. **Great for:** For a quiet dinner after a bad day—it's comfort food and beer, after all. **Entrées:** \$9-\$17 **Key:** A, D, OD, V, L, B. 773-561-7433. [firesidechicago.com](http://firesidechicago.com). **5739 N. Ravenswood Ave.**

#### Moody's Pub

Moody's menu is a bit limited, but the half-pound Moodyburger, its centerpiece, is quite possibly the best burger in Chicago. For those who aren't up to

**A:** Alcohol  
**BYOB:** BYOB  
**D:** Delivery  
**OD:** Outdoor dining

**V:** Vegetarian friendly  
**L:** Late-night dining [after midnight]  
**B:** Brunch

the challenge, consider the massive salad, served on a silver platter. The beer selection is also limited, but the powerful margaritas and sangria more than make up for it. Take it all in on the sunny outdoor patio, as opposed to the interior that makes Moody's perhaps the darkest bar in Chicago. Regardless, hit the ATM beforehand; Moody's is a cash-only enterprise. **Great for:** For tying one on, on the cheap. The most expensive drink is a \$5.50 Long Island Iced Tea that will keep a buzz going through a half-pound Moodyburger and some onion rings. **Entrées:** \$5-\$8 **Key:** A, OD, L. 773-275-2696. [moodyspub.com](http://moodyspub.com). **5910 N. Broadway St.**

### LAKEVIEW/WRIGLEYVILLE/BOYSTOWN

#### Penny's Noodle Shop

Penny's has several locations in the city, all serving the same varieties of low-cost, tasty Asian noodle dishes. The menu isn't groundbreaking, but all the favorites (like pad Thai) are available, and the environment is casual and comfortable. **Great for:** Wrigley is just up the street, so eat something slightly healthier than ballpark food before a game. **Entrées:** \$5-\$6 **Key:** BYOB, D, OD, V. 773-281-8222. [pennynoodle.com](http://pennynoodle.com). **3400 N. Sheffield Ave.**

#### X/O

X/O is contemporary in character and cuisine. For the former, the restaurant has three stylishly decorated dining rooms, ranging from warm and intimate to airy and lively (like the front room, which opens onto the sidewalk). X/O's cuisine sticks to small-plate "global tapas" dishes (sharing is encouraged), which range in influence from Asian to Mediterranean: spicy stir-fried shitake mushrooms, petite lobster tail and craw, crabcakes, oysters, fried peppers, and more. One of the most popular items is the grilled octopus salad seasoned with lemon, garlic, olive oil, and oregano. For something more traditional, try the jumbo sea scallops, which X/O gussies up with pumpkin dumplings and sage-hazelnut brown butter. Pair the food with one of the creative cocktails,

FOOD see page 44