

WHERE TO DRINK NOW

EDITED BY
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At least 65 drinking establishments have opened in Chicago in the past year: hotel bars, cocktail bars, gay bars, bars in restaurants, even bars in distilleries. *Chicago's* 12-reporter team imbibed its way through them, sizing up drink quality, service, and ambiance. The result: a ranking of the 20 best.

PLUS > The best bars in 12 neighborhoods, chosen by readers > Where Chicago's top bartenders drink off duty > The ultimate bar quiz > The most overrated newcomers > Five new cocktails to try now > What the hottest openings in 2014 will be—and more



The Drinker's Choice at
The Berkshire Room (No. 5)

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLAYTON HAUCK



WHERE THE
BARKEEPS DRINK



Ed Marszewski,
Maria's Packaged
Goods &
Community Bar

I like to drink
local, so I go to
Bernice's
Tavern [3238
S. Halsted
St.]. It
reminds me
what Maria's
used to be like
back in the
'60s.

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Punch House

PILSEN · COCKTAIL BAR

Punch has been around since the 1600s. The carbonated soda gun? That's a 20th-century invention. Leave it to a '70s-rec-room-themed basement bar, the latest from the trendsetters behind Longman & Eagle (in Logan Square) and sister restaurant Dusek's (upstairs), to marry the two—and to serve up the result in the hazy glow of a massive aquarium that is another nod to the vintage theme. Speaking of haze, this concoction is a complex and delightfully effervescent sipper that lands at your barstool quicker than you can whip out your credit card and start a tab, and will land you on the floor if you sip too many.

Who's there: A refreshingly unclassifiable crowd, ranging from middle-aged artists to students **What to order:** Garrick Club (gin, cherry liqueur, raw sugar, lemon juice, and carbonation) **Find it:** 1227 W. 18th St., 312-526-3851, thaliahallchicago.com

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The Berkshire Room

RIVER NORTH · HOTEL BAR

This handsome boutique lounge in the Acme Hotel represents a sweet spot in Chicago's craft cocktail scene: It's got all the swank but none of the snoot. Though the Fifty/50 Restaurant Group's latest project is populated by River North's more moneyed happy hourers (cocktails range from \$12 to \$15), you would feel just as comfortable ordering a barrel-finished Old Money (bourbon, Aperol, walnut liqueur, and allspice) as a Hamm's. (Or a Stroh's. Or a Dixie. All are available on mixologist Benjamin Schiller's Blue Collar Lagers menu.) Service is a bit pokey, but that's a testament to the TLC poured into your drink.

Who's there: 20- to 50-somethings with jobs. Lucrative jobs **What to order:** The Dealer's Choice: You pick the booze, flavor profile, and glassware, and your bartender does the rest **Find it:** 15 E. Ohio St., 312-894-0800, theberkshireroom.com

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Lone Wolf

WEST LOOP · COCKTAIL BAR

Leave it to the minds behind Trenchermen and the Barrelhouse Flat to dream up one of the boldest launches of the year. This spacious neighborhood bar offers sgroppinos (sorbet-like vodka and prosecco concoctions), amaro cocktails, and savory Pleasant House Bakery pies, plus a revolving list of whiskeys and craft beers. Don't be fooled by its 2,500-square-foot sprawl: In true Randolph Row fashion, the booths and stools fill fast on weekends, leaving some drinkers lurking awkwardly in the entryway. Get there by nine.

Who's there: Girl & the Goat reservation holders before dinner; cocktail scenesters later **What to order:** Giralamo Sour (see page 67) **Find it:** 806 W. Randolph St., 312-600-9391, twitter.com/lonewolf tavern

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Analogue

LOGAN SQUARE · COCKTAIL BAR

Combine Violet Hour drinks with dive bar minimalism and you've got Analogue, the latest venture from Violet vets Robert Haynes and Henry Prendergast. Well-conceived cocktails share menu space with \$3 drafts of Bud and everything in between, including surprises such as purls (beers infused with wormwood) and Cajun bites cooked up by the former chef at Rootstock. The look—sleek gray-and-black metal tables, exposed brick, candles everywhere—screams alternative casual, all the more so with a guest DJ spinning LCD Soundsystem (a bit too loudly).

Who's there: Plaid-clad Gen-Xers **What to order:** The Double Take (Letherbee gin, Punt e Mes vermouth, Letherbee Fernet) and a purl—just to try it **Find it:** 2523 N. Milwaukee Ave., no phone, analoguechicago.com



COMING SOON

Five openings to
get excited for.

East Room (January) The owners of Boiler Room promise a speakeasy-type experience at this signless bar on, incidentally, the same soon-to-be-bumping block as the Radler and Slippery Slope. 2354 N. Milwaukee Ave.