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DINING

# French-inspired dishes in South Loop, Rick Bayless opening Tortazo Jan. 15, plus more Chicago restaurant news

By GRACE WONG  
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The Grail Cafe is open in South Loop, serving up light dishes, coffee and pastries. (Steven Cook)

After years of working and living in the South Loop, Sheldrick Holmes and Steven Cook have opened The Grail Cafe, a restaurant where the dishes are light, coffee is fresh and pastries are plentiful.

“I’ve always had a love for food,” Holmes said. “I’m humbled and honored to serve people food. It’s one of the greatest gifts and responsibilities to do that: giving something that someone puts in their body to live and nurture them.”

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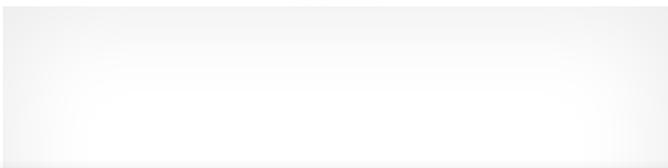
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Holmes spent the past four years in culinary school, at the Four Seasons hotel, and at Dietz & Watson, where he helped with menu development and culinary training. He and Cook had often talked about opening their own cafe one day.

The menu is “uncomplicated with a little bit of surprise,” Holmes said. He’s generously utilizing herbs and you’ll find many ingredients showing up in more than one dish. For breakfast, there’s a farro risotto with Greek yogurt, granola, apple-apricot chutney, honeycomb and mint served with a ginger biscotti, and number of toasts from 3D Baking served with jam and butter. Grab a pastry from PHLour to pair with coffee from Hexe Coffee

Co. or indulge in your nostalgic side with the grilled peanut and jam sandwich on challah for lunch.



The Grail Cafe is serving up toasts like this rustic orchard toast topped with marscarpone cheese, apple thyme and cranberry compote. (Steven Cook)

Although the chickpea chicken couscous salad has been really popular among guests, Holmes’ favorite salad is the The Golden Halo, made with kale, golden lentils, quinoa, golden raisins, red pepper, Persian cucumber and pepitas, and dressed with a fennel vinaigrette. He also recommends the rosemary ham and Emmental sandwich, with a fig-apple spread, arugula and a dill dressing on ciabatta.

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“The Grail Cafe is a place where goodness can be found, meaning that when you come in, we hope that you get a good experience,” Holmes said. “When you leave, you have been filled up with a little goodness from good food and good service and good conversation and when you walk out those doors, you can spread a little of that goodness throughout your day.”

715 S. Dearborn St., 312-756-8977, [thegrailcafe.com](http://thegrailcafe.com)

## Openings

**THE LOOP** — Tortazo will open Jan. 15 in Willis Tower adding to Rick Bayless' roster of restaurants. The menu will include griddle-crisped tortas, like a crispy chicken milanesa, soups and salads, a chicken chilaquiles bowl and fresh churros. 233 S. Wacker Drive, 312-962-7700, [tortazo.com](http://tortazo.com)

**LINCOLN PARK** — Takito Street, by the owners of Bar Takito and Takito Kitchen, will open Jan. 9. The restaurant will serve tacos al pastor and fresh fruit margaritas in a colorful environment, plus crunchy flautas and skirt steak with chimichurri relish, avocado puree and served with a flour tortilla. 2423 N. Lincoln St., [takitostreet.com](http://takitostreet.com)

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**LINCOLN SQUARE** — Menya Goku, from the owners of Ramen Wasabi and Ramen Takeya, has opened, bringing shoyu ramen, pork belly buns, shumai and tantanmen to the north side. 2207 W. Montrose Ave., [instagram.com/menyagoku](https://www.instagram.com/menyagoku)

**LOGAN SQUARE** — Jibaritos y Mas has opened a dine-in spot next to its corner location, serving the same menu but in a bigger space. 3404 W. Fullerton Ave., [facebook.com/jibaritosymas](https://www.facebook.com/jibaritosymas)

**NEAR NORTH** — RPM Seafood will open this month as the final piece of the RPM Waterfront Project. The restaurant will serve fish, seafood, steak and wine with panoramic views of the Chicago River. It is a two-story space with two private terraces and a main floor patio. 317 N. Clark St., [rpmrestaurants.com/rpm-seafood](http://rpmrestaurants.com/rpm-seafood)

**UPTOWN** — In-On Thai Uptown is open, serving up dishes like stir-fired crispy fish fillet with curry sauce, pad see-ew and tom yum soup. 4641 N. Broadway, 773-944-0114

**WILMETTE** — Sophia, a neighborhood steakhouse, is slated to open this spring by Glenn Keefer (Keefer's Restaurant) and Ryan O'Donnell (Ballyhoo Hospitality). Look out for petite filet, hangar, New York strip or Delmonico rib-eye steaks, plus a number of fish and seafood dishes, including shrimp cocktail and trout from Wisconsin. There will also be a