

CHICAGO GOURMET

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Kinship for Chicago Gourmet

**STEP UP TO THE PLATE! CHICAGO GOURMET RAISES THE GAME
WITH THE CULINARY FESTIVAL OF THE YEAR FEATURING EXCITING NEW TEAMMATE,
TITLE SPONSOR INVESCO QQQ**

Come have a ball this fall at Chicago Gourmet powered by Invesco QQQ!

CHICAGO, IL (May 1, 2025) - Ladies and Gentlemen, Start Your Appetites! One of the nation's top food festivals, Chicago Gourmet, is hitting the field this fall for the ultimate culinary experience. This year's theme, "Step Up To The Plate," celebrates the best in food and sports, with all-star chefs, big-time bites, and championship-level sips. New to the lineup, [Invesco QQQ](#) joins as the title sponsor, alongside founding sponsor [Illinois Restaurant Association](#) and longtime presenting sponsor [Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits](#).

"Chicago Gourmet is where talent, creativity, and our city's enduring competitive spirit get to shine," remarks Sam Toia, President and CEO of the Illinois Restaurant Association. "Like pro sports, great food requires skill, strategy, and passion. No doubt Chicago is a top sports town, but our restaurant teams are the real MVPs of this city!"

Invesco QQQ shares our passion for innovation and entrepreneurship - values that align with the creativity, talent, and competitive spirit celebrated at Chicago Gourmet.

Chicago Gourmet 2025 will feature a full roster of sports-inspired events set to take place on the Harris Theater Rooftop at Millennium Park and iconic sports venues located throughout the city. Additional FUN, NEW pre-game events starting in the summer will be announced soon.

Aaannd now, this year's main event weekend schedule:

Tacos & Tequila: An absolute crowd favorite, Tacos & Tequila, presented by [US Foods](#) starts off the action on Thursday, September 25th from 6:00-9:00 pm with the weekend opener on the Harris Theater Rooftop! Hosted by renowned Chefs Rick Bayless and Marcos Carbajal, Tacos & Tequila serves up kick-ass tacos from top local chefs, premium agave spirits from Jose Cuervo Traditional, Patron Tequila, and others mixed in with specialty cocktails, traditional musical & dance performances, and much more. This night is in a league of its own!

Hamburger Hop: Presented by [Home Grown Program supported by Sysco](#), [DoorDash](#), and [Blue Moon](#), this fan-favorite event is a high-stakes match. Going crosstown classic this year, Northside and Southside chefs will be swinging for the fences with their best burgers on Friday, September 26, from 6:00-9:00 pm, teamed with cold beer,

sips from Caymus Vineyards, 1800 Tequila cocktails, pumping DJ music, and unobstructed skyline views from the Harris Theater Rooftop. Co-hosted by Chefs Joe Flamm (Southsider) and Sarah Grueneberg (Northsider), two burgers will be crowned at the Hamburger Hop – the coveted Judge’s Award and the fan favorite People’s Choice.

Asian Late Night Market: Extra time on Friday night means extra fun at Late Night Gourmet! New in 2025, the party continues at an Asian night market-inspired celebration on Friday, September 26th from 9:00 pm to Midnight. Hosted by Chef Thai Dang and presented by [TAO Chicago](#), this high-energy after-party keeps the action going with plenty of music, lights, dancing, and fun vendors serving late-night bites and specialty cocktails with an Asian flair. This new street market is a slam dunk.

Grand Cru: Like Jordan, Biles, and Brady, Saturday’s Grand Cru is the GOAT. As the Harris Theater Rooftop buzzes with fabulous sights, smells, and sounds, the incomparable Grand Cru, presented by [UnitedHealthcare](#) and [RATIONAL USA](#), on September 27th showcases lights-out cuisine from the best-of-the-best chefs paired with the very finest wines & spirits. Saturday is a beautiful day for the Cru, so let’s do two. Hosted by Goat-famous Chef Stephanie Izard, guests can enjoy their culinary MVPs during the afternoon session from 2:00-5:00 pm or the evening session from 7:00-10:00 pm.

Rise & Shine Gourmet: Down the stretch on Sunday, it’s brunch time! Hosted by Chefs Art Smith, Lorena Garcia and Jernard Wells, Rise & Shine Gourmet, is presented by [Performance Foodservice](#), [Kerrygold](#) and [Country Financial](#) on September 28th, from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm, Rise & Shine delivers a brunch trifecta of top-tier chefs serving up sweet & savory bites, plenty of inventive cocktails, and lively music on the Harris Theater Rooftop. It’s the perfect victory lap for the weekend!

With over 100 participating chefs yearly, the 2025 talent roster includes renowned names such as: Marcos Ascencio, (Mariscos San Pedro, Taqueria Chingón), Rick Bayless (Frontera Grill, Topolobampo, XOCO, Bar Sótano, and more), Marcos Carbajal (Carnitas Uruapan), Thai Dang (Crying Tiger, HaiSous), Jonathon Sawyer (Kindling Downtown Cookout & Cocktails), Diana Dávila (Mi Tocaya Antojería), Casey Doody (pastryCASE), Norman Fenton (Cariño), Joe Flamm (Il Carciofo, Rose Mary, BLVD Steakhouse), Lorena Garcia (CHICA, Food Café), Carlos Gaytan (Tzucu) Stephen Gillanders (Signature, The Staley), Sarah Grueneberg (Monteverde), Israel Idonije (Signature, The Staley), Antonio Incandela (Mariscos San Pedro, Taqueria Chingón), Stephanie Izard (Girl & The Goat, Duck Duck Goat, Little Goat, and more), Brian Jupiter (Frontier, Ina Mae’s Packaged Goods, Migos), Dominique Leach (Lexington Betty Smokehouse), Jeff Mauro (Mauro Provisions), Lamar Moore (etc.), Oliver Poilevey (Mariscos San Pedro, Taqueria Chingón), Tony Priolo (Piccolo Sogno Doug Psaltis (Asador Bastian), Art Smith (Blue Door, Reunion, and more), Alfonso Sotelo (5 Rabanitos), Jenner Tomaska (The Alston, Esmé), Paul Virant (Gaijin), Erick Williams (Virtue), Donald Young (Duck Sel), Jernard Wells (Haute Cuisine).

Chicago Gourmet programming will benefit the [Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation](#) (IRAEF), a 501 (c)(3) dedicated to building and promoting the health and prosperity of the restaurant industry by investing in both youth and workforce.

The new pre-game events in 2025, plus the complete chef lineup, detailed event information, and ticket sales, will be announced this summer at chicagogourmet.org.

Chicago Gourmet 2025 is made possible by the generosity of the following sponsors: [Illinois Restaurant Association](#) (Founding Sponsor), [Invesco QQQ](#) (Title Sponsor), [Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits](#) (Presenting Sponsor), [Choose Chicago](#), [UnitedHealthcare®](#), [RATIONAL USA](#), [Jose Cuervo](#), [DoorDash](#), [South Walton Florida](#), [Patrón Tequila](#), [S.Pellegrino](#), [Molson Coors](#), [Kerrygold](#), [Country Financial](#), [Mariano’s](#), [Home Grown Program supported by Sysco](#), [American Airlines](#), [US Foods](#), [Acqua Panna](#), [JCDcaux](#), [Performance Foodservice](#), [Pure Leaf](#), [Tincup® Mountain Whiskey](#), [Bank of America](#), [Ecolab](#), [McCormick Place](#), [Oak View Group](#), [Chicago Magazine](#), [Volpi](#), [TAO Chicago](#), [Turano Baking Co.](#), [Gibsons Restaurant Group](#), [Wickles Pickles](#), [Seagar’s Prime Steaks & Seafood](#), [Millennium Garages](#), [AV Chicago](#), [The Langham Chicago](#), [Fairmont Chicago Millennium Park](#), [Hyatt Regency Chicago](#), [Virgin Hotels Chicago](#), [NBC 5 Chicago](#), [93XRT](#).

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ABOUT CHICAGO GOURMET.

Chicago Gourmet, the nation's premier culinary experience, returns in September 2025. Created by the [Illinois Restaurant Association](#) to honor Chicago's culinary achievements and the creative vision of the chefs, Master Sommeliers, and wine-, spirit-, and beer-makers who participate, it spotlights Chicago as an international culinary destination via its unparalleled epicurean talent. With the present and future of the hospitality industry at the forefront, the 2025 festival will benefit the Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. Chicago Gourmet is possible with the support of title sponsor Invesco QQQ and presenting sponsor Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits. For more information, visit chicagogourmet.org and follow on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

ABOUT INVESCO QQQ

Invesco QQQ is an exchange-traded fund (ETF) that tracks the Nasdaq-100 Index®. The fund provides a way to gain diversified exposure to some of the largest non-financial companies listed on the Nasdaq Stock Market. For more information, visit invesco.com/qqq.

ABOUT SOUTHERN GLAZER'S WINE & SPIRITS.

Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits is the world's preeminent distributor of beverage alcohol, building brands for moments that matter. The multi-generational, family-owned Company has operations in 47 U.S. markets and Canada, as well as brokerage operations through its Southern Glazer's Travel Retail Sales & Export Division in the Caribbean, Central and South America. In 2024, Southern Glazer's was recognized by Newsweek as one of America's Greatest Workplaces for Diversity and America's Greatest Workplaces for Women. Southern Glazer's urges all retail customers and adult consumers to market, sell, serve, and enjoy its products responsibly. For more information visit www.southernglazers.com. Follow us on Facebook, X and Instagram @sgwinespirits.

ABOUT THE ILLINOIS RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION.

Founded in 1914, the Illinois Restaurant Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, protecting, educating, and improving the restaurant industry in Illinois. The IRA owns and produces [Chicago Gourmet](#) – the annual food and wine festival uniting hundreds of restaurants, chefs, and beverage experts for a weekend filled with food and drink tastings, entertainment, and more. The Association is also a proud co-host of the [James Beard Foundation Awards](#), which will be held in Chicago through 2027. For more information, visit www.illinoisrestaurants.org and follow on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

ABOUT THE ILLINOIS RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION.

The Illinois Restaurant Association Educational Foundation is a 501 (c)(3) dedicated to building and promoting the health and prosperity of the restaurant industry by investing in youth and workforce. It has awarded more than \$3.5 million in scholarships since its inception. For more information, visit www.illinoisrestaurants.org/IRAEFAboutUs.