

Chicago Tribune  
FOOD & DINING

[Home](#) > [Features](#) > [Food & Dining](#)

## All done!

### When it comes to 2011 dining, it's time to clear the table. But first, a look back at what got our attention

**Best of 2011:** When it comes to 2011 dining, it's time to clear the table. But first, a look back at what got our attention. (Kennet Havgaard/Getty Images/Aurora Creative)

December 22, 2011

It was the best of times (particularly for new steakhouses), it was the worst of times (pork products remained en fuego). And it was another year of dining in Chicago, and there was no dearth of compelling stories. Here are the ones that resonated with us.

#### It's still what's for dinner

There continues to be no discernible limit to Chicago's support for high-end steakhouses. Glen Keefer, of the well-established Keefer's in River North, said he estimates that there are 1,000 more steakhouse seats in his area than there were 20 months ago. In that time, we've seen the debut of Benny's Chophouse, Mastro's and Chicago Cut, all in [River North](#); [Michael Jordan's Steak House](#), on [Michigan Avenue](#); and the latest, Ill Forks, in the Lakeshore East area. "The good news," Keefer says, "is that this neighborhood is so popular, especially among younger diners (make that younger diners with money), that there are enough people on the street to keep everybody busy."

The steakhouse boom was a godsend to chef Jackie Shen, forced out of her gig at Red Light (which closed shortly thereafter); the alert people at Chicago Cut, remembering the chef's years running Lawry's the Prime Rib, quickly brought her aboard, improving their appetizer menu, their desserts (especially with Shen's famous Chocolate Bag added to the list) and, presumably, their bottom line. Smart move.

— [Phil Vettel](#)

Copyright © 2011, [Chicago Tribune](#)

ct-dining-1222-great-dining-moments-20111222