



Crepe expectations

Forget Paris—this simple, cheap and tasty staple is making a Chicago stand

By Julia Borcherts

Crepe carts are as ubiquitous in Paris as hot dog stands are in the U.S. But recently, Chicago spots have been flipping



over the quick, affordable and eminently versatile cuisine. Whether you're seeking a commuter-friendly breakfast, casual lunch, quick street snack, elegant

dinner or romantic dessert, these silky pancakes with their endless varieties of fillings fit the bill. Ready to embark on a crepe caper? Meet the city's newest crepe-preneurs.

Crepe Crave

1752 W. North Ave. 773-698-8783

"People think of crepes as French, but you see them all over Europe," says co-owner Matt Goleba, who hails from Poland. His cozy new Bucktown cafe offers 28 sweet, savory and breakfast varieties as well as build-your-own options, with the crepe station situated behind the counter so you can watch as your order is made fresh. In a hurry? They'll fold it up into a to-go pocket so you can eat on the run. "We make them a little larger than the typical European portion," Goleba adds, "so that people can have one for lunch and not get hungry later that afternoon."

Try it: Norwegian crepe (smoked salmon with cream cheese, red onions and capers, \$7.50)

Crepe Town

3915 N. Sheridan Rd. 773-248-8844

"The menu is just everything we like," says co-owner Pui Sriussadaporn, who recently opened this charming Lakeview spot with three female friends from her native Thailand. And that explains why offerings include onion rings, cheese sticks, bubble tea lattes and breakfast options such as Boom Boom Egg (two eggs

with ground chicken and spicy sauce) alongside 20-plus crepe selections. Bonus: All savory crepes include a choice of soup or salad.

Try it: Spice Up crepe (fried fish filet with Thai coconut-curry sauce and basil, \$10)

Cook Au Vin

2569 N. Milwaukee Ave. No phone yet

After Paris-born Vincent Colombet closed the cafe portion of his Elston Avenue catering and cooking-class venue due to lack of foot traffic, he returned to his roots by launching a street crepe cart at the Logan Square Farmers' Market last summer. Encouraged by the response, he's opening a 19th Century Parisian-style cafe in Logan Square in January, with marble and cast-iron bistro tables, a black-and-white tile floor, a chandelier and an in-house boulangerie (bread bakery) serving up fresh bread every two hours with an optional delivery service he's calling "Bread-Flix."

Try it: Provencale crepe (ratatouille—roasted tomato, eggplant, zucchini, yellow squash and onion—with goat cheese, \$6, \$7 with oven-roasted turkey)

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More crepe escapes

The newest crop of spots joins a distinguished crew of established crepe flippers. A few of our faves:

Shokolad

2524 W. Chicago Ave. 773-276-6402

This cheerful Ukrainian-style cafe in Humboldt Park also scores a hit with pastries and desserts, but we're hooked on the crepes. For a sweet treat, try the Banana Shokolad crepe, which features sauteed bananas, chocolate and pastry cream (\$7).

La Creperie

2845 N. Clark St. 773-528-9050

Transport yourself to Paris at this cozy, romantic bistro, which is always crowded with Lincoln Parkers in need of a crepe fix. Savory crepes are among the standouts here, including the boeuf bourguignon crepe, a hearty

buckwheat pancake filled with burgundy-braised beef, mushrooms, carrots, leeks and tomatoes (\$13).

Crepe and Coffee Palace

2433 N. Clark St. 773-404-1300
5200 N. Clark St. 773-271-5233.

These casual sister spots specialize in fresh North African and Mediterranean cuisine, including the signature Palace Crepe (Cheka Chouka), made with roasted peppers, arugula, goat cheese, caramelized onion, fresh roma tomatoes, pine nuts, roasted garlic and baby spinach (\$8.50), served with a cup of sweet potato or chicken cilantro soup. Add Algerian lamb sausage, chicken breast or ham for \$2.99.

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