



"Food is our common ground, a universal experience."

- JAMES BEARD

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this week's feature

Sola

Winter Belly Warmer

3868 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago | 773-327-3868

www.sola-chicago.com

Winter is the perfect season for comfort cuisine. Pumpkin this, butternut squash that, a little gingerbread here, a dash of eggnog there. Which is why Sola is the perfect restaurant to visit during these cold (and delicious) times.

Let's start with ambience. Butter cream walls, gleaming wood floors, a glowing fireplace, impeccable table décor and some of the best service in town make this destination worth the trip to the far north side in the dead of winter. It's one of the rare places in this city you can receive the downtown treatment without the downtown attitude. The menu is defined as upscale, contemporary American, with Asian and Hawaiian influences. Chef Carol Wallack (props for a female chef, btw!), has laid out her menu in two simple categories: starters and main courses - both equally long so you have many options. Standouts on the starter side are definitively the tuna poke, made with Hawaiian big eye, hijiki, avocado, sushi rice timbale, soy syrup and wasabi oil. Plus the artichoke fritters, served with soy-lime and white-truffle honey sauces, are a delicious and surprisingly light way to start the meal.

Because of Wallack's Hawaiian influence, expect to find various fish options in her main course selections. The scallops, made with tempura banana, bacon and soy syrup is lick-your-plate-good. Not to mention the salmon (with edamame puree), the to-die-for hoisin-mustard-panko crusted tuna and the braised short ribs, made with hoisin, lemongrass and soy are some the menu's best. And don't forget the side of truffle fries - actually, the aroma fills the whole room - so there is no way you could.

Every month, Sola offers a \$30 prix fixe menu Monday through Wednesday, featuring a "star" ingredient. Last month, butternut squash graced the plate in tempura oysters, seared yellowtail amberjack and a squash and date cake. This month's star is bacon and I can only imagine how delicious that will be. I heard through the grapevine that Sola's wowing with Wallack's bacon ice cream. There isn't much she can do wrong, so be adventuresome and take advantage of this amazing deal. (An average main course can go for \$30 on its own.) Drinks are seasonal too, with a Gingerbread Hot Toddy and a Pumpkin Martini. And if there's one thing Sola is *truly* worth visiting for - it's Wallack's desserts. Caramel apple bread pudding, chocolate hazelnut brulee and carrot pineapple cake. Need I say more?