

SAVOR REVIEW Labriola Ristorante Chicago— and my five top culinary experiences of 2025

What restaurants made the cut?

ANDREW DAVIS
DEC 29, 2025 · PAID

1 Share

One of the advantages a Mag Mile restaurant has is the (hopefully) non-stop stream of customers.

This was evident at [Labriola](#), a fast-casual spot that's been at its Streeterville location for 15 years and that is courtesy of the Doughboy Restaurant Group, which is also behind Stan's Donuts & Coffee.



Legalize Marinara T-shirt at Labriola. Photo by Andrew Davis

It was 5:30 p.m. during the middle of the week, and the place was bustling with a mix of out-of-towners, co-workers and more. It was heartening to see all of these people laughing and enjoying the food.

However, one of the disadvantages of dealing with many guests is possibly sacrificing the quality of a restaurant's dishes to satisfy the quantity of customers. Was that the case at Labriola?

What are my thoughts on Labriola? And what spots made my top five of 2025? Find out by entering your email address. Thanks!

For the most part, the answer was a solid no. However, while most dishes satisfied, a few left my friend and I wanting more.

Example: Apps such as the grilled calamari as well as the sausage and peppers were quite delicious. However, proportions were off, as there seemed to be a mountain of cherry peppers over the calamari and a dearth of bread with the sausage and peppers.



Shrimp cacio e pepe. Photo by Andrew Davis

The entrees were better. My friend said his chicken parm was cooked perfectly, and I thought my shrimp *cacio e pepe* was wonderful—even if there were only four of the

crustaceans in the entire bowl.

However, the most egregious mistake, by far, occurred with what Labriola's best known for: pizza. We decided to try Danny's Special (Russo sausage, mushrooms, green pepper and onion) as a "skinny deep-dish" pie—one with a thinner portion of dough while maintaining a crispy cheese crust. Unfortunately, my friend and I agreed that the pizza was soggy and underseasoned.

Fortunately, the saving grace turned out to be dessert—an absolutely perfect panna cotta that was accented with strawberry balsamic rosemary jam. It was probably one of the best desserts I had tasted over the past month. I would return for that alone—oh, and the tart cherry sangria was pretty impressive, too.

Labriola has several things to recommend it, including its location. But it has lessons to learn as well as to impart.

Grade: B

Note: SAVOR with Andrew visits are pre-arranged, unless otherwise indicated.

Note: No reproduction of this column is permitted under any circumstances without the express prior written permission of the columnist.

My top culinary experiences of 2025

In some ways, 2025 was very different—and the news will confirm that. However, in other ways it was the same, with people experiencing the incredible fare that Chicagoland restaurants provide.

And it was hard whittling things down to my top five. But here they are, in no particular order:



eden's interior. Photo by Andrew Davis

1. **eden:** I had been to the Avondale restaurant [eden](#) to cover events such as Eat & Evolve and a conversation about sustainability, but I hadn't really experienced it for a meal until 2025—and now I get why it has such a loyal following. From the Garden Spell—a concoction of beet juice, citrus and ginger beer—to the squash blossom crab rangoons and the Market Burger, everything impresses. Plus, the staff's commitment to nature and sustainability provides hope for the future—and diners can arrange visits to the restaurant's greenhouse.



Asador Bastian's

caviar churros. Photo by Andrew Davis

2. **Asador Bastian:** It's true: [Asador Bastian](#)—a River North chophouse featuring Basque influences (reflecting the Basque country straddling Spain and France)—lives up to the hype. With luxurious apps consisting of Osetra caviar churros; lobster and foie gras on a mini-corn tortilla; and a two-anchovy “matrimonio,” a meal can include items such as bluefin tuna carpaccio, a bowl of chanterelles with egg, *jamon Iberico*, spider-crab risotto and/or burnt Basque cheesecake. Dining at Asador Bastian is a singular experience.



Provare's seafood trio with lamb chop. Photo by Andrew Davis

3. **Provare:** You should really try the Black-owned West Town Italian/Creole spot [Provare](#). (After all, its name means “to try.”) Dishes such as salmon egg rolls and crabby fries are beyond delightful. Moreover, the shrimp cognac scampi (with chicken) featured pasta in the creamiest of sauces, accompanied by jumbo shrimp; and the seafood trio is just as enticing, with plentiful shrimp, lobster and crab meat with the rotini pasta. Yes, dishes cost a little more—but you have leftovers for at least a day or two. By the way, don't leave without trying the butter cake with vanilla ice cream.



Sunda New Asian's

oxtail pot stickers. Photo by Andrew Davis

4. **Sunda New Asian:** The Fulton Market location of [Sunda New Asian](#)—part of owner Billy Dec's growing empire—provided one of the most pleasant culinary experiences of 2025. Dec and Sunda aim to celebrate the culinary traditions of countries such as Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines and China, among others—and make those countries proud with dishes such as roasted duck hash. And if you want to get “Ridiculous”—the name given to a round, sticky concoction of vanilla ice cream, ginger carrot cake, glazed walnuts and caramel— you absolutely should.



Gene & Georgetti's crab cakes. Photo by Andrew Davis

5. **Gene & Georgetti:** [Gene & Georgetti](#) has been around since the Civil War. Okay—that's not true, but there's a good reason this River North restaurant has been around for more than 80 years. Michelle Durpetti, in becoming the third generation (and first woman) principal of Gene & Georgetti, continued to have the restaurant focus on the two C's—cuisine and customers—with amazing results. The old-school Italian dishes are (still) wonderful, and I certainly plan to try a steak next time.

Honorable mentions: [Fioretta](#); [The Grillroom Chophouse & Wine Bar](#); [Francois Frankie](#)

Discussion about this post

Comments Restacks



Write a comment...

