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The word "Mediterranean" conjures up images of a scintillating blue sea, mountains studded with pine trees, and fragrant citrus groves. In addition to a shared mild climate, many of the 22 countries located in the Mediterranean Basinalso have similar traditional gastronomies.Fromolives, chickpeas, lentils, thyme, oregano, rosemary, basil, and mint (among many others), it's not uncommon to find the sameingredientsused across the region. Unsurprisingly, these colorful, flavorful, and mostly healthy cuisines have achieved international acclaim, with renowned Mediterranean restaurants located seemingly everywhere including the city of Chicago. There are numerous Mediterranean-based establishments to be found among thethousands of restaurants in the Windy City, with options for Greek, Turkish, Lebanese, Italian, Provenal, and other regional cuisines. Of course, given so many restaurants offer top-notch versions ofMediterranean staple dishes you should try such as tabbouleh, moussaka, pasta alla Norma, and zarzuela de mariscos (or thizian shellfish stew) you may not know where to go.As a Lebanese with Cretan roots who's visited numerous other Levantine and Mediterranean countries on multiple occasions I'm extremely familiar with the region's dishes and cooking methods. Through my personal knowledge of the cuisine, along with research of consumer ratings, customer feedback, and the menus at various establishments, I was able to curate the following list of authentic eateries for you to try. Here are 12 restaurants to visit in Chicago for Mediterranean cuisine. If you've ever felt like enjoying hearty and unassuming Greek food accompanied by warm and fluffy pita, consider the Athenian Room. Founded in Lincoln Park in 1972, it features a rustic and cozy decor, ample outdoor seating, and free parking. Though it's a cash-only establishment as of 2024, you can always use the ATM at the adjoining bar, then have your drinks brought over to complement your meal.This restaurant is consistent when it comes to flavor, quality, and promptness of service. Somerepeat customerseven recalled dining at Athenian Room as a young couple before bringing their children along years later; in other words, Athenian Room offers the exact kind of warmth, tradition, and authenticity that's to be expected from a family-owned Mediterranean joint.It's no wonder it's generated so many positive reviews, with praise offered for the clean interior and reasonable prices (particularly compared to other establishments in the area).While some have highlighted its baklava, others compliment its tender and juicy chicken described by some as among the best to be had in Chicago. Consequently, when it comes totthe house's standout item, look no further than the chicken breast shish kebab served with a large salad and tzatziki (salted yogurt and cucumber dip). Its lemon-flavored fries, feta cheese appetizer,spanakopita, andkalamata chicken (Tina Fey's favorite, apparently) also appear worthy of ordering.athenianroom.net(773) 348-5155807 W Webster Ave, Chicago, IL 60614 If you're a kebab lover who only consumes 100% halal food, then consider Zabaadi's bowls and wraps. This grab-and-go joint brands itself as a "one-stop kebab shop" in the Chicagoland area, with customizable flavors and ingredients.Aside from the menu, satisfiedcustomers seem to appreciateits ample parking space, cozy yet spacious wooden interior, and attentive, patient, and knowledgeable wait staff. The subtle (but not overwhelming) flavors also impress, as do the well-plated dishes, adequately seasoned meats, and its creamy hummus. And the fact that a few extra falafels are sometimes thrown with some orders is certainly a contributing factor to this place's success.Don't forget to order standout items like the Zabaadi bowl, which includes falafel with kefta and chicken kebabs, served over rice or lettuce, and topped with salad, hummus, red cabbage, pickles, and tahini sauce. The chicken shawarma bowl seems to be another popular choice, as is the steak kebab wrap and the mixed grill entree.zabaadi.com(708) 695-55437052 Forest Preserve Dr, Norridge, IL 60706 Cedar Palace prepares traditional recipes passed down through generations, and boastsa lovely, shaded patio. But before highlighting its star items, let's address its name. Since the cedar tree is featured on theLebanese flagand is one of Lebanon's sacred symbols, it was therefore honored by this family-owned Mediterranean place that servesfresh and affordable Greek and Middle Eastern cuisine (along with gluten-free, halal, vegetarian, and vegan options).This no-nonsense venue is as simple as they come. It's ideal for takeout or a quick (but filling) seated meal.Furthermore, it only prepares comforting and familiar dishes, be it tabbouleh, baba ghanouj, a hummus gyro bowl, chicken kabob salad, or chicken shawarma (which is served with dill basmati rice, hummus, pita, and a house salad).Keep in mind, though, that there are no beverages other than water and sodas, and no desserts other than a classic baklava.Still, both new and repeat customers seem to appreciatethecomfortable seating at Taza, its hearty and moderately priced dishes, friendly and personalized service, and practical location near tourist sites.tazachicago.com(312) 201-9985176 N Franklin St, Chicago, IL 60606 An intimate and vibrant venue with whitewashed brick walls and a small patio, mfk. Restaurant was established in 2014 on the border of Lincoln Park and Lakeview East. More than that, it's nabbed a Michelin Bib Gourmand Award multiple times since opening, meaning it's clearly worth visiting.The kitchen at mfk. concocts creative Mediterranean dishes, with a menu that mostly spans Catalan, Basque, and seafood specialties. There are also fun daily specials that attract a wide range of customers, such as Tortilla Tuesday, Wine Wednesday, and Sangria Sunday. Additionally, though the restaurant's food and drink menus are subject to change, some standout options as of November 2024 include a charred melon salad, panko eggplant, Spanish tortilla, and burned Basque cheesecake (this treat can also be ordered whole).As for the establishment's satisfied patrons, they mention its delightful European vibe, delicious craft cocktails and refreshing mocktails, and its bright, flavorful, and filling dishes. Customers typically find the space cozy enough for anniversaries and date nights, and also appreciate the occasionally cramped drinks to compensate for the wait in busy hours.mfkrestaurant.com(773) 857-2540432 W Diversey Pkwy, Chicago, IL 60614 Sfera (which means "sphere" in Italian) is nestled in the Edgewater Beach neighborhood of Chicago. It offers brunch, hearty Sicilian street food, and pizzas.Be it the prompt and friendly service, traditional Sicilian decor and tableware,generous sandwiches, or its blood orange and chocolate cassata cupcake,there are numerous reasons why this place seems to have amassed so many satisfied customers.If you're unsureabout what to orderfrom Sfera, you can't go wrong with the house's polipetti soup which comes with Italian sausage meatballs and Tuscan kale or its Chicago muffuletta sandwich, which comes on house focaccia with a signature garden olive relish.The kitchen also prepares excellentpane e panelle (a popular Sicilian street food made from chickpeasand arancini (or fried stuffed risotto balls) with different fillings. Some customers have gone so far as to deem these as even better than the ones in Italy.sferachicago.com(773) 739-91283759 N Broadway, Chicago, IL 60660 As someone who's lived in Lebanon (with a side of Cretan and a French education), who has explored the Mediterranean region at length, I had to be picky with this list. My first task was to search for venues representing various parts of the Mediterranean Basin not just those offering gyros or kebabs. Next, I looked up each entry on various customer review sites, and only retained those with fully functional websites, as well as a rating of at least 4 bubbles on TripAdvisor and 3.9 stars on Yelp.After perusing menus, and making sure each location included ample choices along with typical items and ingredients found in Mediterranean cuisine I locked in my final selections. Additionally, while developing my slides, I gathered and summarized positive reviews from TripAdvisor, Yelp, Open Table, and Google Reviews representing different types of customers. Each entry featured patrons reporting the food was authentic and tasty, the service was courteous, and they couldn't wait to return. Review us on GoogleHaving you as part of our food lovers family means the world to us. Wekindly ask you to spread the word about our restaurant by leaving aGoogle Review.Zaytune Mediterranean Grill"Best Mediterranean Restaurant in Chicago"STORYABOUTat Zaytune Mediterranean Grill in Chicago, we serve tasty Mediterranean dishes prepared using only fresh meats, vegetables and herbs. At this local favorite, you'll discover a variety of grilled wraps, plates, and salads, with your choice of protein. From vegetarian falafels to steak shawarma, all of our dishes feature the freshest produce and herbs. Each order at Zaytune is custom-made. We even grill our homemade flatbread fresh for your order. It takes a little more time, but you will taste the freshness and quality. Zaytune is derived from the Arabic word "olive," and is our way of celebrating the deep connection we have to traditional Mediterranean cuisine -- with a modern twist. Zaytune prides itself on its artisanal, made-to-order Mediterranean cuisine! Whether you choose dine in, catering, delivery, or carryout. We hope to see you soon!With over 20 countries in a 2,500-mile stretch, the term Mediterranean cuisine is as vague as declaring "I love indie music." It's a giant food umbrella that includes caviar, iskender, gyros, koshary, and hummus, all of which can be found in Chicago. So the next time, Mediterranean? pops up in the food-planning group chat, check out some of these excellent spots with influences ranging from Spain to Lebanon. Unrated: This is a restaurant we want to re-visit before rating, or its a coffee shop, bar, or dessert shop. We only rate spots where you can eat a full meal.Learn more2429 N Lincoln Ave, Chicago, Illinois 60614\$\$\$\$\$At some point during a meal here everyone experiences what we call The Gait Momentthe inevitable realization that this places modern Israeli food is absolutely incredible. The smoky cinnamon-braised brisket hummus might be the source of the epiphany. Or it could be the falafel with mango and pickled turnips. Perhaps the mushroom-stuffed cabbage with saffron mujadara will be the culprit. Their \$98 tasting menu is just that great. And with a relaxed, airy dining space that works equally well for a casual date with yourself as it does for a special anniversary, any reason to visit Gait is the best one.615 W Randolph St, Chicago, IL 60661Like that one TV show you could watch thousands of times and never get sick of, Avec is one of the most reliable spots in the city. The food at this West Loop Mediterranean small-plates place always makes us happyparticularly staples like the bacon-stuffed, chorizo-wrapped dates, and the taleggio flatbread. The tiny communal dining room feels a little bit like eating inside of a wooden chest, so expect to be sitting elbow-to-elbow with strangers. But those strangers are having a wonderful meal, which means this crowded place is consistently enjoyable whether youre here for a birthday, or on a 76th date with the person you share a utilities bill with. RESERVE A TABLE WITHCARDMEMBER BENEFITTS FORGet access to exclusive reservations at this spot with Chase Sapphire Reserve. New cardmembers get \$300 in annual dining statement credits.SEE EXCLUSIVE TIMESAPPLY NOW932 W Fulton St, Chicago, IL 60607\$\$\$\$\$Rose Mary has been booked since before it even opened, which isnt that shocking considering this West Loop spot is from a popular Top Chef winner and in one of the buzziest neighborhoods in the city. But this hyped-up place is also a great Croatian-Italian restaurant. The crni rizot is what the ocean would taste like if it made a wish to become risotto. Their cevapi plate full of garlicky sausages is perfect for sharing, and they have an incredible line-up of pastas. And despite the place being always packed, you'll be seated in a timely fashion, have a relaxed dinner with clairvoyant servers who bring the check exactly when youre ready to leave. Which, by your last course, will be never.Reservations released one month in advance, but the bar area is reserved for walk-ins. If you get there close to or before opening time (5pm), you'll most likely find an empty seat or two.RESERVE A TABLE WITH333 S Franklin St, Chicago, IL 60606Perfect For:Casual DinnersSerious Takeout OperationLunchBereket took over a bright yellow space that used to be a counter-service restaurant, with drop ceilings and a now-defunct metal cafeteria station that definitely feels like a place you might visit during a rushed lunch break in the Loop. But you should take a minute to slow downthe Turkish food on the long menu should be savored. Everything is housemade, from the fresh bread that starts your meal to the firm manti topped with marinara and yogurt sauce. The tender dner meat in the iskender pairs wonderfully with its buttery tomato-sauce-soaked croutons, and the flaky baklava will make you wonder, Why dont I eat more baklava? And because this place is open all day, seven days a week, theres no excuse for you not to.3224 N Damen Ave, Chicago, IL 60618Perfect For:Serious Takeout OperationWalk-InsCasual DinnersLunchWhether youre Team Rice Bowl or Team Wrap, theres no losing when either includes the excellent meat and vegetarian options at this small counter-service restaurant in Roscoe Village. Every piece shaved off of Sinyas spinning shawarma and gyro spits is nicely charred and tender, while the pillowy falafel is fried to a shade of golden brown worthy of its own Crayola crayon. Though endlessly respawning Doorsdashers are a testament to Sinyas take-out-order greatness, were big fans of grabbing one of the underutilized two tops and just digging in right there.660 N Orleans St, Chicago, IL 60654\$\$\$\$\$Perfect For:Drinking Great CocktailsSitting OutsideSifr is a modern Middle Eastern and Mediterranean spot from the Indienne team, and the menu has a wide range of great dishes, including blackened mushrooms in a peppery sauce and lamb kebab with tzatziki. The space looks like a lot of restaurants these days (full of plants and playing tropical house), but its a lovely place to spend a few hours, especially if it involves happy hour or some time on their rooftop.RESERVE A TABLE WITH302 N Green St, Chicago, IL 60607\$\$\$\$\$Abas massive plant-filled space, huge rooftop patio, and unexplainable ability to make anyone eating there look like a movie star naturally lends itself to being one of the buzziest restaurants in the city. This West Loop spot is definitely a scene, so its often crowded, but assuming youre able to grab a table with some friends or a solo bar seat, youre in for some delicious food. The housemade pita is delicious and luckily comes with most dishesethe smoky kebabs, lamb chops, and our favorite, the crispy short rib hummus. The creamy dip comes with a buttery poached egg and is luckily around for both breakfast and lunch. RESERVE A TABLE WITH946 N Orleans St, Chicago, Illinois 60610\$\$\$\$\$Perfect For:Coffee & A Light BiteThis Croatian cafe in River North has layers. Domas soothing Scandinavian furniture store aesthetic is perfect for a relaxing morning when you want to pair soft tmovekai makai full of poppyseeds with a good book. But its also ideal when youre not-so-relaxed and need a quiet place with strong wifi so you can cram some work while simultaneously cramming in some lunch (shoutout to all you multi-tasking legends). Their evapi sandwich with fluffy flatbread, smoky sausages, clotted cream, and a roasted pepper spread is excellentand is the fuel you need to get through all of those spreadsheets.350 W Armitage Ave, Chicago, Chicago 60614Perfect For:Dining SoloLunchSerious Takeout OperationEvettes is a counter-service Lebanese-Mexican cafe in Lincoln Park that could be somewhere in the Sonoran Desert. This casual restaurant is all geometric floors and brightly painted brick, and when the sun beams through the windows, sitting at the counter can feel like a day on the beach. The short menu has a handful of options like bowls and wraps, but the standouts are anything involving the smoky chicken shawarma, the not-too-oily, well-spiced falafel, or the fantastic tacos on soft little pita-tortilla hybrids stuffed with halloumi or chicken arabes. Most people get their food to go, but its worth the risk of sunburn to dine into the baklava ice cream can help you cool off.5449 N Clark St, Chicago, IL 60640Perfect For:Walk-InsCasual DinnersBYOBDespite what all the beef and lamb gyros floating around Chicago might suggest, in Greece, pork is traditionally the star of this classic sandwich. And one of the best places in the city that serves it in all its piggy glory is this casual Andersonville spot, which has just enough white and blue everywhere to reinforce that it is, in fact, a Greek restaurant. The juicy pork belly slices have perfectly crispy edges, and the accompanying onion, tomato, and tart tzatziki balance out the salty meat. Its Greek 2 Us other disheslike saucy gigantes and zucchini fritters with fluffy skordaliaare also delicious, and a great warm-up before diving into a meat-stuffed pita. 2542 N Milwaukee Ave, Chicago, IL 60647Perfect For:Big GroupsBirthdaysBuzzy, has delicious food, and is fairly easy to get infinding a restaurant that falls in the center of this triple Venn diagram is no easy feat. Enter Andros Taverna. Somehow, despite how good the food is and how busy this place seems to be all of the time, its actually pretty easy to snag a reservation at a reasonable dinner time even if its the week of. The menu has appetizers like the must-order kataifi cheese pie (shredded filo layered with cheese, baked, then topped with honey and pistachios), entrees like prawn saganaki in a rich tomato sauce, and a very tasty spanakopita. They also have a big patio, which is exactly where we want to spend a summer night eating some baklava froyo.RESERVE A TABLE WITH243 S Franklin St, Chicago, Illinois 60606Perfect For:Casual DinnersDrinks & A Light BiteLunchFor a hotel restaurant hiding in the shadow of the Willis Tower, Seville at the Hilton has surprisingly good food. The seasonal menu with Spanish and Italian influences has a lot going on, but some of the highlights are the tapas, large bowls of pasta, perfectly cooked fish, and some fantastic pinsa. The chorizo and peppers version is a good choice for something spicy and the perfect size to split with some out-of-town friends after being coerced into taking them to Willis skydeck. And if you want to enjoy a city view without having to press your nose against some glass windows, Seville also has a large outdoor deck.RESERVE A TABLE WITH1206 E 53rd St, Chicago, IL 60615\$\$\$\$\$Perfect For:Walk-InsCasual DinnersSerious Takeout OperationUChicago students and Hyde Park residents have been coming to this Palestinian-owned neighborhood spot for their falafel for over three decades. And for good reason, the fried chickpea spheres have an excellent crunchy crust, a fluffy center, and get plenty of herby zip from tahini that clearly has a dill obsession. But its also worth checking out foods that fuse Mexican and Mediterranean elements, like tacos layered with tender chicken shawarma or lamb barbacoa, both of which get a generous drizzle of their zesty chili salsa and peppery harissa tahini. They also occasionally drop specials like harissa glazed fried chicken tacos and host comedy shows, so check out their Instagram for menu and event updates.1440 W Chicago Ave, Chicago, IL 60642Perfect For:Walk-InsBig GroupsCasual DinnersThis Noble Square spot is one of the best places for Moroccan food in Chicago. Flaky sugar-dusted pastillas loaded with chicken are sweet and savory perfection. Peppery harira or chicken tagine infused with warming spices and full of chickpeas are both so delicious that a single spoonful could instantly put a good cry on pause. The servings are large and the dimly lit space full of decorative tiles and plates doesnt get too busy, so its great for a spontaneous meal with friends that includes some of Marrakechs delicious mint tea.6954 N Western Ave, Chicago, Illinois 60645Perfect For:Walk-InsCasual DinnersSerious Takeout OperationWith a name like Zimis Pizza And Grill, its not surprising this Rogers Park spot has pizza, burgers, and wings. But hiding among the margherita pies and fries are tasty Albanian dishes, like a flaky spinach and cheese burek and all sorts of traditional meat options. The stuffed pleskavica is a glorious ground beef slab full of cheese, like a juicy Lucy that divorced the bun, and their gebapa and spicy qofte have an excellent charred flavor and pair perfectly with the creamy tart kajmak on the side. Zimi's has plenty of room for groups, so you and some fellow carnivores will have space to tackle the large meat platter that comes with gebapa, gofta, spicy beef franks, steak, and chicken.730 W Maxwell St, Chicago, Illinois 60607\$\$\$\$\$Perfect For:Casual DinnersLunchDespite its name, resist the urge to only get kebabs at this University Village spotthere are plenty of other Egyptian specialties that deserve a spot on the table. The koshary is an excellentmountain of rice, lentils, pasta, tomato sauce, and fried onions that only gets better once the side of garlicky vinegar and hot sauce joins the party. The taamiya is a must-order as well, because there arent many places in Chicago to get these fava bean falafel and the ones here are perfectly crispy. Whatever you end up ordering, meals never feel hurriedwhich is great because youll want some time to just enjoy sitting in a booth with some throw pillows after eating a whole plate of koshary.200 S Halsted St, Chicago, IL 60661Greek Islands has been around for more than 50 years, so its basically a Chicago institution. And this massive Greektown quinquagenarian is one of the citys best places for classic Greek dishes. The creamy and tart avgolemono is one of our favorite takes on the traditional chicken-egg soup. Its also the perfect way to kick off a dinner of tomatoey kokkinisto with tender lamb shank, grilled octopus with a tangy vinaigrette, and saganaki thats flamed tableside with an accompanying Opa! from your server. Though the multi-level seating, fake roofing and balconies, and Mykonos-esque blue and white color scheme dont totally make you forget youre in the West Loop, its probably enough to charm you into joining in all of the Opas, too. KOKOS COMBO 10.002 eggs, 2 Sausage, 2 bacon, 2 pancakes or French Toast w/ hash browns or fresh fruit.STEAK & EGGS 14.85Marinated ribeye steak & 2 eggs any style w/ hash browns or fresh fruit, toast & jelly or pancakes.2 EGGS ANY STYLE 7.75 W/ hash browns or fresh fruit, toast & jelly or pancakes. W/ Bacon, Ham, Sausage or Gyros ADD 2.35.PANCAKES OR FRENCH TOAST 7.75Add bacon or sausage links 2.35. MEXICAN SKILLET 10.50chorizo sausage, green peppers, onions, tomatoes, crumbled tortilla chips & pepper jack cheese served w/ tortillas or toast. Served w/ hashbrowns or fresh fruit, toast, & jelly.Choice of cheese: Cheddar, American, Pepper Jack, Swiss & FetaAdd Cheese or extra cheese for .99. Additional veggies for .59.Antipelli Mediterranean Grill- Serving up Chicagos favorite Mediterranean tastes,baklava,kunefe and flavors that happen to be healthy- since 2020! Fresh baked pita, zesty meats,lahmacun,pide,hummus and baba ghanoush that will show up in your dreams. All of our meals will leave you saying Place your order, and bite into your falafel fantasy today! Eat, Live, Love, Antipelli Mediterranean Grill!Discover our fresh and delicious cuisine 3224 N Damen Avenue 354 W Hubbard Street Chicago, IL 60618 Chicago, IL 60654hello@eatsinya.com rivernorth@eatsinya.com 773.897.5700 312.763.3952

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