



10 New Chicago Venues for Fall 2018 Meetings and Events

The restaurants, hotels, meeting spaces, and more open to host events in Chicago.

By Erin Brereton October 4, 2018, 7:30 AM EDT

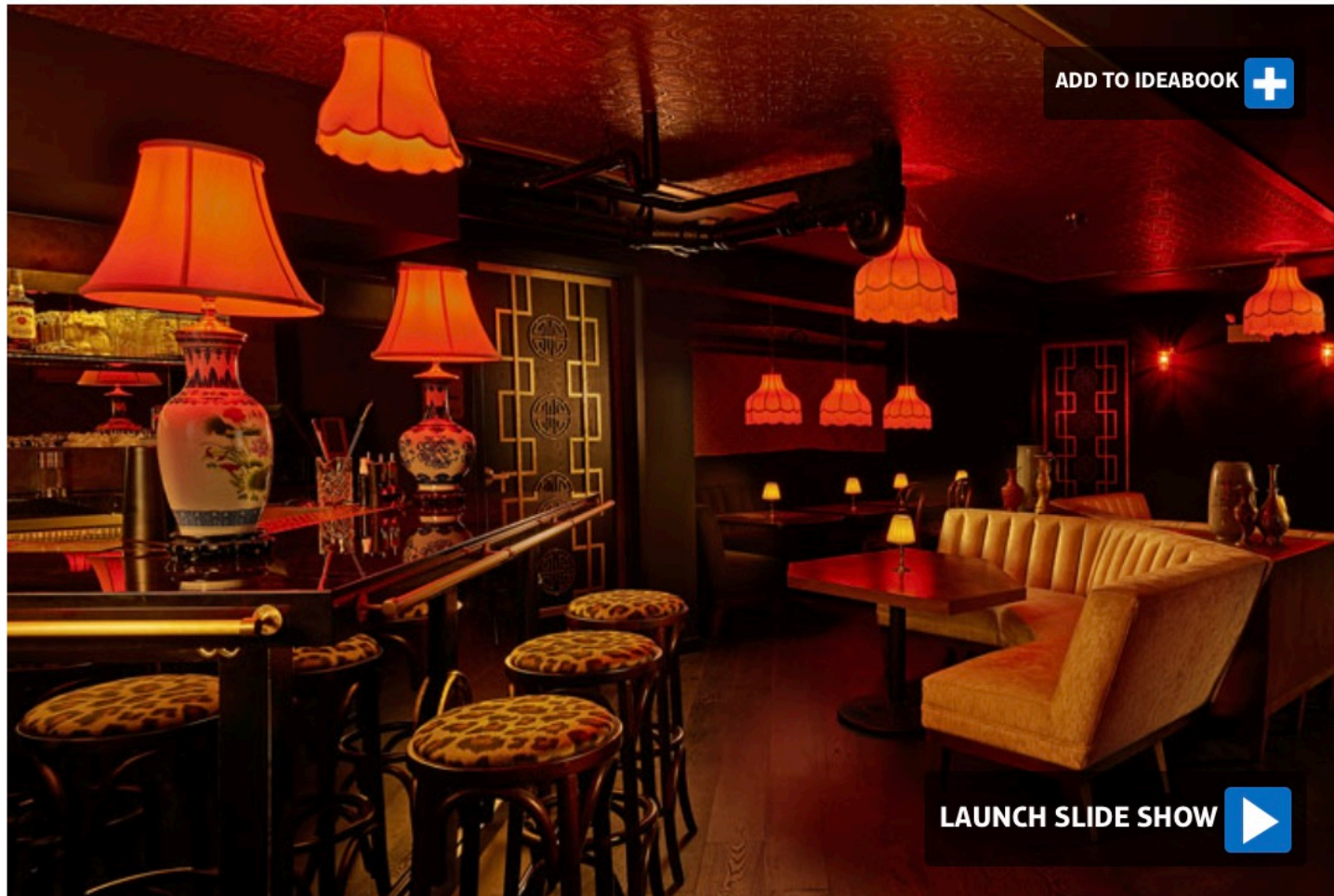


Photo: Anthony Tahlier

CHICAGO Here's a look at new Chicago eateries, drinking spots, hotels, conference areas, private rooms, and other spaces available for events this fall. The new and renovated Chicago venues are available for corporate parties, weddings, fundraisers, outdoor functions, business dinners, teambuilding activities, conferences, meetings, and more.

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1. The Dalcy

At 6,000 square feet, **the Dalcy** is Lettuce Entertain You's largest private event hall in the city, housed on the third floor of new Mediterranean-influenced Aba eatery in Fulton Market. Although modern elements were added to the interior, no major structural changes were made to the building—which, dating back to 1887, is reportedly one of the neighborhood's oldest—preserving original design elements such as its brick walls and arched windows. With room for 320 seated guests (with dancing) or 550 standing attendees, a number of seating options are possible, including a classroom configuration that could be used for a daytime meeting and a crescent-style layout for award dinners or other events. Catering options include Aba-inspired small plate dishes like beef tenderloin with a cauliflower puree or pan-roasted halibut; the restaurant's rooftop, featuring skyline views, ivy, and a fireplace, can hold reception-style events for 220 guests.

Photo: Kent Drake

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2. The Chicago Architecture Center

In late August, the [Chicago Architecture Center](#), formerly known as the Chicago Architecture Foundation, moved to a new 20,000-square-foot space located above the dock where the organization's river cruises depart. The center has tapped Blue Plate Catering to provide food for events held at the Gold Coast venue; available space includes the galleries, which span two floors and more than 8,000 square feet, offering views of the Chicago River, Tribune Tower, and other landmarks through 40-foot-tall windows. Guests can check out a 4,250-building model of Chicago, various exhibitions, and the Buck Grand Atrium, a large, open space on the first floor with ample room for cocktail tables. Hosts can also make use of the multiple microphones, monitors, and capabilities for live streaming in the Joan & Gary Gand Lecture Hall, which seats 140 for lectures, presentations, or meetings—or rent the more compact ArcelorMittal Design Studio, which seats 36.

Photo: Courtesy of The Chicago Architecture Center

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3. Mesler

Mesler, the 2,000-square-foot, 60-seat New American restaurant inside the Sophy Hyde Park, started serving customers in late September, just before the 98-room hotel officially opened. Decor meant to echo an author's dining room includes bookshelves carved into columns and a wall gallery of book covers, along with original pieces by local artists inspired by Hyde Park literature. Mesler offers an intimate, 350-square-foot private dining area that can be used to host dinners for 14 guests; although the outdoor living room-like Sanctuary space isn't set up for seated events, when combined with the Patio, an adjacent area that has tables, 85 guests can mingle in a 1,500-square-foot area. The eatery's menu, created by chef Bradford Shovlin, a veteran of the Michelin-starred North Pond and Crofton on Wells, offers options from lighter fare, such as chili-glazed chicken wings, or sausage rigatoni, hand-cut steaks, and other heartier items.

Photo: Courtesy of Sophy Hyde Park

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4. Blind Dragon

The River North outpost of the speakeasy-style lounge **Blind Dragon**, which also has locations in California and Arizona, is situated in the basement of the Found Hotel. Since early August, the venue has been serving up cocktails infused with lemongrass, ginger juice, and other inventive ingredients—courtesy of beverage specialist Justin Campbell, who's crafted libations for Girl and the Goat—alongside chicken satay, Asian barbecue pork ribs, and other savory shareable items. Vintage tiki matting decorates the walls of the 2,000-square-foot venue, which holds 80 seated or 120 standing guests. Three private karaoke rooms, two with space for 10 crooners and one that can fit 15, are also on hand, offering guests a choice of more than 25,000 songs.

Photo: Anthony Tahlier

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5. Optima

Optima, a 3,500-square-foot, two-level eatery from the operators of the nearby Rabbit Hole bar, opened in May in Old Town. Formerly the Mexican dining destination Salpicon, the space underwent a renovation, and the decor now centers on rock and roll memorabilia and features a massive wall of speakers. Overall, the venue holds 120 guests for reception-style events. Its 1,500-square-foot Marquee Room has been used for occasions including political fund-raisers, birthday parties, and more; it seats 40. A seasonal outdoor patio that seats 12 is also available for private events, weather permitting.

Photo: Courtesy of Optima

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6. Casati's

The menu at **Casati's**—a new Lincoln Park restaurant, comes from chef Christian Fantoni, who's logged in time at Le Bernardin and Le Cirque in New York and RPM Italia and Phil Stefani's 437 Rush in Chicago—includes pizze de pinsa, comprised of an Italian flour blend and more water than traditional crust, giving it less calories, carbs, and fat than traditional pizza, according to the eatery. Open since mid-August, the venue has a 2,500-square-foot dining room and bar area, which features a wood-barrel ceiling, olive trees, and gold and green hues. It can accommodate 80 seated guests or about 180 for receptions. A 700-square-foot patio is an option for smaller events of as many as 20 guests.

Photo: Courtesy of Casati's

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7. The Hiltons at McCormick Place

In August, Hilton premiered its first tri-branded property, which features rooms from three signature hotel brands—HiltonGarden Inn, Hampton Inn, and Home2Suites—in one structure. Connected to the massive Motor Row District McCormick Place convention center and adjacent to the Wintrust Arena concert and sports venue, the **Hiltons at McCormick Place** offers nearly 7,000 total square feet of meeting space. Located on the third floor among antique car-theme artwork and hallways lined in leather-textured wallpaper, the more than a dozen rooms that are available for events are able to be broken down into sizes as small as 500 to 650 square feet; some can also be combined to create a 1,000- to 1,320-square-foot space. Featuring floor-to-ceiling windows and customizable digital reader boards that can be updated for each occasion, options are available for about 60 attendees, depending on the configuration. A third-floor rooftop patio that's still in the works will also be offered for private events.

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8. Walton Street Kitchen & Bar

Three chic spaces are available for private events in [Walton Street Kitchen & Bar](#), which opened inside a luxury Gold Coast condo building in September and offers views of nearby State Street. Bookshelves and green plaid wallpaper line the first-floor lounge, where guests can either stand or sink into leather couch or wingback chair seating in some 450 square feet of space; the lounge seats 18 or holds 25 for receptions. Upstairs, the Walton Room, designed with private parties in mind, accommodates 30 standing guests or 24 seated guests; and additional chairs and tables are being ordered. Hosts can also reserve both the Walton Room and 1,700-square-foot main dining room for 132 seated guests—or both those spaces, along with the 1,300-square-foot second-floor bar area, for a 250-person reception-style event.

Photo: Galdones Photography

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9. Claridge House

Claridge House—known as Claridge Hotel until 2005, then as Hotel Indigo—debuted a new look following a \$9 million renovation in May. While classic 1920s architectural elements by Chicagoan Walter Ahlschlager incorporated into the design have been preserved, the Gold Coast hotel's new look also features spheres and other circular imagery in artwork, lobby lighting, and a chandelier made of silk-wrapped rings to represent the property coming full circle back to its prior moniker. The sunlit 672-square-foot DaVinci Room, which includes a small built-in stage, can hold 60 guests for a seated or standing event; guests can nosh on passed items ranging from mini crab cakes to beef sliders and chicken satay in the space, which has new laminate wood flooring and chandeliers.

Photo: Nicholas James Fochtman

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10. The Reveler

After an eight-month renovation, the Last Call Tavern Group debuted the Roscoe Village spot **the Reveler**—outfitted with 96 taps and a horseshoe-shaped bar—in late August. Three private rooms offer 700, 1,000, and 1,100 square feet of space, respectively. The largest space, which seats 75 or holds 100 for receptions, has an open floor plan, three regulation dart alleys, and D.I.Y. beer taps that let guests pour their own pint. Catering is available, including customized versions of items from the main menu, such as slider-sized versions of the pub's wood-fired burgers. For dessert, there's an ice cream bar where guests can craft their own sweet treat.

Photo: Courtesy of Barry Brecheisen