



FALL'S GLORIOUS FALL

STUNNING FOLIAGE IS JUST THE BEGINNING. FROM SUPERB SEASONAL DINING TO AN INCREDIBLE SLATE OF CULTURAL EVENTS, AUTUMN IN CHICAGO IS PACKED WITH REASONS TO SAY SAYONARA TO SUMMER.

BY KATE ROCKWOOD

Summer in Chicago gets all the love, but fall may be the true star of the city's seasons. The cooler temps herald a surge of artistic energy far and wide, while foodies and fashionistas alike revel in what's in season this time of year. We asked four Chicago VIPs to share the can't-miss favorites they look forward to most as autumn rolls in....



SEASONAL STYLE

For fashion designer **Maria Pinto**, fall is the Goldilocks of Chicago style: cool enough to embrace the fun of layers, but still warm enough to keep our coats in the closet.

Michelle Obama and Oprah Winfrey have both embraced the easy, chic comfort of Maria Pinto's designs, and versatility is at the core of the designer's M2057 by Maria Pinto fall collection of dresses, pants, wraps, and jackets. This season, the machine-washable pieces include two-way zippers for the first time, allowing for adjustable slits and necklines. It's a capsule collection perfectly suited

for Chicago's mercurial fall weather, which keeps residents and visitors alike on their toes.

"I can't imagine living somewhere without seasons," says Pinto. "Spring is this big explosion of growth, then summer we're all revved up, and then fall comes and it's a cool, quieting-down time. You start cocooning back in.

"I think eating comfort food on the outdoor patio of **Nico Osteria** (1015 N. Rush St., 312-994-7100; nicoosteria.com) perfectly captures that. The patio is just gorgeous—you can really feel that you're outside. I remember last fall sitting next to a heat lamp in a cashmere wrap, sipping a glass of red wine, and just feeling so strongly that fall had arrived.

"Fall is this incredible period of renewal for me. It ushers in a different way of being. You can have a 90-degree day, but there's still that coolness in the air. We start transitioning to light layers, but we don't have to pull out the heavy-duty pieces yet. Everything feels different, and I want to be outside as much as possible.

"When I buy fall clothes, one of my go-to stores in Chicago is **Blake**

(212 W. Chicago Ave., 312-202-0047). The owners do a really great job curating brands and including up-and-coming designers. And they always have new kinds of sweaters with beautiful yarns. Even if I'm not buying one of the sweaters on that particular trip, I want to touch and look and feel everything.



Blake's impeccably curated styles range from established brands to up-and-comers.

"**Robin Richman** (2108 N. Damen Ave., 773-278-6150; robinrichman.com) is another go-to fall destination for me, but it has a very different point of view. I always find these really special pieces—like they carry Goti jewelry, but it's not

the Goti that you see everywhere else, because here they took a leap and bought some really unique pieces. I'm an accessories person, and I love that you can still show them off in the fall.

"For my designs, I take inspiration from things like architecture and nature. **Lurie Garden** (at the southern end of Millennium Park; lurigarden.org) is stunning this time of year. I like to go there at least once a month. It's not that big—just five acres—but it's beautifully designed by the Dutch garden designer Piet Oudolf, who also did the High Line in New York City. Lurie Garden feels very contemporary and unlike more traditional gardens. In the fall, all of the grasses and flowers start to shift, so you'll have fields of purple aster and pops of goldenrod and later eulalia grass. It's so serene during that fall transition time. It's probably where I'd want to live, if given the choice.

"Painting is a big part of my life right now, and I find it so much easier to do those more disciplined, solo projects when the weather drops and the daylight grows shorter. There are more than 100 artists at **Mana Contemporary Chicago** (2233 S. Throop St., 312-850-0555; manacontemporarychicago.com), where I have a painting studio. The energy is incredible; it gives me such a boost.

"I like to grab a bite just a short walk away, at **Dusek's** (1227 W. 18th St., 312-526-3851; dusekschicago.com). My favorite dish they make is this roasted quail with cornbread and scotch quail egg. It's amazing. A meal there is always comforting and deeply inspiring."



The open kitchen at Nico Osteria.



Outdoor dining at Piccolo Sogno under a canopy of fall colors is a must.



TASTE OF AUTUMN

Donnie Madia, managing partner of One Off Hospitality Group and 2015 James Beard Award winner for outstanding restaurateur, shares his favorite ways to savor fall.

Most kids might spend autumn afternoons playing baseball or early football, but young Donnie Madia was already immersed in food. The Chicago native spent the breezy early autumn tanning tomatoes with his mother.

"It was probably not my favorite thing to do as a kid, but I remember picking tomatoes with her in September, and she'd show me how to skin them and crush them," he says.

I vividly remember the taste of her tomato sauce—the best sauce I've ever had in my life—and those are my strongest memories of fall in Chicago.

When I crave homemade sauce now, I head to **Tufano's Vernon Park Tap** (1073 W. Vernon Park Pl., 312-733-3393; tufanosrestaurant.com). It's been around since 1930, and I worked there when I was young. It's a great red-sauce spot.

"Our winters seem to be getting longer rather than shorter, so I try to get as much dining alfresco in before it's gone. **Piccolo Sogno** (464 N. Halsted St., 312-421-0077; piccolosogno.com) is an outstanding spot. Because of the foliage in the trees that surround all the tables, it doesn't seem like you're dining out on a concrete slab at all. Chef Tony Priolo has one or two pizzas that change with the seasons, and anything he does is fantastic. My wife and I are both of Italian descent, and our 2-year-old, Bronson, loves pizza, so we can spend a long time here in the fall.

"On Sundays, we try to enjoy family days when we're not working—and, trust me, my business partners and I work a ton. I like taking Bronson to the **Adler Planetarium** (1300 S. Lake Shore Dr., 312-922-7827; adlerplanetarium.org) during the fall because

it has these sweeping views of the city and the lake. You can admire the changing colors of the season outside, and the inside feels cozy despite the museum's size. And noticing the excitement on his face while he's there is the best feeling in the world."



CURTAINS UP

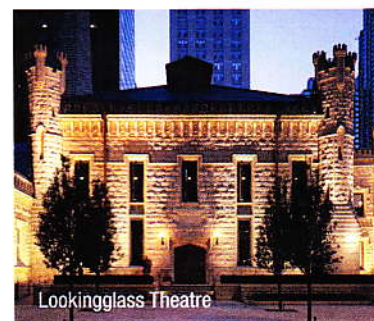
For new Steppenwolf Theatre Artistic Director **Anna Shapiro**, fall in Chicago is bursting with potential.

A lifelong resident of Evanston, Anna Shapiro returned this summer from a year in New York City, directing *This Is Our Youth*

and *Fish in the Dark* on Broadway. Though she's been a Steppenwolf ensemble member for years, this fall she takes the reins as its new artistic director.

"I have two school-aged kids and I'm a teacher, so fall is always the beginning in every aspect of my life," says Shapiro. "For me, this fall is also the beginning of a job I've dreamed of having my whole life. I want to be in every day of September and October and November and feel every moment of the fall season at **Steppenwolf**. I'm very excited because [former Artistic Director] Martha Lavey chose John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* to open the season (September 17–November 15, 1650 N. Halsted St., 312-335-1650; steppenwolf.org).

"If you're a theater maker or a theatergoer or both, the fall is like opening the first chapter of a book. All of the companies are starting a story that they want to tell you that's going to last all year long. I always want to see anything that the **Lookingglass Theatre** (821 N. Michigan Ave., 312-337-0665; lookingglasstheatre.org) or **Goodman Theatre** (170 N. Dearborn St., 312-443-3800; goodmantheatre.org) does. But I love the smaller companies, too, like the **Griffin Theatre** (1624 W. Granville Ave., 773-769-2228; griffintheatre.com) and **Steep Theatre** (1115 W. Berwyn Ave., 773-649-3186; steeptheatre.com).



DAY-TRIP DESTINATIONS

Squeeze in one last trip before the winter hibernation begins.

Buchanan, Michigan:

The charming old mill town has a tiny shopping district that's a magnet for home décor and antiques shoppers. And the surrounding rolling hills are dotted with vineyards, many open for tastings and tours. 90 miles east on I-90; buchanan.mi.us

Kettle Moraine State Forest, Wisconsin:

The 30,000-acre Northern Unit of the forest offers kaleidoscopic vistas of fall foliage, which you can take in on the Kettle Moraine Scenic Drive and Lake-to-Lake Bike Trail. Pitch a tent under the stars at one of the campgrounds or head to nearby Kohler Waters Spa for a bit of pampering. 130 miles north on I-94; dnr.wi.gov

Geneva, Illinois:

Nestled on the Fox River, Geneva has become a playground for adults looking to soak up the fall sunshine: Think canoeing, scenic strolls, tandem bike rentals, and outdoor markets aplenty. The annual Festival of the Vine draws a crowd September 11-13. 40 miles west on I-88; genevachamber.com



AN APPLE A DAY

The best places to enjoy all manner of the season's signature fruit.

Apple Picking at More Than Delicious Orchard:

Skip the carnival explosion of most u-pick places in favor of this well-kept rural orchard that grows 80 varieties of apples (including Honeycrisp) and pears. 9905 Thompson Road, Woodstock, 815-575-9650; morethandelicious.com

Apple Fritters at Old Fashioned Donuts:

The line regularly snakes out the door for these handmade fritters studded with chunks of apple. Bring your appetite or a friend—the fritters are the size of dinner plates. 11248 S. Michigan Ave., 773-995-7420

Cider Tour at Virtue Farms:

A Goose Island brewing veteran opened this cider press, which uses heirloom apples from Michigan. The cidery tour—and the bourbon barrel-aged cider—is well worth the drive. 2170 62nd St., Fennville, Michigan, 269-561-5001; virtuecider.com

Apple Cider Donuts at Dinkel's Bakery:

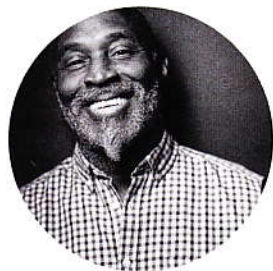
The apple cider is refreshingly flavorful in these old-fashioned cake doughnuts, which are coated with cinnamon sugar. 3329 N. Lincoln Ave., 773-281-7300; dinkels.com

Cider cocktails at Longman & Eagle:

An appletini it's not. Ask for the Innocence Lost, a discerning blend of Anthem Hops cider, Aperol, North Shore Distillery Aquavit, and grapefruit bitters. 2657 N. Kedzie Ave., 773-276-7110; longmanandeagle.com

COOL-WEATHER CULTURE

The temperatures may be cooling down, but for artist and internationally known tastemaker **Nick Cave**, autumn is when Chicago's cultural scene heats up.



As a professor and head of the Fashion, Body, and Garments graduate program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Nick Cave—who has gained global recognition for his ongoing “Soundsuit” project, a series of costumes made from found materials—is more in tune than most with the back-to-school season. But autumn brings a renewed energy and focus to his art as well. This fall, he begins construction on a 15,000-square-foot building project in the Irving Park neighborhood that will eventually house art studios and rotating storefronts.

“If summer is about relaxing and hanging out, fall is this signal of a cultural jump-start in Chicago,” muses Cave. “It’s like the New Year beginning, in terms of the arts and culture scene.”

Expo Chicago (September 17–20, Navy Pier; expochicago.com) is one of the anchor events that mark the start of that season. More than 100 contemporary and modern galleries participate from around the world; it can be so exciting.

“The **Randolph Street Market Festival** (September 26–27, 1340 W. Washington St.; randolphstreetmarket.com) hosts its final outdoor event in the early fall, and that’s a real marker of the season. I love sneaking in one last visit and the festivities around that. It seems everyone wants to visit the outdoor antique market and vintage market one

last time—it’s no less crowded than during the summer.

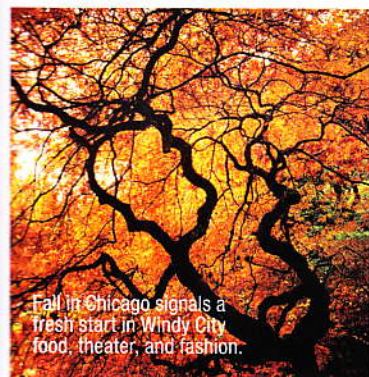
“Many of the **art galleries in the West Loop** open on the same day, the first Friday in September. It’s really become part of the DNA of the city, a community-based effort with all kinds of creative people gathering together. And in terms of fall favorites for hanging out, it’s always upstairs at **Maude’s Liquor Bar** (840 W. Randolph St., 312-243-9712; maudeliqurbar.com) for me. The upstairs has a very lounge-y feel to it, with all sorts of sofas and candles. But you eat dinner at the same time. It’s very dark and cozy. I like the intimacy of it.

“In many ways the **Chicago Cultural Center** (78 E. Washington St., 312-744-6630) has the opposite feel: It’s airy and open. But it’s another fall favorite of mine. It’s just two blocks from the Art Institute of Chicago, so I often go on my lunch break or sometimes take my students there. Performances, exhibitions, lectures—it’s such a cultural hub in the center of the city.

“I live in the South Loop, two blocks from the lake. I get up every morning and by 6 [I’m] on the **lakeshore path**. There’s no one out there at that time, and I need a bit of isolation sometimes. In the fall, you can really tell the difference in the air. There’s such a sense of space and independence. The trees are turning; the grasses are changing colors. It’s really sort of nice to be able to be in the presence of all that change as you’re starting your day.” **MA**

“My favorite restaurant is right across the street, **Balena** (1633 N. Halsted St., 312-867-3888; balena.chicago.com). It’s set up to fit the kind of evening you want to have, whether that’s sitting for a longer dinner or standing at a tall table and grabbing drinks. The food is seasonal and exquisite. I don’t tend to order chicken in restaurants, but the salt-and-pepper chicken thighs are insanely good. And the bar has great ice cubes, which I know sounds insane. But trust me—order a drink with ice cubes in it.

“My twins are 6, and the one fall ritual we always do as a family is visit the **Chicago Botanic Garden** (1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-5440; chicagobotanic.org). It’s a beautiful



Fall in Chicago signals a fresh start in Windy City food, theater, and fashion.

time of year there, full of autumnal orange and really deep reds and browns. The restaurant there sits on top of the water with a bunch of patios and bridges. The kids like to watch the ducks while we eat. My kids get so excited in the fall in general, but it’s almost a bittersweet time for me. With the start of school and theater season, fall has this emotional weight. It’s filled with so much excitement, but it also marks the passing of another year.”



Maude's Liquor Bar is the perfect spot for an intimate gathering. RIGHT: Chicagoans get in one last visit to Randolph Street Market Festival's outdoor market at the start of autumn.

