

## Chicago French Market Opens

By: Susan Taylor

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Photograph by Steve Johnson

No one with an appetite will be able to resist the offerings at the Chicago French Market, which opened Thursday as part of MetraMarket in the Ogilvie Transportation Center. With more than two dozen vendors, the Market offers an array of fresh produce, cheese, coffee, meat and poultry, bread, pastry (fancy and rustic) and just about everything you need to put together a meal at home.

The market is the dream of Chicagoan Bob Wislow, CEO of U.S. Equities Realty, who partnered with the Bensidoun family of Paris to bring the European-style market to the transportation hub. Sebastien Bensidoun, who first visited Chicago at age 4, hopes to see the market expand to an outdoor farmers market in summer. For those who don't commute or aren't close enough to walk, the market offers reduced-rate validated parking. Here are some highlights.

**Canady Le Chocolatier** Michael Canady studied chocolate making in Europe and brings a global range of flavor and design to his selection of chocolates. Handcrafted truffles and bonbons come in such flavors as pistachio, ginger, creme brulee, cognac, Champagne and tamarind. Also look for chocolate covered fruits and dragees (nuts drenched in chocolate).

**Chicago Organics** This is the place to find certified organic produce, meats and dairy products, including eggs and yogurt.

**City Fresh Market** An offshoot of one of Chicago's global markets features fresh produce, poultry and beef raised without antibiotics and hormones, and a few groceries such as salad dressings and oils that complement the fresh produce. Also look for ready-to-eat bureks - large Balkan-style U-shaped pastries filled with meat or cheese.

**Completely Nuts** Fresh, roasted and salted or cinnamon-roasted cashews, pecans, almonds, and peanuts are hard to resist.

**Delightful Pastries** Get set for the holidays with spicy gingerbread loaves covered in chocolate, and cognac- and Grand Marnier- soaked fruitcakes. Dobra Bielinski also makes traditional Polish specialties, including paczki (Polish doughnuts filled with plum or rose petal jam), pierogi with various fillings, and for the Christmas eve meal, uszka, tiny porcini filled pasta.

**Necessity Baking Co.** The French Market is the first retail location for Ellen Carney Granda, who started selling her imaginative creations at farmers markets. Her cleverly named "faux-caccia" is available with Parmesan topping or filled with savory blends such as red onion jam. Aromatic potato bread is made with real potatoes and rosemary. Also look for braided dense round challah, and "Stay Spot Stay," a moist raisin bread flavored with cinnamon and molasses.

**Pop This!** Popcorn comes plain or with coatings and mixes. Try the cashew caramel for a rich crunchy blend.

**Produce Express** This shop will carry a large selection of fresh produce. Run by a family of Illinois farmers, the shop will focus on locally grown produce when available.

**Provo's Village Bake Shoppe** Wesley Kuras trained in Poland for seven years to learn his craft. He bakes various rye breads, as well as Latvian bread containing molasses, houska -- a sweet egg bread with golden raisins -- and potato bread. Also look for Danish pastry in poppy seed, cheese and cherry flavors.

**Sweet Miss Givings** This is the first retail shop of the bakery that provides not only delicious cupcakes, scones, biscotti and muffins, but also a sense of hope to the formerly homeless and HIV/AIDS-affected people who have trained at Chicago House to learn to work in a bakery. Fifty percent of the profits support the work of Chicago House.

**Vanille Patisserie** The combination of classic French techniques and modern flavors helped Dimitri Fayard win the World Pastry Championship in Nashville, Tenn., in 2008. His pristinely beautiful pastries combine flavor, texture and design in affordable single-serving indulgences. For the holidays, French yule logs, mini-cookies and French macarons in neon colors make fabulous gifts.

**Wisconsin Cheese Mart** For more than 70 years, the Wisconsin Cheese Mart has been gathering the best Wisconsin cheeses and selling them at a store in Milwaukee. The second store will be at the Chicago French Market and will stock 80 to 100 varieties. Marieke Gouda, caramelized from two years of aging, is unusually creamy with tiny melt-in-your-mouth crystals. Bellavitanoa, a creamy Parmesan, Cheddar blend is soaked in merlot. The shop also sells 20 varieties of Milwaukee's Usinger sausages.

131 N. Clinton St.; 7:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.  
Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m.-6  
p.m. Saturday; 312-575-0306  
chicagofrenchmarket.com