

# Knot unexpected

## Traditional or with a twist, get ready to rethink the pretzel

By Leah Fabel

From a bag, they're boring; they smack of health food when what we really want are potato chips. At the concession stand, there's a chance they've been in the freezer since 1994—and no amount of processed cheese can hide it. But don't give up on pretzels yet. This Oktoberfest season, we've found the finest in Chicago. No matter how you twist 'em, these treats are worth a try.

### Schlegl's Bakery and Cafe

3334 W. FOSTER AVE. 773-539-9207

**Their twist:** best Bavarian pretzel

Years ago, Chicago's Bavarian bakers mixed pretzel ingredients by hand, then diligently twisted the dough. Today, few of these classic bakeries remain, making Schlegl's a rare find. This third-generation pretzel purveyor produces thousands of soft pretzels (\$1 each) from its secret-recipe dough each year, including a batch of more than 10,000 for Lincoln Square's Oktoberfest.

### Dinkel's Bakery

3329 N. LINCOLN AVE. 773-281-7300

**Their twist:** best pretzel with a beer

Like Schlegl's, Dinkel's Bakery is a time-piece. This family-owned German bakery

tember and October, when nights begin to turn cool. In Bavaria, the pretzels are a mid-morning snack, cut like sandwich bread and served with butter, cheese and a beer. If your boss won't go for reviving that tradition, you'll find they're just as delicious after 5 p.m. Third-generation bakery owner Norm Dinkel suggests pairing one with Dinkelacker, a German brew available at Delicatessen Meyer (4750 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-561-3377).

### Hannah's Bretzel

180 W. WASHINGTON ST.  
312-621-1111

**Their twist:** best pretzel bread sandwich

Hannah's Bretzel is a relative newcomer on the pretzel scene, bringing with it new ideas like organic ingredients. Beyond baking the traditional Swabian soft pretzel (\$1.75)

(Swabia is a region in Bavaria; pretzel is the authentic spelling of *pretzel*), Hannah's also makes a pretzel loaf that looks like a mini-baguette with a shiny golden-brown finish. The sliced bread is used for sandwiches, such as turkey with Swiss gruyere (\$6.95) and Italian Parma ham with mozzarella (\$6.95). The result: a pretzel bread sandwich that's a little bit ballpark but a whole lot healthy.

### D'Amato's Bakery

1124 W. GRAND AVE. 312-733-5456

**Their twist:** best foreign pretzel

Pretzels are about as Italian as croissants are British. It's a compliment to Germans, then, that Italians liked pretzels enough to



**TWIST 'N' SHOUT** The pretzel bread sandwiches at Hannah's Bretzel are something to shout about. [CHASE AGNELLO/DEAN FILE PHOTO FOR METROMIX]

Italian pretzel. The basic ingredients are the same, but the Italian version is dense and crispy, and comes in a round, ring shape instead of a twist. One other notable difference: *Taralli* are served with wine, not beer. At D'Amato's, an Italian mainstay for more than 40 years, *taralli* are available fresh each morning; they come plain or flavored with garlic, pepper or anise (\$6 per bag).

### Windy City Sweets

3308 N. BROADWAY 773-477-6100

**Their twist:** best chocolate-coated pretzel

Sure, savory and sweet pairings now appear on trendy dessert menus all over town. But this delightful combo developed long ago with the marriage of pretzels and chocolate. You'll find the finest at Windy City Sweets, where the coated pretzels are fit for the Kaiser. Choose from milk choco-

ed, as well as chocolate-dipped versions covered with Reese's Pieces, M&Ms, or toffee and nuts (\$18.99 per pound).

### Southport Grocery and Cafe

3552 N. SOUTHPORT AVE. 773-665-0100

**Their twist:** best pretzel candy bar

If you love pretzels but it's chocolate you really crave, head to Southport Grocery for a Retro Salty Pretzel (\$3.25) bar, made like the Chocolate Bar in New York. Imagine a ground pretzel mixed into a milk chocolate bar—a high-end Hershey's with a salt crunch. If you can resist unwrapping it on the spot, Southport Grocery owner Lisa Santorec recommends taking one home and mashing it with pretzels and ice cream for a decadent chocolate pretzel ice cream delight.

[LEAH FABEL IS A METROMIX SPECIAL