

MEN'S JOURNAL

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The Hunter-Gatherer Restaurant

By [Alina Dizik](#)

A homey restaurant in Chicago mixes exotic game and foraged plants to create high cuisine.

Few are the restaurants that even attempt what could be called hunter-gatherer cuisine. Fewer are those that do it successfully. At Chicago's [Elizabeth Restaurant](#), chef Iliana Regan has made an art form of turning the seemingly inedible into delicacies. On any given night, diners may encounter game meats like deer – or even the odd raccoon – paired with foraged ingredients, like acorns, fungi, or pine shoots. In comparison, heritage veggies and artisanal cheese seem almost corporate.

Regan is a self-professed nerd when it comes to foraging for food, which is what she does in her spare time, she told our table when we visited the restaurant recently. Many of the ingredients on her menu have been handpicked from the Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area, just across the Illinois border in Indiana. It's tough to imagine eating a dozen or so courses based of gamey meats and alternately exotic or humble sounding plants, but our meal was delicious and we found three hours had passed without notice.

The restaurant is housed in an unmarked building in Chicago's Lincoln Square – not exactly a foodie neighborhood, making it all the more of a discovery. With just three wooden communal tables, the restaurant has a homey ambiance, and eating there makes you feel as though you're attending a private dinner party, an impression that's amplified by chef Regan's own collection of edible plant books that line the bookshelves. The dining experience is truly unique: Rare is the occasion when you'll ever cross a menu that includes deer heart, maitake mushroom tea, venison tartare, and duck blood soup.

Tickets for meals are sold online; guests can choose from three packages ranging from 10 to 25 courses. Tax, tip, and wine pairings are extra. [*\$75 to \$195; elizabeth-restaurant.com*]