The gist: I’ve always felt that Chicago has seriously lacked a Korean food scene. Unlike other cities with vibrant Koreatowns, such as New York City and Los Angeles, Chicago’s most legitimate options are mostly strewn throughout the northwestern suburbs. All of this suggests why I’m thrilled to see a Korean-inspired bar and eatery pop up in River North. It’s called Miki’s Park, and I’m crossing my fingers that this place will trigger a new era of Korean drinking and dining in Chicago. Because God knows we have enough Italian restaurants.

The drinks: First and foremost, Miki’s Park is a bar. And since it’s located smack in the middle of River North’s thumping club scene, it had better be. But still, it thinks outside the box with a contemporary, playful approach to imbibing, noshing, and socializing. Naturally, soju is the star of the drinks list, featured prominently on the menu and in cocktails, of which there are six to eight originals on deck. There’s also a focused lineup of wines, craft beers, and liquors. Of note: The bar plans to offer different illustrated instructions for Korean drinking games, which is the most charming thing I’ve ever heard.
The food: Make no mistake, just because Miki’s Park bills itself as a bar doesn’t mean the food skims. Rather, it offers a delightful range of dishes ideal for snacking and sharing—or keeping all to yourself. There’s bibimbap, lollipop chicken wings, Seoul sliders, Tiger fries heaped with bulgogi, and Korean rice rolls. There’s also a to-go window by the main entrance, which will serve late-night sustenance until 4 a.m. on Friday and 5 a.m. on Saturday. And there is a daytime lunch menu.

The space: Unlike anything else downtown, Miki’s Park is a transportive and immersive experience that’s sure to whisk you away to Seoul. Via a long bamboo-lined corridor entrance, it sports a lounge-y vibe with high-top tables, plush banquettes, and an Art Deco–style bar. It’s all illuminated with fun street art, neon signs, and cherry blossoms dangling from the ceiling. For added entertainment, there’s a photo booth that automatically sends photos to your Instagram; karaoke will be available on occasion; and a DJ spins pop music on Friday and Saturday late into the night.

The deets: Miki’s Park is now open at 109 West Hubbard Street.