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Verve
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Evanston features delicious choices

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Flat Top Grill
707 Church St.
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Tapas Barcelona
1615 Chicago Ave.
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As spring break rolls around, those who do not have the privilege of going on a tropical vacation are forced to find a source of amusement right here in Chicago.

However, a night on the town requires a source or nourishment usually provided by bland ordinary family style restaurant if you happen to be on a tight budget. However, here are two restaurants with a different style and for reasonable prices that are not too far away from home.

For a restaurant that's a little out of the ordinary, we suggest trying Flat Top Grill, located on the corner of Church and Orrington in Evanston. It's a fairly dim restaurant with



Tapas Barcelona features a wide array of appetizers.
Photo courtesy of www.tapasbarcelona.com

small tables set up outside for warmer weather. As you look around the restaurant there are chalkboards full of desserts and drinks. Every so often the restaurant will hire artist to draw pictures of the food on the chalkboard, which are pleasing to the eye. After the customer is seated, the waiter proceeds to explain the "Flat Top system." Basically, everyone makes his/her own stir fry custom made to taste.

As you get up and go to the food line, you take a little stick given to you with your table number. In the system, there are five steps.

First, grab a bowl and fill it with either rice or noodles and also place your stick with you number into the bowl.

Second, there is an array of vegetables from which you can choose and mix it with your rice or noodles.

Third, you come upon a section where there are several different sauces that can be added to the stir-fry.

Fourth, if you choose to have meat, take a smaller bowl located near the sauces and place whatever meat you would like

in your stir fry. Usually, Flat Top has three to four choices of meat every night.

The fifth and final step is to add any spices you desire or custom make your stir fry into a soup, salad or mooshoo (the stir-fry is wrapped in a tortilla like shell).

To help you with your decision with what to put in your dish, there is a big chalkboard behind the buffet with popular food mixtures and even tells you the number of calories of some of the foods. Then, simply return to your table and wait.

Upon arrival, the custom-made stir-fry has the same stick in the bowl that can be reused as many times, as you desire. This restaurant will run about \$12 per person for dinner and \$10 for lunch, if no dessert or drinks are ordered.

If stir-fry doesn't suit you, try a restaurant only a few blocks south, specializing in Spanish food. Tapas Barcelona is located on Chicago Ave. The atmosphere in Tapas Barcelona is very lively with soft music playing in the background and small tables set up on their patio for warmer weather.

When ordering food from the menu, each person chooses from two to four items because each portion is the size of an appetizer and therefore cheaper. All the dishes are brought out simultaneously and set in the middle of the table.

Dishes vary from Spanish style soft-shelled crab to fettuccini alfredo with chicken. You may request to have individual plates brought out for all the people so that all the dishes can be shared.

This restaurant will usually cost anywhere from \$10-\$20 a person depending on the type of food and the amount of dishes ordered.



Flat Top Grill allows diners to design their own meals.
Photo courtesy of www.flattopgrill.com