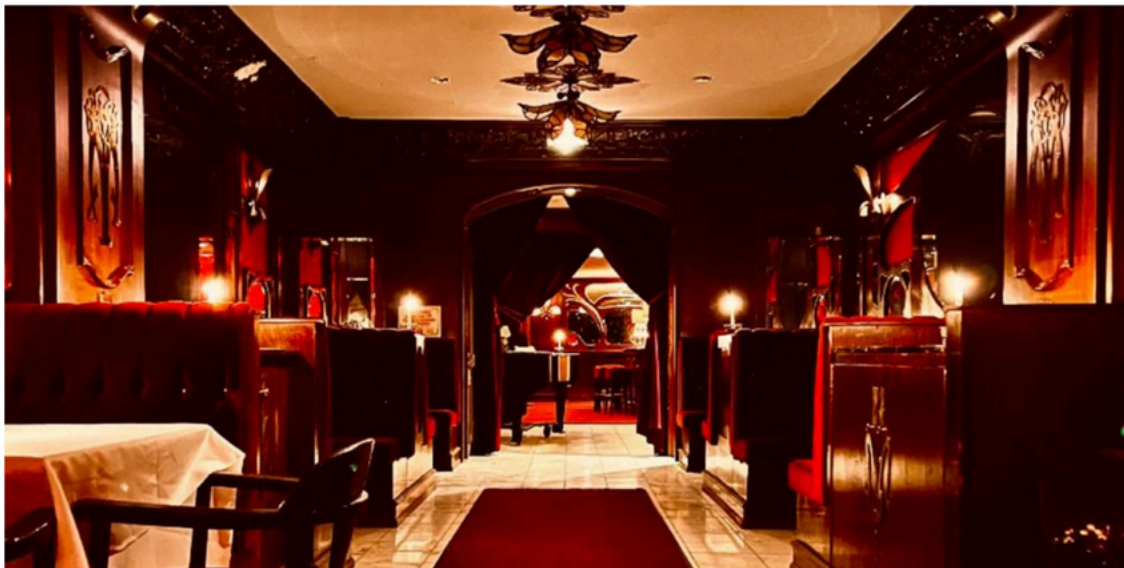


Restaurants

# Historic Astor Club opens doors to members

By Corli Jay

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Credit: Astor Club

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The Astor Club, a new members-only social club is now open for business. Owner Adam Bilter said that the club's grand opening took place the weekend of June 30, but the past weekend served as the first full dinner service in its dining room.

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"A lot of the members that showed up there live in the neighborhood, but a lot of them hadn't met each other, which is a reason people are joining the club in the first place, to meet other neighbors," said Bilter, who mentioned that 70% of its members live within four blocks of the space, making Astor Club a neighborhood-serving venture.

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The Gold Coast club located in the basement of 1300 N. Astor St. has a one-time initiation fee of \$4,800 with monthly dues of \$300. Members include former Chicago Bear Mike Ditka, actor Jim Belushi and cabaret singer Denise Tomasello.

Biliter, who owns the social club with his wife, Victoria, said that opening night sold out. Capacity was limited to 120 members and their guests. Currently, the club has over 250 members, which surpasses their initial goal. Adam Biliter said.

"We already have planned a black tie, New Year's Eve party for our members and their guests. We'll be having Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday parties. We plan to set up some charitable events and even fashion shows," he said.

For regular programming, members can expect to hear live music played from the various pianos that are housed at the club, including a 1936 Steinway, Biliter said. Members will also be entertained by John Vincent, resident National Anthem singer for the Chicago Cubs, who performed in the dining room over the weekend.

When the Astor Club opened in 1963, it operated as Maxim's de Paris, a replica of the Paris restaurant and was once the only five-star restaurant in Chicago, according to the [company's website](#). The restaurant welcomed visitors such as Frank Sinatra, Elton John and The Rolling Stones back in its heyday.

The City Council [approved the \\$680,000 sale](#) to Biliter and his wife, who live in Astor Tower, in January 2022. The restaurant space was gifted to the city in 2000 where it served as the Nancy Goldberg International Center. Late last year, restaurant group Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises [announced a joint venture](#) with New York-based Tao Group Hospitality. The "one-of-a-kind" private members-only club was teased to open in River North with a culinary focus in late 2023.

With the vast amount of social clubs that crowd the area, Biliter says he sees the Astor Club's presence as an opportunity for collaboration.

"That's the thing about most of these clubs, they're all unique in some way. You know, like the Yacht Club is about boating. Biggs is about cigars. Racquet Club is about racquet sports," he said. "Every club kind of has (its) own unique aspect. And so, it hasn't really been too competitive at all — in fact, more collaborative."