



On a Bicycle
**Built
by Hand**

Mike Salvatore's custom bike shop and craft coffeehouse combine for a stop that's all the buzz in Chicago.

BY KIT BERNARDI
PHOTOS BY JOHN NOLTNER



Heritage Bikes
General Store, 2959
N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago
(773/245-3005;
heritagebicycles.com)

The aroma of freshly ground coffee drifts across Lakeview's sidewalks as morning customers slip through the door at Heritage Bikes General Store. Baristas serve up the day's first caffeine fixes (preparing an average of 300 drinks each day), while customers gather at communal tables and mechanics get to work on hand-built bicycles in their section of this early-1900s brick storefront in Chicago.

"We're a mash-up of two passionate cultures—coffee and cycling," owner Mike Salvatore says while ringing up sales of coffee and scratch-made treats from nearby Dollop Bake Shop.

At Heritage, everything is customized, including the coffee bar that Mike's crew made of reclaimed wood. That's where the process of ordering a bicycle begins. While sipping lattes, customers discuss their personal style and biking habits before heading out on a test ride through the trendy neighborhood less than two miles from Lake Michigan.

Heritage is the first bicycle manufacturer to set up shop in Chicago since Schwinn shuttered its production plant decades ago. Each of the 500 or so bikes Heritage builds every year takes six weeks to assemble. The line includes five vintage-inspired frames with names such as The Chief, The Jane, The Goblin and Daisy. The bikes are fabricated with American-made steel tubing. Prices start at \$799 and go up as buyers customize. Upgrades such as high-performance brake systems and gears, as well as custom paint jobs, saddles and handlebars, personalize the ride. Stylish accessories include fenders, colored tires and cycling bags. Heritage Bikes General Store also sells bicycle gear crafted by European designers.

For Mike, a fifth-generation Chicagoan, owning a neighborhood store is as natural as, well, riding a bike. He's been peddling goods since he sold balloons tethered to the handlebars of his Knight Rider Big Wheel in his Rogers Park neighborhood (about 6 miles north of Lakeview).

Mike met his photographer wife, Melissa, at the University of Arizona. After graduation, the couple moved to New York, where Mike worked on Wall Street and built bikes at an East Village co-op on weekends. While selling bikes at street markets, Mike noticed vendors luring customers with coffee. That's when his bicycle-coffee concept began percolating.

In 2011, Mike and Melissa moved back to Chicago and opened Heritage Bikes down the block from Melissa's family portrait storefront, A Little Photo Studio. Now, customers also find Heritage Outpost coffee hangouts in the Edgewater and Uptown neighborhoods. Chicago's Intelligentsia roasts the Heritage brand of globally grown coffees for all of the stores decked out with bicycles.

This year, Mike plans to expand the business with more Heritage Outposts in Chicago (some serving craft cocktails) and increase bike production. He's customizing the Chicago commute, one made-to-order bike and coffee at a time. That's just how Mike rolls.



Check the Illinois Made section of enjoyillinois.com for tips on where to find handcrafted flavors and wares.



CHICAGO'S LAKEFRONT TRAIL

PHOTOGRAPH: (LAKEFRONT TRAIL) DAVID NEVALA

MUST-DO

MIKE'S FAVE RIDES

CHICAGO'S LAKEFRONT TRAIL
The 18.5-mile paved route along Lake Michigan's shoreline connects sandy beaches and waterfront parks, perfect for picnics framed by iconic skyline views. The Hotel Lincoln, SoHo House Chicago and Chicago Athletic Association hotels provide guests with Heritage bikes for exploring the city.

LABAGH WOODS
The Chicago River and undulating gravel bike trails run through this forest preserve on the city's northwest side. Nearby, throwback Superdawg dishes classic Chicago-style hot dogs.

BARRINGTON
The northern suburb's country roads offer leisurely road rides past horse farms. Mike kick-starts his daylong pedals at Cook Street Coffee and ends them at Penny Road Pub.

ILLINOIS CYCLOCROSS EVENTS
Attending these high-performance, cross-country races as a spectator is a great way to experience Illinois' small towns. In his 1968 motor home, Mike transports Chicago teams sponsored by Heritage.