

Gene's Sausage Shop: Size Doesn't Matter

Chicago has no shortage of European-style delis, but neither the shops nor their offerings are created equal. Case in point: Gene's Sausage Shop and Delicatessen in the Polish enclave of Belmont-Cragin.

Once featured on *Frugal Gourmet*, Gene's easily bests the smaller, similarly-styled shops sprinkled across the city's Northwest Side. Crowned by an enormous bovine nicknamed Queenie, Gene's 22-year-old shop offers a dizzying array of sausages made on premises, aisles of imported foods at Wal-Mart prices, European specialties and tantalizing smells.

No matter the size or type of sausage, Gene's sausages are sure to satisfy. Close your eyes and you could be in a food hall in Munich or Krakow. Open your eyes and view a deli counter bulging with over 30 varieties of sausage—from veal hot dogs to spicy links.

Poland-born proprietors Eugene and Alice Luszcz are serious about their victuals: deli meats, such as thick-as-a-thigh veal bologna, aren't pre-sliced, and Old World recipes are utilized. Whether knishes, kielbasa or dill pickle soup, everything's made in petite batches. Specialty items include snow-white folds of tripe, veal liver, fresh-sliced bacon, buttery potato pancakes, delicate blintzes, flavor-packed pierogi, and dozens of herrings, including an enormous barrel of scoop-it-yourself fish.

Whether it's smoked meats such as lusty, finger-thin kabanosy or garlic-infused, giant kielbasa, Chicago's premier sausage shop proves once and for all that size doesn't really matter.

- Alan J. Shannon

Gene's Sausage Shop and Delicatessen, 5330 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago; 773.777.6322



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Photos by Eric Futran