

» HOUSE PRICES 2004 OUR ANNUAL SURVEY

OCTOBER 2004

# Chicago

## BEST PLACES TO WORK

**PLUS**

> **THAT GREAT SUCKING SOUND?**  
THE DISAPPEARING CONVENTION BUSINESS

> **THE SEXPOT WHO CONQUERED CHICAGO**

> **THE HOTTEST RESTAURANTS**  
SEE 'DISH,' PAGE 185

**25**

Chicago companies with top pay, perks, and policies



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» Taste buds: Lettuce lets them eat cake in the company test kitchen.

# 6

## Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises

*Owns and operates restaurants*

### HEADQUARTERS:

Chicago **FOUNDED:**

1971 **EMPLOYEES:**

4,000 total; 3,000 in Chicago

» **WHEN MITCHELL LANGELE** accepted an employee relations position six years ago in the corporate office of Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises, the culinary empire (\$200 million revenue in 2003) founded by restaurant impresarios Richard Melman and the late Jerry Orzoff, he did not expect to start out bartending, bussing tables, serving, and

washing dishes for nearly three months. His lesson: No job is too trivial in the Lettuce organization. "All you really need to do is work at a restaurant on one not-so-busy night, let alone a really busy night, and you'll understand why everybody is important and equal," says Kevin Brown, the company's president and CEO.

All employees, even part-timers, receive health coverage and extensive food and wine training that is widely considered among the best in the business. Tip-earning employees who average 25 hours a week earn paid vacation time. After six months, workers can qualify for 401(k) benefits. Other perks: financial assistance for marriage and divorce, flexible scheduling, shortened workdays, Spanish class tuition reimbursement, and tickets to sporting events as a reward for good performance. And at Lettuce, there is such a thing as a free lunch—for all employees.

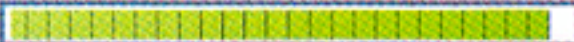
"Not too many restaurants do those things," says Susie Southgate-Fox, a senior vice president of human resources who started out 35 years ago as a cashier and hostess at Mr. Ricky's, a Skokie delicatessen that Melman's father owned. "If we're not giving to our employees and don't take care of them, they're not going to want to give back to us or to our guests."

**FYI** More than 10 percent of Lettuce's 34 equity partners began their careers in hourly jobs.

**COMPANY SCORE: 18TH**



**EMPLOYEE SCORE: 1ST**



## > Turnover

*Measures resignation rates and related policies*

- 1 **ALLSTATE INSURANCE COMPANY**
- 2 **DDB CHICAGO**
- 3 **FIRST MIDWEST BANK**
- 4 **USG CORPORATION**
- 5 **CHUBB INSURANCE**

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