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metro

An insider's guide to the best new places to eat, shop, stay and visit—from the Loop to the Ringstrasse.

new orleans A lush five-acre setting adjacent to the New Orleans Museum of Art is now home to the **Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden**. The collection is set within an architectural framework of cast-stone-and-bronze pavilions, meandering paths, pedestrian bridges and a reflecting lagoon—really a series of outdoor galleries designed by Lee Lodbetter Architects and landscape architects Sawyer/Berson. Imposing works by Louise Bourgeois, Henry Moore, George Segal (above), Joel Shapiro and others rest among the moss-laden, 200-year-old live oaks, towering pines, magnolias and camellias, making this one of the premier sculpture gardens in the country (1 Dueling Oaks Dr., City Park; 504/488-2631, noma.org).

chicago **Avec**, a new West Loop Gate wine bar, is the product of the team that created the award-winning eatery Blackbird next door. This lower-priced and less-formal offshoot offers rustic boutique wines and wine-friendly food. The dishes are all meant to be shared—*avec* means “with” in French—and the restaurant has five large communal plank tables seating about 50. The menu runs the gamut from small raw-vegetable salads and hearty servings of Provençal fish stew to braised or grilled meats, focaccias and *pissaladières* (\$13 to \$20). The spare postmodern decor is forged of simple yet sumptuous materials: burnished cedar, hickory planks and a wall of lustrous green wine bottles (615 W. Randolph St.; 312/377-2002). >

