124 WINNERS.

2012 BEST

of Chicago

SHOPS, BARS, FOOD, FUN & MORE!

READERS' CHOICE AWARDS
Best Baby Gear
Galt Toys
Galt Baby
500 N. Michigan Ave., 312-660-0550; 185 N. Cindy Avenue, 773-327-3983; 5515 S. State

[1] We tried, we really did, to find a new best place to shop for the most trend-forward modern baby goods in Chicago. But, the local family-owned toy specialty store, still wins. It’s often the first to carry strollers and infant gear that soon become must-have items: the fold-by-itself Origami stroller, the Silver Cross pram, the Naked Tub from Boon, and, today’s hot seller, the Mamaroo bouncy seat.

Best Hostess Gifts
Hazel
1502 N. Monroe Ave, 773-788-1722

[2] The successful hostess gift depends on striking just the right note. In three connected storefronts, Hazel offers a dazzling array of solutions: glass platters painted to resemble Chinese checkers or backgammon boards ($40), Angela Adams soy candles ($36), a mod Joseph Joseph spatula ($10), and a big selection of affordable jewelry. The nicest touch: Hazel also sells flowers by the stem. Toss three yellow cafe lattes into a vase and the next invite is assured.

Best New Home Design Shop
Megan Winters Maison
675 N. Forest Ave, Lake Forest, 847-395-905

[3] Some people think traditional design means fuzzy and dull. Designer Megan Winters wants to change that perception. Her charming new Lake Forest shop and design studio, dominated by a bold black-and-white color scheme, is filled with home accessories, gifts, and furniture that Winters finds at flea markets and fairs here and in Europe. She then paints, glits, and upholsters the classic pieces to make them fresh and modern.

Best New Men’s Clothing
Independence
271 W. Wacker, 312-605-295

[4] Opening amid many clothing store closings last year, Independence, a cozy but well-stocked men’s apparel den, is a spark in the ash heap. George Viagas, the local craftsman behind Oak Street Bootmakers, opened the shop in March and governs it with his take on the made-in-America mantra. Look for goods previously unavailable in Chicago—denim from Imogene + Willie, sunglasses from American Optical, and Brooklyn-made aprons from Stanley & Sons.

Best New Retail Concept
Heritage Bicycles
260 W. Lucas Ave, 773-245-7105

[5] Equal parts coffee shop, custom bike lab, and Americana shrine, this Lake View spot defies easy categorization. Michael and Melissa Salvatore craft luxury two-wheelers out in the open—plus sell vintage sporting goods, cycle-inspired stationery, fresh pastries, and Stumptown coffee. Whatever the concept is, we—and the creative types who colonize the cafe’s communal table—agree that they’ve nailed it.