

**CHICAGO PARENT**

# Best hacks for baby playdates with your DINK friends

by Dawn Reiss



mother and daughter in summer cafe outdoor

For those of us who mostly have DINK—Dual Income, No Kids—friends, it can be a difficult transition when baby comes along. You've got one foot in the carefree, do-what-I-want old world while still trying to make time for mom friends, work, a significant other, the baby and maybe, just maybe, an hour for yourself here and there.

When my friend Kevin and his partner wanted to meet my baby for the first time, we headed to the Growling Rabbit in Edgewater, which ended up being a perfect spot with its hangover skillet, scrambles, breakfast burritos, a highchair I could use for my son's car seat and enough space for the stroller without being totally obnoxious.

If you're trying to figure out what to do with your childless friends, here are a few suggestions.

Remember, no matter what you decide, be brave enough to venture out, even if you feel like you're in a sleep deprived daze. There's something about being around friends, no matter how tired you are, that is just good for the soul and will help you feel human again.

## Go to brunch

If it's hard to meet friends during the "witching hours" that accompany dinnertime, try brunch. If you have a big group and live on the northwest side, try [Fannie's Cafe](#). This Wisconsin-esque space has a bakery in front, random homemade crafts, live music and a \$18 for adults, \$10 for kids, \$4 for toddlers, all-you-can-eat brunch of homemade scones and other baked goods with savory items, granola and fresh fruit.

If you're by Millennium Park, especially with out-of-towners, [Wildberry Pancakes](#) in the Prudential building is always a good option. The local chain has fluffy-not-too-sweet berry bliss pancakes with mascarpone, red velvet French toast, skillet and salads.

Don't be surprised if you find a slew of strollers at [Crosby's Kitchen](#) in Lakeview, which offers a great Bloody Mary, monkey bread, crab toast and omelets. Kids can get pancakes and French toast while parents can go for chicken chili Benedict or lobster deviled eggs. Afterwards, there's shopping along the Southport (Avenue) corridor.

## Grab coffee (or tea)

If you want to just chill for a bit while the baby naps in the stroller, look for a coffee shop that also serves tea if you're a nursing mom who doesn't want the caffeine.

[Overflow](#) coffee bar in the South Loop uses fairly-traded, local ingredients with its European-style bakery, coffee, organic teas, even a Nutella mocha. The cafe is connected to the private Daystar School so there's plenty of kids here, which can make it noisier.

Bucktown's [Red June](#) has bagels and sandwiches in a kid- and dog-friendly café that also serves breakfast and lunch.

If you want to go old school and play board games, head to North Park's [Java & Mug Café](#). It's open until midnight for the college students, but offers plenty of seating for those who go early with kids. There's bubble tea, waffle sundaes and other options besides a hot cup of joe.

In Portage Park, the [Perkolator](#) offers tea, coffee, breakfast and lunch options coupled with a retro counter and mixed-matched furniture.

## Find a brewery

There always seems to be the "there's a baby in a bar" comments from childless couples. Sometimes heading to a brewery is just easier. The key is to find one with decent food, so when you're not drinking, you've got options. Rachael Toma-Tamez, a mom of four, says she's a fan of [Revolution Brewery Tap Room](#) in Logan Square. "My kids have fallen asleep in the booths without a bat of an eye," she says.

[Old Irving Brewery](#) is another favorite for parents for its family-friendly atmosphere (you can play bags inside), good beers, brunch, lunch and dinner options that include a bacon-and-cheddar mac-and-cheese. Plus, it opens for lunch daily at 11 a.m.

[Gastropub Corridor Brewery & Provisions](#) in Lakeview has brunch, lunch and dinner options ranging from artisan pizzas, salads and sandwiches to brioche waffles and croque madame.

[Goose Island's Clybourn brewpub](#) in Lincoln Park and [Lagunitas Brewing Company](#) in Douglas Park neighborhood are both known as being kid-friendly.

For a more creative option, head to [The Plant](#) in Back of the Yards, an urban farm and food incubator that teaches sustainable business practices. This innovative net-zero space houses 21 business inside the 93,500-square-foot former meatpacking facility, including the Whiner Beer Company.

## Sit on a patio

Being outside can help if the baby starts to wail. [Chief O'Neill's Pub](#) is a favorite among parents who love outside patios, plus you can eat Shepherd's pie, fish and chips, listen to live music and drink some Guinness.

Avondale's [Honey Butter Fried Chicken](#) has an intimate indoor seating, but a nice patio to sit and chill. Plus, there's pimento mac and cheese, biscuits and gravy and heavenly chicken. Or head to [Baker Miller Bakery & Millhouse](#) in Lincoln Square, which has a tiny hidden outdoor patio perfect for a quiet retreat or [Café Selmarie](#) with its outdoor seating near the fountain on the square.

Both Wicker Park's [Big Star Taco](#) and Portage Park's [Cochinita Taco Company](#) offer savory mix-and-match tacos coupled with outside spaces. [Beatrix](#) in Fulton Market, Streeterville and River North offer a variety of outdoor patios with cocktails and brunch options like cauliflower grits or steak chimichurri with eggs, along with Belgium waffles and lemon pancakes.

## Take a group class

If you've got a day off during the week, head to [Bloom Yoga](#) studio off the Rockwell CTA stop in Lincoln Square, which offers great adult-and-baby yoga classes on Mondays and Thursdays. Then walk across the street to Beans and Bagels, if it's before 2 p.m., or [Rockwell's Neighborhood Grill](#), which is another family-packed bar.