They say variety is the spice of life. And there is no better variety than in the city of Chicago, which hosts a wide range of ethnic neighborhoods and restaurants. Likewise, the enclosed Preliminary Program for ATA’s 55th Annual Conference in Chicago, November 5-8, 2014, contains a virtual smörgåsbord of conference goodies and delicacies. So, grab your highlighter and dig in.

The multi-colored grid at the heart of the Preliminary Program offers sessions on a wide array of subjects and languages; a delicate balance of new topics and tried-and-true sessions for both absolute beginners and seasoned professionals. Between our Distinguished Speaker series, preconference seminars, and sessions from our generous colleagues, it is sure to be a feast for the linguistically-inclined. Fortunately, we received over 400 proposals this year, which gave us a lot from which to choose — this is also a good sign of potential attendance.

In addition to over 180 educational sessions, we are pleased to offer a great program of special events. Here is a quick peek of what we have to offer this year. Be sure to check out the Preliminary Program and the website for more details (www.atanet.org/conf/2014).

Preconference Seminars: Three-hour sessions held the day before the conference that are designed to delve in-depth into advanced topics with an expert.

Tool Training Seminars: A new addition to our regular preconference seminar line-up that will explore the latest and greatest translator tools and programs in detail.

The Tool Bar: Our own take on the “Genius Bar” that will allow you to get answers to your detailed questions from tech wizards on a one-on-one basis.

ATA Distinguished Speaker Series: High-profile speakers will share their expertise on a wide range of subjects.

Brainstorm Networking: A new twist on the traditional Speed Networking event, where participants work their way around the room in discussions revolving around hot topics in translation and interpreting.

Betsy Benjaminson: The freelance translator from Israel who blew the whistle on Toyota’s unintended acceleration problem will share her story. Her talk will be followed by a thought-provoking panel discussion on ethics. (Sponsored by the American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation.)

Breathe, Stretch & Move and Zumba: The mellow morning Breathe, Stretch & Move is back by popular demand and will be joined by the more upbeat Zumba! For those who prefer adrenaline to (or in addition to) caffeine.

Conference App and Wi-Fi Hotspot: The popular multi-platform conference app and Wi-Fi hotspot will also return this fall with enhancements based on your feedback.

It is a mixed blessing that with so many sessions, you may not be able to get everything on your plate. You may find two sessions that appeal to you, but they may be scheduled in the same time slot. While we try to reduce these conflicts by shuffling subjects and languages, there is no way to eliminate this problem altogether. Instead, I can recommend ordering the session recordings that will once again be available on DVD and as an eConference. In addition to allowing you to be (virtually) in two places at once, the eConference can give you a little taste of the conference throughout the year.

So, pour a cup of coffee, pick up your pen, and start planning your program. I am sure you will see why so many of your colleagues come back year after year!