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## 20 Must-Try Eateries For First-Time Visitors To Philadelphia

*The ultimate dining list for the Philly first-timer.*

**PHILADELPHIA, May 26, 2023** – Philadelphia’s abundance of unique restaurants, eclectic cafes and food-forward bars poses a delicious mealtime dilemma for every diner — especially first-time visitors. No matter how a newcomer chooses where to eat in Philly — pre-arrival research, an app, a stroll along a neighborhood food corridor — certain iconic spots serve as great culinary starting points.

These essentials of Philadelphia’s restaurant scene include fine-dining stalwarts, historic markets, international standouts and classic sandwich joints. They’re places locals who’ve moved away dream of from afar and make a point of returning to each time they come home. Beloved for their unpretentious settings and unforgettable food, these spots are the backbone of the city’s dining scene.

It should be noted: Philadelphia’s eating-out must-dos aren’t all restaurants. In and beyond the city, the ever-expanding homegrown convenience store chain Wawa inspires fierce loyalty with its hoagies, hamburgers and other offerings. And, with 32-and-counting outlets across the country, Philly’s pioneering coffee roaster La Colombe has five Philadelphia-area cafes that are essential stop-offs for perfect cappuccinos and draft lattes.

For sit-down spots, the following list is a great place to start (eating):

### **Food Hall & Market:**

#### **1. Reading Terminal Market**

For 130 years, this indoor public market below a historic train shed has supplied shoppers with ingredients, cookware, gifts — and plenty of meals. Breakfast and lunchtime visitors choose from dozens of restaurants, bakeries, ice cream shops and more to dig into cuisine like Pennsylvania Dutch classics; hoagies and cheesesteaks; Cajun fare; Middle Eastern specialties; sushi; Filipino classics; and beyond.

**Where:** 1136 Arch Street

#### **2. Franklin’s Table**

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Nestled in the heart of the University of Pennsylvania campus, this 8,000-square-foot food hall serves as a gathering space for the University City community; students; travelers; and other Philly locals. Pull up a chair at one of the outdoor cafe tables or 175 indoor seats to dive into fare from vendors like Goldie, DK Sushi, Delco Steaks and more.

**Where: 3401 Walnut Street**

### **3. The Bourse**

This artisanal food hall is located in a century-old building smack dab in the middle of Philadelphia's historic Old City district. Once simultaneously home to a stock exchange, maritime exchange and grain-trading exchange, the building is now a hub for hungry passersby seeking poke bowls, tacos and other eats.

**Where: 111 S. Independence Mall E.**

### **Casual Dining:**

### **4. South Philly Barbacoa**

This Mexican eatery from James Beard Award-winning Chef Cristina Martínez may look unassuming from the exterior, but the food is anything but. This culinary gem is located along the historic South 9th Street strip in Philadelphia's Italian Market neighborhood, which reflects the area's multicultural makeup and dining scene. Martínez's small, inexpensive menu focuses on intensely flavorful dishes like lamb barbacoa, pork rib guisado and chicken mole.

**Where: 1140 S. 9th Street**

### **5. High Street Philly**

This Washington Square West restaurant and artisan bakery from esteemed local restaurateur Ellen Yin has received nods from the James Beard Foundation over the years for its chef. Here at this daily breakfast-lunch-dinner spot you'll find some of the best breads in Philadelphia, plus sandwiches, handmade pastas and more.

**Where: 101 S. 9th Street**

### **6. Pat's King of Steaks/Geno's Steaks/ DiNic's Roast Pork/John's Roast Pork**

Choosing where to go for a cheesesteak is the ultimate Philadelphia battle royale. Cheesesteak traditionalists will argue for one of the neon-lit Passyunk stalwarts, Pat's or Geno's (many visitors order one of each to conduct taste tests). Some say South Philly gem John's Roast Pork is the spot. Others go

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against the grain and triumph another iconic Philly sandwich altogether: the roast beef variety, which John's Roast Pork and DiNic's in Reading Terminal Market do up right.

**Where:** Pat's King of Steaks, 1237 E. Passyunk Avenue; Geno's Steaks, 1219 S. 9th Street; DiNic's Roast Pork, 1136 Arch Street; John's Roast Pork, 14 E. Snyder Avenue

## 7. Dim Sum Garden

Diners flock to this Shanghai-style dim sum eatery in Chinatown, where the head chef Shizhou Da is the fifth-generation relative of the original chef who created the first original Chinese steamed soup dumplings in China. Today, Shizhou runs this casual joint with her daughter Sally. Must-try eats on the menu include spicy pork soup dumplings, shrimp dumplings, steamed vegetable buns and more.

**Where:** 1020 Race Street

## 8. Pho 75

This simple, cash-only Vietnamese pho eatery is a star attraction of a no-frills strip mall located off Washington Avenue in South Philadelphia. It offers quick service and heaping bowls of steaming pho that it promises is the “hangover cure from heaven”—though it's just as tasty when you're feeling in prime health, too.

**Where:** 1122 Washington Avenue

## 9. Green Eggs Cafe/ Sabrina's Cafe

Brunch in Philly is an honored custom, especially if it includes gigantic portions and creative cookery. Sabrina's Cafe and Green Eggs Cafe are two Philadelphia-born brunch stalwarts, where you can expect lines out the door on the weekends. Don't miss the stuffed challah French toast if you're giving Sabrina's a whirl, or dig into the extravagant dishes at cash-only Green Eggs Cafe like loaded skillet or French toast in varieties such as apple pie, cinnamon bun or cookie dough stuffed.

**Where:** Sabrina's Cafe, 1804 Callowhill Street, 227 N 34th Street, 2101 South Street; Green Eggs Cafe, 1306 Dickinson Street, 1301 Locust Street, 2327 Gaul Street, 33 S. 18th Street, 2800 W. Girard Avenue

## 10. Ralph's

Loyal patrons of this fourth-generation family restaurant go for the basics — sausage and peppers, mussels in red or white sauce — and usually go home with doggie bags. Ralph's is one of the oldest Italian restaurants in the country, and is well known for its “gravy,” a.k.a. red sauce. Celebrities from Frank Sinatra to Taylor Swift have been spotted here over the decades.

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**Where:** 760 S. 9th Street

## **11. The Original Taconelli's Pizzeria**

Once a best-kept secret in the River Ward neighborhood of Port Richmond, this fifth-generation, cash-only pizzeria asks its guests to call ahead to reserve dough and limit themselves to three toppings per pie. It also allows them to bring their own beer and wine, but no liquor.

**Where:** 2604 E. Somerset Street

### **Sweets & Treats:**

## **12. Franklin Fountain**

The lines out the door all year long are a testament to the enduring popularity of this classically designed ice cream parlor where bowtie-wearing staff sling old-time classics like phosphate sodas and decadent hot fudge sundaes alongside newer confections like vegan ice cream and ice cream cakes.

**Where:** 116 Market Street

## **13. John's Water Ice**

As Philly as the Liberty Bell, water ice — a unique blend somewhere in between an Italian ice and shaved ice — can be found all over town, but this Bella Vista landmark has been delighting customers since 1947. John's offers this sweet treat in flavors including lemon, cherry, chocolate and pineapple, while traditional ice cream is also available in vanilla, chocolate, strawberry and butter pecan varieties.

**Where:** 701 Christian Street

### **Fine Dining:**

## **14. Parc**

This beloved French bistro from James Beard Award winner Stephen Starr will transport you to the streets of Paris — complete with many design elements imported directly from Europe. Soak up the fragrances of fresh-baked bread; sit back at the charming tables dotting the sidewalk while soaking up views of [Rittenhouse Square](#); and fill up on delicious escargot, steak frites and duck l'orange.

**Where:** 227 S. 18th Street

## **15. Vernick Food & Drink**

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Reservations are available up to four weeks in advance for parties of four guests or fewer at this restaurant from James Beard Award-winning chef Greg Vernick, and trust us, they fill up quickly. Spring for the six-course tasting menu served in the Vernick Wine “jewel-box” dining room, or choose your own à la carte adventure with “on toast” options such as beef tenderloin tartare with horseradish; raw dishes; and large plates.

**Where:** 2031 Walnut Street

## 16. Vedge

You’re not allowed to say veggies aren’t your thing until you give Vedge a shot. The creation of James Beard-nominated chefs Rich Landau and Kate Jacoby, this vegan restaurant offers a constantly changing menu that relies on seasonal ingredients to create shareable, plant-based “medium plates” (somewhere in between tapas and entrees).

**Where:** 1221 Locust Street

## 17. Vetri Cucina

Italian food is an art form in Philadelphia, and the dishes you’ll find at this intimate townhouse in Center City are no different. James Beard Award-winning chef Marc Vetri has devised a dynamic, prix-fixe Quattro Piatti menu that is the restaurant’s sole offering. It features a selection of antipasti, pasta, secondi and dessert crafted from local, seasonal and specialty ingredients.

**Where:** 1312 Spruce Street

## 18. Zahav

Chef-owner Michael Solomonov’s restaurant Zahav singlehandedly elevated Philadelphia’s food scene when the James Beard Foundation dubbed the Israeli concept the best restaurant in the country in 2019. This restaurant serves up a five-course tasting menu with an optional beverage pairing. Reservations open on the first of the month for the entire following month, and they book up fast.

**Where:** 237 Saint James Place

## 19. Fork

Restaurateur Ellen Yin’s [sleek concept](#) in Philadelphia’s historic [Old City neighborhood](#) has been dazzling taste buds since the 1990s, ringing in its 25th anniversary in 2022. The stylish New American bistro impresses for any night out on the town.

**Where:** 306 Market Street



### **Upscale Dining & A Casual Twist:**

#### **20. Talula's Garden/ Talula's Daily**

Aimee Olexy's vision for regional farm-to-table fare was first realized in her Kennett Square market/eatery Talula's Table. Stephen Starr helped translate her vision writ large for this Washington Square venue. The Garden offers high-end dining; the Daily provides a casual eating experience. Both feature exquisite cooking, warm service and lots of excellent cheese.

**Where:** 208-10 W. Washington Square

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Compelling photography and videos, interactive maps and detailed visitor information make the site an effective trip-planning tool. Visitors can also find loads of inspiration on Visit Philly's social media channels.

*Note to Editors: For high-resolution photos and high-definition B-roll of Greater Philadelphia, visit the Photos & Video section of [visitphilly.com/mediacenter](http://visitphilly.com/mediacenter).*