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SOUTHERN, SOUL & CARIBBEAN FOOD SATISFY PHILLY DINERS
Caribbean Cuisine Week Celebrates Island Flavors This Spring

PHILADELPHIA, March 21, 2018 – Nothing’s more satisfying than a plate of down-home eats, and thankfully, Philadelphia’s dining scene is rich in all categories of authentic soul food. Whether it’s a gourmet spin on turkey wings, a zesty bowl of jambalaya or a slice of sweet-potato pie, hearty goodness abounds at the region’s soul, southern, Cajun, Cuban and Caribbean eateries. Here’s a look at some of city’s most soulful soul foods:

Hot Buttered Soul:

- **Aprons Soul Food** – At this Point Breeze mainstay, days begin with red velvet pancakes and fish and grits, and just keep getting better with lunches and dinners of chicken and waffles, candied yams, fried tilapia, peach cobbler and more hits. 2617 Grays Ferry Avenue, (215) 560-8837
- **Butter’s Soul Food** – This takeaway joint corners Brewerytown’s market for gravy-slathered baked turkey wings, fried shrimp platters, rice and gravy, corn and okra and a mean sweet potato cheesecake. 2730 W. Girard Avenue, (215) 235-4724, buttersoulfood.com
- **Chef Ken’s Café** – This friendly little hideaway in Mt. Airy serves hearty lunch and dinners of barbecue chicken, fried whiting, the chef’s signature beef ribs and sides of dirty rice, mac and cheese and collard greens—all prepared with a light, health-conscious touch not always found in southern kitchens. 7135 Germantown Avenue, (215) 713-8899, [@ChefKensCafe](https://www.instagram.com/chefkenscafe)
- **Country Cookin’ Restaurant & Catering** – Saudia “Saud” Shuler is known for both her impressive down-home, all-love North Philly takeout—jerk chicken, Buffalo shrimp, oxtail, macaroni and cheese, banana pudding—and her impressive—100K fans and counting—Instagram following. 2836 N. 22nd Street, (267) 625-3664, [@countrycookin1](https://www.instagram.com/countrycookin1)
- **Gigi & Big R** – This food truck has spent years satisfying the University City lunchtime crowd with its belly-warming mix of Caribbean, soul and southern cuisines. Packed with home-cooking flavor, the hefty Styrofoam platters stuffed with mac and cheese, jerk chicken and tender yams are also a great value. 38th & Spruce Streets, (267) 278-2705
- **Ms. Tootsie’s** – Keven Parker’s popular South Street bar and restaurant serves up irresistibly homey eats with upscale flair (crab mac and cheese balls, smothered pork and turkey chops and some of the best fried chicken in town). As a bonus, the hybrid restaurant/bar/lounge’s slick setting keeps the party going well after dinner’s finished. 1312 South Street, (215) 731-9045, kevenparker.net
- **Relish** – This West Oak Lane restaurant and jazz club ramps up classic soul food dishes with ingenuity. For example: Cajun deviled eggs with shrimp; a Southern Caesar with cornbread croutons; and their famous turkey wings, served over apple-cornbread stuffing and smoked collards. Movers and shakers should also note that it’s a popular gathering place for local politicians. 7152 Ogontz Avenue, (215) 276-0170, relishphiladelphia.com

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- **Soul Food Cafe** – Ms. Tootsie’s owner Keven Parker doubles down with his eponymous stall in the busy Reading Terminal Market. In addition to the spectacular chicken and waffles, the quick-serve vendor offers catfish, yams and red velvet cake. 12th & Arch Streets, (215) 731-9045, kevenparker.net
- **Warmdaddy’s** – Live jazz and blues provides the smooth soundtrack for red-hot food at this long-running favorite, where the audience stays full and happy with NOLA-style shrimp and cheddar grits, cornmeal-crusted Low Country catfish with spicy Creole sauce and slow-braised, barbecue beef short ribs. 1400 S. Columbus Boulevard, (215) 462-2000, warmdaddys.com

Southern Fried:

- **Deke’s Bar-B-Que** – With a carryout location in Manayunk and sit-down restaurant in hilly Roxborough, Deke’s has built a sweet and smoky reputation. The kitchen serves a mix of barbecue styles—from Texas to Carolina—and the ribs, hush puppies and chocolate-chunk bourbon pecan pie are revelatory. 443 Shurs Lane (Manayunk); 4901 Ridge Avenue (Roxborough), (215) 588-7427, dekesbar-b-que.com
- **The Lucky Well** – This suburban find slings legit Memphis-inspired smoked meats thousands of miles from that national headquarters of southern barbecue. Smoked and grilled wings, pork ribs and local beef brisket form the centerpiece section of the menu, accompanied by a wide variety of appetizers, sandwiches and sides. 111 E. Butler Avenue, Ambler, (215) 646-4242, theluckywell.com
- **Mike’s BBQ** – Michael Strauss, co-owner of South Philly’s Taproom on 19th and longtime amateur barbecue enthusiast, has gone pro with this friendly, no-frills joint focused on, he says, “smoking meats the old-school way.” Strauss gets raves for his sweet and spicy smoked wings, locally sourced pulled pork and signature brisket cheesesteak, topped with melted Cooper Sharp “wiz.” 1703 S. 11th Street, (267) 831-2040, mikesbbqphilly.com
- **Redcrest Fried Chicken** – New to the hopping East Passyunk eating scene, chef Adam Volk’s spot specializes in southern-style yard bird, with traditional batter or a spicy, zingy alternative. The chicken comes by the quarter, half or whole, and as killer sandwiches, such as the house special with spicy mayo and shredded romaine. 1525 S. 11th Street, (215) 454-6951, redcrestfriedchicken.com
- **Rex 1516** – Graduate Hospital’s palace of pimento cheese mixes and matches southern flavors with creative results. There are crawfish potpie, stellar barbecue meat platters and plenty of clever cocktails to wash it all down. Once a month, chef Justin Swain offers a tasting menu inspired by a different down-south cooking tradition. 1516 South Street, (267) 319-1366, rex1516.com
- **SOUTH** – Southern dishes made with rare-around-here ingredients are the focus at this Spring Garden restaurant and jazz venue. Menu standouts include wood-roasted salmon with hoppin’ John, fried lobster with Anson Mills grits and chocolate pecan pie with cornmeal crust. 600 N. Broad Street, (215) 600-0220, southrestaurant.net
- **Southern Cross** – This country kitchen in Conshohocken turns out familiar yet fresh takes on home-style fare such as fried pickles, blackened catfish tacos and barbecue pulled pork mac and cheese. On the liquid side, the bar shakes up an array of cocktails, from the classic Sazerac to a “vanilla sour” made with vanilla-flavored whiskey, lemon juice and egg whites. 8 E. First Avenue, Conshohocken, (484) 344-5668, southerncrosskitchen.com
- **The Twisted Tail** – Smoked meats, fried chicken and fancy aged country hams appear frequently on the menu at this Headhouse Square bourbon bar and live music venue. Also not to miss: decadent mac and cheese with crawfish and charcoal-grilled lamb chops. 509 S. 2nd Street, (215) 558-2471, thetwistedtail.com

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- **Wishbone** – Craft fried chicken at Wishbone locations in West Philly and Midtown Village gives the Southern staple a decidedly new-school spin. In addition to the classic wings with signature pretzel crust, there are daily-changing flavors, plus honey buttermilk biscuits and cheddar-jalapeno cornbread. 210 S. 13th Street & 4034 Walnut Street, (215) 921-3204, wishbonephilly.com

New Orleans Noshes:

- **Acadia** – Bella Vista-based fans of true New Orleans flavor appreciate chef-owner Sean Nevins' love letter to real-deal Creole and Cajun flavors. Alluring entrees include a proper jambalaya (traditional and vegetarian versions), Jazzfest-inspired shrimp Monica and red beans and rice with smoked andouille sausage—the cassoulet of the Louisiana Bayou. 823 S. 8th Street, (215) 922-7200, acadiaphilly.com
- **Beck's Cajun Café** – These twin locations in Reading Terminal Market and 30th Street Station make Beck's hard to miss. The New Orleans specialties, such as muffaletta, alligator sausage po' boys and beignets (served on Wednesdays, and Sundays) make it hard to resist. 12th & Arch Streets; 30th & Market Streets, (215) 592-0505, beckscajuncafe.com
- **Cajun Kate's** – Nestled in Booth's Corner Farmer's Market, this vendor specializes in takeaway Creole cuisine. The crawfish pie, gator on a stick, crispy Cajun mac and cheese and pralines are the real deal. Open Friday and Saturday only. 1362 Naamans Creek Road, Garnett Valley, (484) 947-8914, cajunkates.com
- **Catahoula** – This Queen Village neighborhood bar has Louisiana leanings, dishing up rich and authentic New Orleans flavors. The bounty includes bourbon-peppercorn burgers, duck confit jambalaya, shrimp and grits, gumbo and molasses pecan pie. 775 S. Front Street, (215) 271-9300, catahoulaphilly.com
- **High Street Caffe** – Ever since former glam metal rocker Donny Syracuse opened it, this West Chester institution has been known for hosting famous musicians. One need not wield a Flying V guitar, however, to enjoy the etouffée, super-spicy Voodoo crawfish or Cajun-inspired pierogi. 322 S. High Street, West Chester, (610) 696-7435, highstreetcaffe.com
- **Khyber Pass Pub** – Flavors of the Gulf Coast meet gastropub cookery at the oldest bar in Old City. Boudin balls, muffuletta, gumbo and all manner of po'boys (even vegan fried chicken) accompany a formidable craft beer list and modern spins on the Hurricane and Sazerac. 56 S. 2nd Street, (215) 238-5888, khyberpasspub.com
- **Marsha Brown** – Named for its Louisiana-born owner, this New Hope restaurant resides in a distinctive former church. On the menu: oysters, jambalaya and family recipe “comfort” custard, plus steaks and an extensive wine list. 15 S. Main Street, New Hope, (215) 862-7044, marshabrownrestaurant.com

Jamaican & Trini Delights:

- **48th Street Grille** – Traditional Irie fare mingles with American eats at this popular West Philly restaurant. As such, the jerk chicken cheesesteak shares menu space with braised oxtail with butter beans, brown stew chicken and homemade ginger beer. 310 S. 48th Street, (267) 244-4764, 48thstreetgrille.com
- **Brown Sugar Bakery & Cafe** – Trini and West Indian flavors meld at this Walnut Hill spot, where customers come early and often for roti, doubles, escabèche fish, coco bread and sorrel drink. 219 S. 52nd Street, (215) 472-7380

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- **Ibis Lounge** – Platters of stew chicken, curry shrimp and callaloo, as well as fresh juices like passion fruit and mauby, come with a generous side of reggae and dancehall at this West Philly lounge. 5420 Lancaster Avenue, (215) 878-8420
- **Jamaican D's** – A craving for coco bread can always be satisfied at this Spring Garden food truck and West Oak Lane brick-and-mortar spot. More reasons to visit both: generous portions of curry goat, brown stew chicken and rice and beans. 1700 Spring Garden Street, (215) 668-5909; 1265 E. Cheltenham Avenue, (215) 927-7415
- **Jamaican Jerk Hut** – This Philly dining landmark does a brisk business in traditional delicacies like jerk chicken, curry goat and homemade ginger beer. 1436 South Street, (215) 545-8644, jajerkhut.com
- **Little Delicious** – Affordable, huge platters of jerk and curry keep fans coming back to this Southwest Philly destination, as do tasty sides of plantains, cabbage and rice and tender beef patties. 4821 Woodland Avenue, (215) 729-4911
- **Reef** – Exciting island cuisine has a mainstay on the mainland at this nightclub and restaurant. Fruity margaritas and rum punch accompany specialties such as snapper with sweet mango sauce, coconut shrimp and sweet potato pie. 605 S. 3rd Street, (215) 629-0102, phillyreef.com
- **Sunday's Best** – The oxtails are a must-try at this West Philly Jamaican takeout kitchen, with the jerk, along with rice and peas, cabbage and curry goat close behind. 41 N. 52nd Street, (215) 476-2660
- **Top Taste** – In the Mill Creek neighborhood, top-notch Jamaican specialties include pepper steak, oxtail, barbecue chicken and turkey wings, plus two sides (mac and cheese; candied yams; cabbage) with each order. 40 N. 52nd Street, (215) 747-1460

Dominican Deliciousness:

- **Cibao Dominican Restaurant** – Enormous plates of goodness (and small price tags) are the specialties of this Kensington stop. Well-known for both fried chicken and crispy pork, the traditional spread also includes rice and beans *pastelillos* and stewed eggplant. 3382 Frankford Avenue, (215) 426-1480
- **Parada Maimon** – The kitchen at Spring Garden eatery dishes out soul-stirring Dominican food and plenty of it. The beef patty, yellow rice with black beans, tostones and *pasteles* earn high marks among ex-pats. 345 N. 12th Street, (215) 925-2000, paradamaimon.net

Cuban Cuisine:

- **Alma De Cuba** – This Rittenhouse spot gives timeless Caribbean fare a modern makeover. Cobia ceviche comes adorned with octopus, jalapeño, avocado and kaffir lime; the classic *vaca frita* is made with braised and seared skirt steak and served with tomato escabèche; the flan is served with Key lime curd and graham cracker ice cream. 1623 Walnut Street, (215) 988-1799, almadecubarestaurant.com
- **Cuba Libre** – The appealingly breezy atmosphere at this longtime Old City hotspot—scene of late-night salsa dance lessons—sets the stage for festive eating. A meal of ceviche, Mamá Amelia's empanadas, *lechón asado* and grilled seafood is rounded out wonderfully with mojitos and tres leches. 10 S. 2nd Street, (215) 627-0666, cubalibrerestaurant.com

Flavors Of Puerto Rico:

- **El Coqui Panaderia** – Largely a bakery, this spot also serves savory dishes such as *mofongo*, empanadas and *pollo guisado*. Still, the sweet allure of flan, *pan de agua* and stuffed *tornillo* pastries is undeniable. 3528 I Street, Harrowgate Plaza, (215) 634-5508, elcoquipanaderia.com

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- **Freddy & Tony's** – For a full spread of Puerto Rican favorites, this family-friendly restaurant delivers. The North Philly institution offers *pastelillos*, *bistec*, *habichuelas*, stuffed plantains and plenty of combo plates containing all the variations therein. 201 W. Allegheny Avenue, (215) 634-3889

Pan-Latin & Caribbean Eats:

- **Bar Bombón** – Combining her Puerto Rican heritage and vegan lifestyle, HipCityVeg owner Nicole Marquis offers meat-, egg- and dairy-free versions of island tacos, sandwiches, nachos and margaritas in this darling bar off Rittenhouse Square. 135 S. 18th Street, (267) 606-6612, barbombon.com
- **Mixto** – No need to choose between the overlapping cuisines at this Washington Square West destination. Cuban *vaca frita* (fried beef) meets Argentine *churrasco* meets Dominican kibbeh at this fun and always-bustling restaurant, which opens early for breakfast and brunch on the weekends. 1141 Pine Street, (215) 592-0363, mixtoestaurante.com
- **Tierra Colombiana** – This long-running casual favorite in El Centro de Oro serves a delicious bounty of regional foods. Colombian arepas, Dominican mashed plantains with shrimp and Cuban arroz con pollo with pork sausage and green olives are just a few of the many options. 4535 N. 5th Street, (215) 324-0303, tierracolombianarestaurant.com
- **Sabor Latino** – At Upper Darby's combo restaurant-nightclub, guests can fuel up for a night of dancing in one spot. The classic Puerto Rican roast pork *pernil* joins Argentine *churrasco* steak, Colombian-style fried fish and a scattering of other pan-Latin dishes on the something-for-everyone menu. 33 Garrett Road, (610) 352-8414, saborlatinoud.com

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