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PHILLY'S SIGNATURE SANDWICHES: CHEESESTEAKS, HOAGIES & ROAST PORK
A History & Love Story Between A Proud City & Its Delicious Inventions

PHILADELPHIA, February 7, 2020 – Here in Philly, cheesesteaks, hoagies and roast pork sandwiches are civic icons, tourist draws, cultural obsessions — and, most importantly, beloved meals. A visit to the city would be incomplete without a dive into the distinct, no-forks-required specialties that make this “America’s Best Sandwich City,” as *Saveur* magazine declared. Here’s the lowdown on the holy trio of Philadelphia’s between-bread icons:

Cheesesteak:

What Is It?

A cheesesteak — always one word — consists of a long, crusty roll filled with thinly sliced, freshly sautéed ribeye beef and melted cheese. The art of cheesesteak preparation lies in the balance of flavors, textures and what is often referred to as the drip factor. For many fans, the definitive cheese of choice is Cheez Whiz[®], but American and provolone are widely accepted alternatives. Other common toppings include sautéed onions, cooked mushrooms, ketchup and sweet or hot — “long hots” — peppers.

The History:

The origin of the cheesesteak dates back to 1930, when, during one fateful lunch hour, South Philly hot dog vendor Pat Olivieri slapped some beef from the butcher on his grill. A cabbie driving by sniffed something delicious, leaned out his window and requested his own. It didn’t take long for news of the creation to spread. Other taxi drivers came to Olivieri demanding their own steak sandwiches. Soon after, the vendor opened a permanent shop on 9th Street and Passyunk Avenue, **Pat’s King of Steaks**, to sell his invention to the masses. Pat’s grills now sizzle 24 hours a day. So do the grills at **Geno’s Steaks**, Pat’s across-the-street-rival that opened in 1966. Geno’s late owner claims to have first added cheese to the sandwich. For more than half a century, Pat’s and Geno’s have waged a (mostly) friendly competition, with visitors often ordering from both shops to see which they deem the winner.

Where To Eat One:

Nearly every pizza or sandwich shop on any corner of every Philly neighborhood serves up the casual

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delicacy. Here are a few notable spots in Center City and beyond, but, first, a lesson on ordering. Those who crave a cheesesteak must first consider two critical questions: What kind of cheese? Onions or no onions? Those who want Cheez Whiz and onions, ask for a “Whiz Wit.” Those who want provolone without onions, ask for a “Provolone Witout.”

- **Chubby's Steaks** is a worthy entry in the cheesesteak smackdown that is Henry Avenue near Walnut Lane in Roxborough, where a cluster of cheesesteak and pizza joints rivals those at 9th and Passyunk. Chubby's has all the variations, plus a full bar. 5826 Henry Avenue, (215) 487-2575, chubbysteaks.com
- **Cosmi's Deli** has the look of a corner market — and the cheesesteak cred of a champion. The hoagies here are equally lauded. 1501 S. 8th Street, (215) 468-6093
- **Dalessandro's** lays claim to the hearts and stomachs of Roxborough and Manayunk residents with its signature steak, chopped much finer than many of its South Philly compatriots. 600 Wendover Street (at Henry Avenue), (215) 482-5407, dalessandros.com
- **Geno's Steaks**, across the street from the oldest cheesesteak joint in town, is a formidable, fluorescent-lit competitor that's gone roll for roll with Pat's for more than a half-century. 9th Street & Passyunk Avenue, (215) 389-0659, genosteaks.com
- **Jim's South Street** has been under the same ownership and drawing crowds since 1976. Lines get lengthy on weekends and before and after football games; there's seating on the second floor — and beer too. 400 South Street, (215) 928-1911, jimssouthstreet.com
- **The Marino Bros.** has wit, witout, Whiz and provolone at the ready to drape over rib-eye or chicken inside the food court at the historic Bourse building, steps from Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. Fries and beer are also on offer. 111 S. Independence Mall East, themarinobros.com
- **Pat's King of Steaks**, the undisputed birthplace and home of the cheesesteak, is still owned and operated by the Olivieri family. 9th Street & Passyunk Avenue, (215) 468-1546, patskingofsteaks.com
- **Roxborough Seafood House** adds an extraordinary variation to the cheesesteak game: the grilled salmon cheesesteak, piled with peppers and onions, mozzarella and American cheese. A two-pound version comes with fried shrimp and special sauce. 601 Jamestown Avenue, (267) 437-2524
- **Steve's Prince of Steaks** calls Northeast Philly home with two locations, but also serves its regal sandwiches — and famous American cheese sauce — in Center City, University City and the suburbs. 7200 Bustleton Avenue, (215) 338-0985; 2711 Comly Road, (215) 677-8020; 41 S. 16th Street, (215) 972-6090; 3836 Chestnut Street, (215) 921-6494; 1617 E. Lincoln Highway, Langhorne, (215) 943-4640, stevesprinceofsteaks.com
- **Tony Luke's** approaches national cheesesteak domination, with franchises from the original location in South Philly to the Pentagon, with plans for spots in all six of New York City boroughs. 39 E. Oregon Avenue, (215) 551-5725, tonylukes.com

Hoagie:

What Is It?

The hoagie is a built-to-order cold sandwich, akin to what people outside Philly typically refer to as a “sub” or “hero.” Here, a long, freshly baked roll typically swaddles Italian cold cuts and cheeses. Hoagies

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can also contain tuna, roast turkey or roasted vegetables, although fancy, truffle-sprinkled versions of the aforementioned need not apply. Being cold, the sandwich can be garnished with fresh lettuce, sliced tomatoes, hot or sweet peppers and raw onions, and finished with a splash of oil and vinegar and a sprinkle of dried oregano. Mayo is fine too — though some traditionalists don't agree.

The History:

Accounts of the hoagie's origin vary greatly. Scholars debate exactly where and when the sandwich, as well as its unmistakable name, was first conceived. Here are just a few of the hoagie's origin stories:

- According to a 1967 article in *American Speech*, the word "hoagie" was first used in the late 19th or early 20th century among the Italian community in South Philadelphia. In those days, the area, around what is now Philadelphia International Airport, was known as Hog Island, and it was the site of a bustling shipyard. The Italian-American shipyard laborers, known then by the slang term *hoggies*, would bring large sandwiches stuffed with meats, cheeses and vegetables for lunch, and the creations closely associated with them would eventually come to be known as "hoagies."
- The *Philadelphia Almanac and Citizen's Manual* tells of street vendors known as "hokey-pokey men" who sold antipasto salad, meats and cookies. When Gilbert and Sullivan's opera *Pinafore* opened in Philadelphia in 1879, bakeries produced long loaves called pinafors, which enterprising hokey-pokey men sliced in half and filled with antipasto. The "hokey" salesmen influenced the eventual emergence of the term "hoagie."
- In 1925, a couple in Chester, a city southwest of Philadelphia, opened the A. DiCostanza grocery store, which stayed open past midnight to accommodate gamblers. One night, a hungry card player came into the store, where Catherine DiCostanza was cooking peppers, and asked if she would make him a sandwich. She asked what kind of meat he wanted, and he said, "Put everything you have in the case in it." She took a loaf of Vienna bread, sliced it open and stuffed it. He asked her to add the peppers on too. He left, and an hour later, DiCostanza's was full of hungry gamblers wanting the same kind of sandwich, which would later be known as the hoagie.

Where To Eat One:

Every Philadelphia neighborhood and suburb has its go-to hoagie shop. Here's a look at some of them:

- **Campo's Deli**, a family-run institution since 1947, is great for hungry visitors in the Historic District, thanks to authentic hoagies: Italian (salami, cappicola, pepperoni, prosciutto and provolone) or Italian tuna (oil-packed). 214 Market Street, (215) 923-1000, camposdeli.com
- **Carmen's Famous Italian Hoagies & Cheesesteaks**, in the center of the historic Reading Terminal Market, serves eaters who like their hoagies well-made and their hot peppers hot. 12th & Arch streets, (215) 592-7799, readingterminalmarket.org
- **Primo Hoagie** has expanded extensively from its South Philly roots, elevating the art form with a long list of variants, including 10 takes on their hot-peppered Diablo, and Mild Italian, Sharp Italian and Mild Sharp Italian Classics. Various locations, primohoagies.com
- **Sister Muhammad's Kitchen** cooks everything on its long menu "daily for your happiness!" That includes a customizable fish hoagie, lamb, beef and fish cheesesteaks and vegetarian options — all halal. 4441 Germantown Avenue, (215) 621-7250, sismuhammadsKitchen.com

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- **T&F Farmers' Pride** in Upper Roxborough stocks a deep collection of local and Italian groceries that they put to good use in hoagies built on rolls from Conshohocken Italian Bakery. 8101 Ridge Avenue, (215) 487-0889
- **Wawa** is much more than the area's preferred convenience store: It's also known for its made-to-order Juniors, Shortis and Classics; summertime HoagieFest, offering discounted sandwiches; and a record-breaking hoagie served every summer on Independence Mall before Independence Day. wawa.com

Roast Pork:

What Is It?

As old as the cheesesteak but less known, the roast pork sandwich has gained acclaim among in-the-know locals as an under-the-radar favorite. The sandwich relies on the same crusty, sometimes sesame-seeded, roll of its sibling sandwiches, but varies its contents when it comes to the flavorful meat inside. The succulent pork is served hot after slow-cooking for hours in a rub typically comprised of garlic, salt, pepper, rosemary, fennel and a little wine. It's then layered with sharp provolone and a scoop of cooked greens, usually sautéed spinach or broccoli rabe.

The History:

The roast pork sandwich has roots in the cuisine of the Abruzzese region of Italy, whose people emigrated en masse to Philadelphia, settling everywhere, especially South Philly. Domenico Bucci was among them. He left the motherland as a teenager to become one of the city's first caterers. At first, Bucci simply cooked at home for weddings and special occasions. But in 1930, he built a wooden shack on a sliver of riverside land he leased from the B&O Railroad. There, on Snyder Avenue, he offered stevedores just two menu items: pork or meatball sandwiches (and, on occasion, an old-fashioned combination of the two). Today, his grandson, John Bucci Jr., runs the family business — **John's Roast Pork**, named after Domenico's late son — alongside his mother and wife. It was John Jr. who added sharp provolone and his mom's signature sautéed spinach to the sandwich back in 1987, creating a new Italian classic that, in many estimations, deserves top billing alongside the cheesesteak (which, by the way, the Buccis are known for too).

Where To Eat One:

The sandwich that shows off true Philly food cred comes in versions that are classic and creative.

- **Charlie's Roast Pork**, conveniently located behind the Pennsport Beer Boutique, serves its sandwich on a Carangi's Bakery roll. 1301 S. 3rd Street, (215) 336-1308, charliesroastpork.com
- **DiNic's Roast Pork** draws a line around its Reading Terminal Market outpost every day for its signature creation — as well as its rich Italian pulled pork, inspired by owner Joey Nicolosi's great-grandfather's recipe. 11th & Filbert streets, (215) 923-6175, tommydinics.com

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- **John's Roast Pork** is the family-owned and operated originator of the roast pork — and thoroughly worth the trip to South Philly. John's is also known for its cheesesteak — and crusty seeded rolls from Carangi's Bakery. 14 E. Snyder Avenue, (215) 463-1951, johnsroastpork.com
- **High Street on Market** in Old City might be the highest-falutin' of the bunch, but its 100% homemade version, featuring kimchi-like fermented broccoli rabe on an artisan roll, packs just as much of a punch. 308 Market Street, (215) 625-0988, highstreetonmarket.com
- **Memphis Taproom** – A Southern comfort food menu that makes room for Port Richmond neighborhood faves like kielbasa sandwiches and cheesesteak pierogi also includes a classic roast pork sandwich dressed in sharp provolone, spinach and, to mix things up, house-made garlic mayo. 2331 E. Cumberland Street, (215) 425-4460, memphistaproom.com
- **Tony Luke's** was founded on its roast pork — which its founders layer with deliciously bitter broccoli rabe instead of sautéed spinach. 39 E. Oregon Avenue, (215) 551-5725, tonylukes.com

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