

**CONTACTS:** Cara Schneider  
(215) 599-0789, [cara@visitphilly.com](mailto:cara@visitphilly.com)  
Donna Schorr  
(215) 599-0782, [donna@visitphilly.com](mailto:donna@visitphilly.com)  
**Tweet Us:** [@visitphillyPR](https://twitter.com/visitphillyPR)

**Tweet It:** Top spots for authentic (and modern) water ice in @visitphilly: <https://vstphl.ly/2TiDUfI>

**13 TOP SPOTS FOR WATER ICE IN PHILADELPHIA**  
*Not Italian Ice. Not Shaved Ice. Definitely Not A Snow Cone.*

**PHILADELPHIA, February 25, 2019** – The moment the winter breaks and the mercury begins to rise, Philadelphians of all persuasions look in one direction for chilly relief: a cup of water ice, one of the region’s most cherished warm-weather traditions. This beyond-cool confection, traditionally a combination of ice, fruit and sweeteners blended to a smooth consistency, is scooped in all manner of settings. The Philadelphia tradition lives on via vibrant community of entrepreneurial street vendors, mom-and-pop shops and family-owned purveyors, each with their own unique techniques and recipes. Water ice has grown nationally via **Rita’s Italian Ice**, a 600-location chain founded in Bensalem by former Philly firefighter Bob Tumolo. Every year on the first day of spring, Rita’s attracts lines out the door by giving away a water ice to every customer.

Water ice’s historical origins stretch back centuries. The Chinese used ice for culinary means as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC. Other ancient Middle Eastern and Asian civilizations followed suit, and the trend spread west to Europe. Roman emperor Nero is said to have enjoyed fruit- and honey-flavored shaved ice at his opulent banquets, an early version of *sorbetto*, water ice’s ancient twin.

As a result, this dessert is commonly referred to as “Italian ice” outside of Philadelphia, since immigrants from that European nation are often credited with popularizing it in the United States. Here, however, “water ice” is the preferred nomenclature for this satisfying treat. Redundant as it may sound, the term came into use to distinguish this simple concoction from a close cousin like sherbet, which can feature milk and egg whites among its ingredients.

Here are some of Philadelphia’s best spots for the chilly treat, from beloved Italian-American stalwarts (**John’s, Dati’s, Pop’s**) and West Philly favorites (**Fred’s, Siddiq’s**) to modern mobile vendors (**D’Emilio’s**) and many in between:

-more-

1. **D’Emilio’s Old World Ice Treats** – Bucks County native Chris D’Emilio left behind a career as a casino dealer to launch this mobile business, which he operates out of a custom freezer-case sidecar he attached to the side of his vintage Royal Enfield motorcycle. Vending at street corners, festivals, outdoor events and farmers markets in his signature bowtie and straw hat, D’Emilio is known for crafting unusual water ice flavors, such as Nectar Cream (cherry, vanilla and amaretto), guava and lychee rosewater. Various locations, (215) 514-3930, [@oldworldicetreats](#)
2. **Dati’s Water Ice & Ice Cream** – A one-stop shop for sugar fiends, Dati’s (say it “Dottie’s”) has spent decades cranking out ice cream novelties like “The Titanic,” an enormous banana split that can easily feed three. But the water ice is really where it’s at: Classic varieties share freezer space with popular special flavors, like tangerine, coconut cream, blackberry and watermelon. 2235 W. Passyunk Avenue, (215) 271-0186, [facebook.com/datisice](#)
3. **Fred’s Water Ice** – Located in Kingsessing, Southwest Philly, Fred’s has a massive menu of eats both savory and sweet—there just aren’t too many places these days where you can grab chicken tenders, a corn dog, funnel cake and a hooked-up ice cream sundae in a single order. Water ice, however, will always be a mainstay here, in flavors like rum, sour apple, bubble gum and the popular Swedish Fish. 5343 Chester Avenue, (215) 726-1918, [fredswaterice.com](#)
4. **Italiano’s Water Ice** – A long-running favorite in Lower Moyamensing, Italiano’s is the originator of the gelati, a tasty blend of their homemade water ice and ice creams. Dormant in the wintertime, the walk-up window returns from hibernation to serve the public every summer. 2551 S. 12<sup>th</sup> Street, (215) 465-1780
5. **Jimmy’s** – Husband-and-wife team Jimmy and Michelle Cialella continue the tradition his father started a quarter-century ago, serving their signature water ice (chocolate and vanilla fudge are just two of many longtime favorites), along with gelato, pizza pretzels and more to their fans in Pennsport. The shop opens for the season each year around April. 2551 S. Front Street, (215) 465-4669, [facebook.com/jimmyswaterice](#)
6. **John’s Water Ice** – Pleasing the Italian Market neighborhood since 1945, this third-generation family-owned shop does water ice the old-fashioned way, with no artificial additives. The classic flavor core of lemon, cherry, chocolate and pineapple are joined by rotating specials. Tip for first-timers: Ask for a paper sleeve of salty pretzel rods, and use them as spoons for eating the icy concoction. 701 Christian Street, (215) 925-6955, [johnswaterice.com](#)
7. **Lucio Mancuso & Son** – In business since 1940, the Mancuso family’s humble East Passyunk storefront is a destination for specialty Italian cheeses and pantry items. But insiders know that when the weather warms up, it’s also one of the best low-key spots in South Philly for authentic water ice, offered in the classic lemon, cherry and chocolate flavors. 1902 E. Passyunk Avenue, (215) 389-1817, [facebook.com/formaggiocliente](#)
8. **Pop’s Italian Ice** – An award-winning South Philly stalwart, Pop’s pops open its sidewalk window every March through October. Limited seasonal specials include iced tea, grove stand-style peach, mango and even pumpkin spice. 1337 Oregon Avenue, (215) 551-7677, [popsice.com](#)
9. **Rita’s Italian Ice** – Philly’s water ice ambassador has locations from Boston, Massachusetts to Charlotte North Carolina, Chicago, Illinois to Houston, Texas and beyond. Rita’s extensive menu begins with classic water ice before moving to sugar-free versions, and extends to fanciful, often colorful takes on gelati, frozen custard and drinks, even cakes. Various locations. [ritasice.com](#)

-more-

Page 3/Water Ice

- 10. Rose's Real Italian Water Ice** – While it's beloved in Roxborough and beyond for its hearty breakfast sandwiches served year-round, Rose's remains true to its name, doling out homemade water ice in an ever-changing array of flavors from a tiny, brightly painted corner shop. 4240 Pechin Street, (267) 972-1902, [roseswatericephiladelphia.com](http://roseswatericephiladelphia.com)
- 11. Siddiq's Real Fruit Water Ice** – Siddiq Moore first introduced his high-quality, all-natural water ice via street cart on the campus of his alma mater Temple University 20-plus years ago. Since 2017, he's been operating out of a colorful and welcoming shop just off the corner of 60<sup>th</sup> and Irving Streets, Moore specializes in creative flavors like strawberry daiquiri, cantaloupe and white grape. 264 S. 60<sup>th</sup> Street, (215) 410-6513, [siddiqswaterice.com](http://siddiqswaterice.com)
- 12. Tranzilli's Real Italian Water Ice** – Italian natives Nobile and Olimpia Tranzilli introduced their eponymous sweets shop to Germantown in 1969, growing from a simple scoop-and-serve in the subsequent decades to a wholesale purveyor of scratch-made water ice. Purists opt for traditional cherry, lemon or chocolate, while nouveau devotees go for fun flavors like cotton candy, kiwi-strawberry and mint chocolate chip. 5901 Belfield Avenue, (215) 849-7965, [tranzillis.com](http://tranzillis.com)
- 13. Yardley Ice House** – A short drive outside city limits, Yardley Ice House was opened in 1994 by the Bissert family, who dreamt of delighting Bucks County residents with exciting water ice styles made by hand. Culinary-driven flavor choices, like lemon meringue, cherry Bourdeaux and Key Lime pie, are joined on the menu by shakes, floats, sundaes and more. 77 S. Main Street, Yardley, (215) 321-9788, [yardleyicehouse.com](http://yardleyicehouse.com)

VISIT PHILADELPHIA® is our name and our mission. As the region's official tourism marketing agency, we build Greater Philadelphia's image, drive visitation and boost the economy.

On Greater Philadelphia's official visitor website and blog, [visitphilly.com](http://visitphilly.com) and [uwishunu.com](http://uwishunu.com), visitors can explore things to do, upcoming events, themed itineraries and hotel packages. Compelling photography and videos, interactive maps and detailed visitor information make the sites effective trip-planning tools. Along with Visit Philly social media channels, the online platforms communicate directly with consumers. Travelers can also call and stop into the Independence Visitor Center for additional information and tickets.

*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).*