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CENTRO DE ORO NEIGHBORHOOD GUIDE
Dining, Arts & Culture Along Philadelphia's "Golden Block"

PHILADELPHIA, May 17, 2019 – A hub of Latinx culture and life in Philadelphia, El Centro de Oro (“The Golden Block”) is home to third- and fourth-generation family-owned businesses, international arts and cultural organizations and residents descending from Puerto Rico and Latin America. Visitors to this lively enclave, about four miles from Center City, in the heart of the Fairhill neighborhood, can feast on authentic Latin/Caribbean dishes at **Isla Verde Cafe**, find inspiration in the work of Puerto Rican artists at **Taller Puertorriqueño** or enjoy a folkloric dance performance at **Raíces Culturales Latinoamericanas**.

Here are some ways to experience Latino culture and flavors in El Centro de Oro:

Culture:

- **Centro Musical** – Owner Reinaldo Meléndez, longtime friend of previous owners the González family, vowed to keep the store exactly as his predecessors did for 57 years. With a massive collection of Latin music CDs, Centro is also a one-stop shop for musical instruments and a large selection of Puerto Rican souvenirs—and a good place to catch an impromptu musical performance by a neighborhood artist. 464 W. Lehigh Avenue, (215) 425-7050
- **HACE Business & Visitor Center** – At the geographical start of El Centro de Oro, HACE provides visitors with information about cultural activities, events and businesses in the vibrant neighborhood. The center also houses an art gallery featuring the work of local artists. 2708-10 N. 5th Street, (215) 426-4990, hacecdc.org
- **Norris Square Neighborhood Project** – Six urban gardens comprise this food and landscape hub, encompassing more than 30 lots managed by the organization and supported by people who grow flowers, vegetables and herbs. Visitors enjoy educational and cultural programs, cooking demonstrations and *La Casita de Abuela*, a tiny house that has been transformed into an exhibit that’s a mini-museum of life in rural Puerto Rico complete with musical instruments, cooking utensils and homemade crafts. Other gardens: El Batey, “a place of retreat;” Raíces, Spanish for “roots,” where high school youth are encouraged to learn and play in a safe place; Villa Africana Colobó, a space celebrating Afro-Caribbean culture; Butterfly Garden, a space for reflection; and Jardín de Paz, “garden of peace.” 2141 N. Howard Street, (215) 634-2227, myneighborhoodproject.org
- **Mural Arts Philadelphia** – This program beautifies neighborhoods all over the city with stunning and thought-provoking public art. A couple of El Centro de Oro highlights: *Curing Community* (Front Street & Lehigh Avenue) by Cesar Viveros, honoring medicinal traditions across generations, and *Latinx Heroes* (Julia de Burgos Elementary School, 4th Street & Lehigh Avenue) by Danny Torres, bringing the legacies of visionary cultural and community leaders to life. (215) 685-0750, muralarts.org

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- **Raíces Culturales Latinoamericanas** – Performing arts and educational programs are the focuses of this organization, founded in 1991 by Michael Esposito, Yolanda Alcorta and a coalition of Latin American performing groups. The organization presents music and dance showcases at venues throughout the region. 634 Maple Avenue, (267) 303-0642, raicesculturales.org
- **A Seed on Diamond Gallery** – Opened in 2010 by Betsy Casañas, this space gives artists in music, spoken word, dance and the visual arts from various communities and cultural backgrounds a place to share their stories. 124 Diamond Street, (267) 982-3913, bzcasananas.com
- **Taller Puertorriqueño** – The first and only Latinx organization in the state to receive the Governor’s Award for the Arts showcases the city’s most extensive collection of Puerto Rican and other Latin American paintings, sculptures and other visual arts. Taller’s gift shop offers authentic and original works by local artists at affordable prices. Taller’s **El Corazón Cultural Center** (5th Street & Huntingdon Avenue) is the largest Puerto Rican/Latinx-based arts and cultural facility in Pennsylvania and the region, with a multipurpose, 200-seat theater, exhibition and gallery spaces, education facilities, an enclosed playground, gift shop and event spaces. 2600 N. 5th Street, (215) 426-3311, tallerpr.org
- **Feria del Barrio** – Every September, several neighborhood organizations host one of the largest celebrations of Latinx art and culture in the city. The free music, dance and arts extravaganza takes place on the lively streets and sidewalks of El Centro de Oro. 5th Street between Huntingdon Avenue & Somerset Streets, (215) 426-3311, feriadelbarrio.org

Restaurants:

- **Delicias Bakery & Delicatessen** – More than just traditional wedding or birthday cakes, Delicias specializes in building colorful, imaginative, even jaw-dropping custom cakes that taste, as the name implies, delicious. 2861 N. 5th Street, (215) 427-9599
- **El Bohio** – For 20 years, this spot has served authentic tastes of Puerto Rico, dishing out salads, sandwiches and small plates, including fried plantain chips, fried cassava root, beer-brined wings and *croquetas*. 2746 N. 5th Street, (215) 425-5991
- **Freddy & Tony’s Restaurant** – Traditional Puerto Rican home cooking at this friendly diner includes standout *mofongo*, mashed green plantains stuffed with pork, smothered in gravy and served in a mortar and pestle, along with rice and beans, deep-fried empanadas and homemade flan. 201 W. Allegheny Avenue, (215) 634-3889
- **Isla Verde Cafe** – Wednesday through Saturday, this lively spot serves traditional tapas. Patrons can dance to the hottest local DJs on Friday nights and groove to the house band on Saturday nights. 2725 N. American Street, (215) 291-9475
- **Taco Riendo Restaurant** – People step off of 5th Street and into Mexico at this bring-your-own-bottle (BYOB) taqueria, known for burritos, quesadillas and tacos. 1301 N. 5th Street, (215) 235-2294
- **Sazon Restaurant & Café** – Venezuelan chef Judith Suzarra-Campbell grinds the corn flour for her arepas, which she fills with shredded beef, chicken, pulled pork and scrambled eggs, while co-owner husband Robert Campbell concocts spectacular cocoas and truffles at this family eatery. 941 Spring Garden Street, (215) 763-2500, sazonphilly.com

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Nearby Flavors:

- **Tierra Colombiana** – Authentic international Latin and Caribbean cuisine draws patrons to this cozy, tropical space from 7 a.m. through late night. Upstairs at **Tierra Nightclub**, musical performances feature Latin sounds from Central, South and North America and the Caribbean. 4535 N. 5th Street, (215) 324-0303, tierracolombianarestaurant.com
- **Las Cazuelas** – From south of the border to Northern Liberties, this eatery satisfies patrons' Mexican cravings. Philly native Alfredo Aguilar cooks up classic ceviche, popular mole poblano and much more. 426-428 W. Girard Avenue, (215) 351-9144, lascazuelas.net

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