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CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICAN, CUBAN, PUERTO RICAN & MEXICAN DINING IN PHILADELPHIA

Latin Restaurants Have Prominence From The Great Northeast To Deep South Philly

PHILADELPHIA, July 1, 2019 – Philadelphia’s diverse Latin dining scene reflects the city and region’s residents. The 2010 U.S. Census reported 187,611 Philadelphians—or 12.3% of the population—are Latinx. In July 2018, that census estimate grew to 14.1%. With this strong population of Latinx residents comes a variety of amazing dining spots—Mexican destination restaurants, date-night Cuban bistros, family-owned Puerto Rican establishments and Pan-Latin culinary innovators—located in all corners of the city.

Here are some of Philadelphia’s top Latin restaurants:

Argentine Cuisine:

- **Jezabel’s Argentine Café & Bakery** – Jezabel Careaga is known for her Argentine empanadas, but she also has a way with *tortilla de patatas* (potato quiches), ham-and-cheese croissants and desserts such as *torta de ricotta* and *pastafrola de membrillo* (quince jam pie). She also hosts monthly chef dinners called If My Grandma Were To Cook For You and designs and sells home furnishings in her next-door studio. 206 S. 45th Street, (267) 519-2494, jezabelscafe.com

Brazilian Cuisine:

- **Broncos Brazilian Steakhouse** – Sleek, rustic and reasonably priced, this bring-your-own-bottle (BYOB) rodizio ups the stakes with its all-you-can-eat meat (and buffet) concept. Regulars praise the short ribs, garlic beef, chicken hearts, goat stew with yucca, fresh fruit, fruit juices and flan. 7634 Castor Avenue, (267) 686-8788, brncosphilly.com
- **Picanha Brazilian Steakhouse** – The mom-and-pop counterpart to corporate-owned Brazilian steakhouse chains carves *churrasco*-style meats tableside and stocks its buffet with vegetables, salads and sides. Saturdays mean homemade *feijoada*, a slow-simmered, soul-stirring pork and black bean stew. 6501 Castor Avenue, (215) 743-4647; 1111 Locust Street, (215) 608-8870, picanhagrill.com

Central American Cuisine:

- **El Bocado** – Salvadoran, Mexican and Honduran cuisine finds its home in this South Philly corner spot. El Bocado is known for *pupusas* stuffed with cheese and *chicharrones*, and fried chicken served with green plantains and roasted tomato sauce. 1005 E. Passyunk Avenue, (267) 758-2390

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- **El Merkury** – Pop-up shop turned brick-and-mortar El Merkury specializes in Central American street food inspired by Mayan cuisine. Corn, chocolate, chili and beans go into popular dishes such as maize-based flatbread *pupusas*, available *con carne* or vegetarian. 2104 Chestnut Street, (267) 457-5952, elmerkury.com

Colombian Cuisine:

- **On Charcoal** – Succulent, marinated meats get cooked over a live fire at this Northeast Philly destination that opens early for breakfast and rolls through BYOB lunch and dinner. Apps of *arepas* and *chori-criollas* (Colombian chorizo with fried potatoes) lead to main courses of smoke-kissed ribs, steak or chicken. 6516 Castor Avenue, (215) 613-8933, oncharcoal.com

Cuban Cuisine:

- **Alma de Cuba** – This Rittenhouse spot gives Cuban fare a modern makeover. Cobia ceviche comes with octopus, jalapeño, avocado and kaffir lime; *vaca frita*, made with braised and seared skirt steak, is served with tomato escabèche; the flan comes 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 Old City hotspot—scene of late-night salsa dance lessons—sets the stage for a menu by renowned chef Guillermo Pernot. A classic Cuba Libre meal includes ceviche, Mamá Amelia's empanadas, *lechón asado*, grilled seafood, mojitos and *tres leches*. 10 S. 2nd Street, (215) 627-0666, cubalibrerestaurant.com

Dominican Cuisine:

- **Cibao Fried Chicken Restaurant** – Enormous plates of goodness (and small price tags) are the specialties of this Kensington outpost. 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 this 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

Mexican Cuisine:

Philadelphia's strong Mexican community has opened and inspired casual taquerias and taco trucks all over town—so many, that VISIT PHILADELPHIA® created a separate press release about tacos. Find it [here](#).

- **Blue Corn** – Along the otherwise gritty South 9th Street market, the Sandoval family serves refined cocktails, spot-on preparations of huitlacoche quesadillas and Puerto Vallarta tacos. Much of the fare is served in signature blue corn tortillas, made with corn meal from San Mateo Ozolco, in Puebla, Mexico, the owners' hometown. 940 S. 9th Street, (215) 925-1010, @bluecornrestaurant
 - **Cafe Ynez** – This sunny, Washington Avenue café from the owners of Jet Wine Bar transports the flavors of Mexico City—pulled pork *cemitas*, chicken *tinga*—courtesy of chef Juan Carlos (JC) Piña, along with horchata, Mexican-style coffees and a rotating selection of drink mixers in carafes available for those who BYOB. 2025 Washington Avenue, (215) 278-7579, cafeynez.com
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- **Distrito** – Chef Jose Garces’ University City destination channels Mexico City with bright pinks and authentic tacos filled with chile-braised beef, corn and wild mushroom or vegetarian chorizo made from tofu. Tequila here is plentiful; fun-loving décor includes a vintage VW Beetle converted into a booth. 3945 Chestnut Street, (215) 222-1657, distritorestaurant.com
- **El Rancho Viejo** – The main draw to this mom-and-pop Mexican taqueria is its chargrilled steaks topped with mole, whole roasted chickens and spit-cooked lamb—served with fresh salsas and tortillas. 942 S. 5th Street, (215) 644-8735
- **El Rey** – An old Center City diner sets a retro scene for lamb and portobello tacos and chile relleno alongside *micheladas* (beer, spices and lime). Tacos are also available in the speakeasy Ranstead Room, located in the back. 2013 Chestnut Street, (215) 563-3330, elreyrestaurant.com
- **Las Bugambilias** – A bright South Street bistro serves lunch and dinner seven days a week, plus brunch Friday through Sunday. The draws: house-made mole atop enchiladas with Chihuahua cheese, inventive cocktails and tequilas. 148 South Street, (215) 922-3190, lasbugambiliasphilly.com
- **Las Cazuelas** – This Northern Liberties eatery satisfies patrons’ Mexican cravings for mole, *sopes*, tamales and mixed-to-order margaritas (it’s BYO tequila). Chef Alfredo Aguilar is known for his refreshing ceviche. 426 W. Girard Avenue, (215) 351-9144, lascazuelas.net
- **Los Camaradas** – This restaurant/bar in Graduate Hospital enjoys a loyal following for its veggie tacos, tequila and mezcal selection, and its neighborly atmosphere. Outdoor tables overlook Julian Abele Park. 918 S. 22nd Street, (215) 309-3727, loscamaradas.com
- **Mission Taqueria** – The owners of the Center City landmark Oyster House balance Mexican tradition and innovation one floor up, slinging beef short rib and chicken mole tacos alongside fancier jumbo lump crab croquettes with charred corn salsa and top-shelf frozen cocktails. 1516 Sansom Street, 2nd Floor, (215) 383-1200, missiontaqueria.com
- **Plaza Garibaldi** – *Vuelve a La Vida*, *sopes*, *huaraches* and *barbacoa* and tripe tacos are among the traditional dishes served at this festive sit-down restaurant and bar known for its tequila selection. 935 Washington Avenue, (215) 922-2370, plazagaribaldiphilly.com
- **Que Chula es Puebla!** – With a name that translates to “How beautiful is Puebla,” this friendly Kensington BYOB serves three meals a day. There’s a wide variety of *platos típicos*, including spicy shrimp stew, decadent chimichangas and traditional or crunchy tacos with *carne deshebrada*, *tripa* or *bistek*. 1356 N. 2nd Street, (215) 203-0404, chulaespuebla.com
- **South Philly Barbacoa** – The all-day eatery from chefs Cristina Martínez and Benjamin Miller offers the incredible *barbacoa*, *pancita*, fresh-pressed tortillas and soulful *consommé* (soup) that earned them “best new restaurant” honors from *Bon Appétit*. But, South Philly Barbacoa is so much more than tacos: Their *tortas* and *platters* have tons of fans too. 1140 S. 9th Street, (215) 360-5282, facebook.com/1149s9th
- **Tequilas Restaurant** – Since 1986, this Rittenhouse Square staple, housed in a stately mansion with folk murals, has celebrated the sophisticated leanings of traditional Mexican cuisine. On the menu: tequila-forward cocktails, luxurious *queso fundido*, Cancun oysters, tamal-wrapped branzino and Mayan-seasoned grilled shrimp. 1602 Locust Street, (215) 546-0181, tequilasphilly.com

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Pan-Latin Dining:

- **Buccann Restaurant and Rum Bar** – A busy restaurant, bar and late-night spot with a nautical theme, Rhawnhurst's Buccann takes a pan-Latin approach to cocktails and cooking. Margaritas and mojitos accompany eats from Cuba (*ropa vieja*), the Dominican Republic (*bistec salteado*), and Mexico (*carnitas* tacos). 7254 Castor Avenue, (267) 686-2961, [instagram.com/buccannphilly](https://www.instagram.com/buccannphilly)
- **Mixto Restaurante** – This busy Washington Square West destination seems to serve it all: Cuban *vaca frita* (fried beef), Argentine *churrasco* and Dominican kibbeh. On weekends, Mixto opens early for breakfast and brunch. 1141 Pine Street, (215) 592-0363, mixtorestaurant.com
- **Tierra Colombiana Restaurant** – 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 fuel up for a night of dancing with classic Puerto Rican roast pork *pernil*, Argentine *churrasco* steak, Colombian-style fried fish and a scattering of other pan-Latin dishes. 33 Garrett Road, (610) 352-8414, saborlatinoud.com

Peruvian Dining:

- **Chalaco's Ceviche & Pisco Bar** – A Peruvian husband-and-wife team and their business partner run this restaurant in The Schmidt's Commons. The pisco (brandy) bar is enough of a reason to go, not to mention the Peruvian seafood-focused menu and killer ceviche. 1030 N. 2nd Street, (267) 534-5819, chalacos.com
- **El Balconcito I & II** – Family-owned Northeast Philly dining fixtures (one in Lawncrest, the other near Roosevelt Mall) have two distinct experiences under a single roof: Portuguese and Peruvian. A single meal can span Lisbon to Lima, pairing pepper- and onion-smothered bacalao asado and Portuguese-style grilled steak with ceviche mixto and pollo *a la brasa* (Peruvian rotisserie chicken). 658 East Godfrey Avenue, (215) 342-2340; 7326 Castor Avenue, (215) 342-3165, elbalconcito.com
- **Vista Peru** – Bright ceviches, pisco cocktails and soy-spiked *lomo saltado* bring the flavors of Peru to a chic, new Old City space. The Northeast Philly-based team behind the more casual El Balconcito restaurants (above) crafted a mod dining room and bar, showing off stylish takes on Andean favorites. 20 S. 2nd Street, (215) 398-5046, vistaperuphilly.com

Puerto Rican Cuisine:

- **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 chic bar off Rittenhouse Square. 135 S. 18th Street, (267) 606-6612, barbombon.com
- **El Bohio** – For 20 years, this Centro de Oro spot has served authentic tastes of Puerto Rico food, 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
- **El Coqui Panaderia y Reposteria** – Though largely a bakery, this Harrowgate 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
- **Lechonera Principe** – Santiago and Margarita Principe spit-roast whole pigs and chickens over a traditional Puerto-Rican charcoal pit in the backyard of their casual Kensington quick-serve; they also encourage patrons to douse the smoky meats with their homemade pique hot sauce. Also on the menu: rice and beans, *alcapurrias* (green banana or cassava fritters), *pastelillos* (meat-filled pastry) and the Caribbean root beer, *mavi*. 235 W. Cecil B. Moore Avenue, (215) 235-9048, facebook.com/lechoneraprincipe
- **Loco Lucho** – Chefs Luis Liceaga and Rafi Nieto bring Puerto Rican street food to the masses at the Reading Terminal Market. Their locally and Latino-influenced menu stars empanadas, fried chicken, seafood paella, marinated skirt steak *pinchos* with chimichurri and the Philly Special sandwich, made with pork, chicken, steak, hot sauce and potato sticks. 51 N. 12th Street, (267) 314-5525, readingterminalmarket.org

Venezuelan Cuisine:

- **Puyero Venezuelan Flavor** – Small but mighty, this colorful Society Hill BYOB has customers head to the counter to order Venezuelan street food: amazing *arepas*, *patacónes* and house-made lemonades. 524 S. 4th Street, (267) 928-4584, puyeroflavor.com
- **Sazon Restaurant & Cafe** – This homey, diner-esque BYOB serves hearty platters of steak, rice and beans; grilled tofu; and cheese-stuffed *arepas* (gluten-free), along with serious, house-made chocolate truffles and drinks. 941 Spring Garden Street, (215) 763-2500, sazonphilly.com

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