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30 Things to Know: Philadelphia's Food Scene

PHILADELPHIA, November 19, 2025 – Philadelphia's food scene isn't just having a moment — it's setting the pace. Locals feel it. Visitors taste it. And the world is paying attention. From James Beard winners to hosting the Michelin Guide's Northeast Cities ceremony, Philadelphia is commanding the culinary spotlight and redefining what American food culture can be.

There is no city pushing the boundaries of food security and creativity harder than the birthplace of America, coincidentally syncing up with the Semiquincentennial in 2026. Philly is the new Cradle of Culinary – the de facto one-stop destination for chef-driven concepts and passion projects. It's about sourcing local ingredients and tapping into neighborhood vibes. It's about embracing delicious diversity and establishing transcendent trends.

Here's a primer of 30 lesser-known components of Philly's lush and luscious food landscape:

The Avant-Garde (New School)

1. Supper Clubs – Emerging from the pandemic and now among one of the hardest tables to score, supper clubs blur dinner-party intimacy with restaurant-level precision. Semi-secret, often announced via Instagram and prepaid through Venmo, these gatherings spotlight rising chefs who are opening their front doors, setting up folding chairs and inviting perfect strangers in for world-class meals. Chef Liz Grothe of **Couch Cafe** fame turned the concept into a brick-and-mortar restaurant called **Scampi**. Ditto for Chef Amanda Schulman at **Her Supper Club** (one-star Michelin) and Chef RJ Smith at **Ocho Supper Club**.

2. LOL Food – When Eater declared LOLFood a trend in 2025, it was nothing new. Silly, nostalgic, comfort food? That's what we do. From grown-up pop tarts at **The Bread Room** to dinosaur chicken nuggets at **Roxanne**, highbrow meets lowbrow in yummy harmony. Look for sentimental tweaks on feel-good classics like Constellation Brownies at **Loretta's** as well as Spaghetti O's at **Barra Rossa**, 100-layer lasagna at **Borromini** and cheffy tweaks on the Big Mac at **Juana Tamale**.

3. Cooper Cheese – Yes, we know this glorious pasteurized cheese has been around since 1893. Nowadays, Cooper Sharp – a creamy, indulgent American-style cheese made with milk (and endorsed by Eagles star Cooper DeJean) – is quickly replacing Cheez Whiz as the go-to topping on a cheesesteak. It gives the iconic sandwich an upgraded flavor, slightly tangy and intensely smooth. For Cooper-infused melty steaks, check out **Angelo's**, **Del Rossi's**, **Cafe Carmela**, **Oh Brother** and **Uncle Gus' Steaks**.

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4. Drink Your Dinner – Creativity on dinner plates is creeping into cocktail shakers where imaginative bartenders are raiding the pantry to experiment with bold flavors. The limited-run Hoagie Martini – a briney collaboration between **Liberty Kitchen** and **Art in the Age** – blends salami-washed vodka, vermouth and a few drops of olive oil, topped with a skewered mini hoagie. Meanwhile, the “Circle Jawn” at **Jade Rabbit** combines vermicelli, roasted carrots, basil and spices into an infuser before adding rum and sherry to mimic a bowl of pho. **Bar Almanac** – the Japanese-style speakeasy nestled above **Ogawa Sushi & Kappo** – recently added the Nasu Dengaku cocktail featuring roasted eggplant ... and members-only **Palizzi Social Club** has a Nutella Martini that tastes like a hazelnut milkshake.

5. Little Treat Culture – Credit *Food & Wine* for naming this phenomenon. With high inflation putting a dent in everyone’s wallet, cost-conscious consumers are splurging on baked goods rather than five-course tasting menus. Grab a quick cannoli at **Isgro Pastries** or a twice-baked almond croissant at **Machine Shop**. The result? A symphony of beloved bakeries that hit the sweetest notes, from Vietnamese-French fusion (**Ba Le Bakery**) to old-school German spots serving *fastnachts* (**Haegle’s Bakery**) to mission-driven bake shops (**Darnel’s Cakes**).

6. Southeast Asian – The best place to see, feel, taste the diversity of Philadelphia’s food scene is at the **Southeast Asian Market** in FDR Park. The bustling market is seasonal – every weekend, April through November – and its vendors vibrantly display a multitude of cultures and cuisines, including Indonesian, Cambodian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Lao and Thai. Additionally, there is a beautiful cross-pollination between food and coffee happening at places like **Griddle & Rice**, **Baby’s Kusina**, **Tabachoy**, **Rice & Sambal** and **Caphe Roasters**.

7. Oyster Cult – Center City’s famed **Oyster House** remains the standard by which all oyster bars will be judged. The crowds have been telling the Mink family story since 1976. However, there is an undeniable oyster resurgence everywhere you look. Chef Phila Lorn (**Mawn**) is spotlighting Cambodian crudo at **Sao** in South Philly. **Tesiny** is Lauren Biederman’s glam raw bar doling out caviar bumps on East Passyunk Avenue. And, for more traditional tastes, **Pearl’s Oyster Bar** continues to shuck it up (see: [Oyster Fest](#)) in the **Reading Terminal Market**. Lest we forget **Sweet Amalia Oyster Farm** which supplies briny bivalves to a host of restaurants and bars in the Philadelphia region.

8. TikTok Hoagies – The kale caesar chicken sandwich at **Liberty Kitchen** had social media swooning in 2024 when TikTokers kept sharing videos. They sold 21 sandwiches in seven minutes at one point. The trend caught on as other local delis enlisted influencers to spread the hoagie gospel, allowing chomp videos of **Farina Di Vita**’s Bronco Cutlet, **Antonio’s** Crispy Tomato, **Ricci’s** The Punisher, **Paesano’s** Mortadella Mio and **Pastificio’s** The Alessandra to go viral – all in good taste and good fun.

9. Shaved Truffles – In Italy, they add these musky, woodsy, umami-rich underground fungi to pasta and risotto for subtle luxury. Black and white truffles are the most common, equally prized and rare. In Philadelphia, chefs are shaving truffles on the humble cheesesteak for instant street cred. **Barclay Prime**’s wagyu-and-black-truffle cheesesteak started the trend, with places like **Woodrow’s** doing a “truffle whiz” and **Elma** and **Palace Steaks** taking it to another level by adding Périgord black truffles. It’s not just cheesesteaks putting on the Ritz. **Honeysuckle Provisions** and **Village Whiskey** are transporting tasty

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truffles onto never-boring burgers.

10. Tomato Pie – Ah, the Philly tradition with deep roots in Sicily might be the most misunderstood food item in the country. Simply put, tomato pie is not pizza. It's a thick-crust, rectangular dough (baked in the same oven used for hoagie rolls) – always cheese-free or with a dusting of shaken parmesan on top – smothered in goopy, sweet tomato sauce. Classic versions pass the test at **Sarcone's, Cacia's, Marchiano's, Gaeta's** and **Corropolese** ... but here's the twist: there is a whole new generation of boundary-pushing bakers doing sourdough-focaccia tomato pies at places like **Downtime Bakery, Paffuto** and **Dead King Bread**. Then, there is the New School Tomato Pie at **CHAR**, which is a marinara pie topped with yellow datterinis, breadcrumbs and Fiore Sardo (raw sheep's milk cheese).

The Usual Suspects (Old School)

11. The Roast Pork – The cheesesteak may be our headline act, but the roast pork sandwich remains the insider's choice. Sharp provolone, broccoli rabe and generations of family recipes shine at Pennsport's **John's Roast Pork**, Reading Terminal Market's **DiNic's Roast Pork**, South Philly's **Cosmi's Deli** and **Porco's Porchetta**.

12. The Mushroom Capital – Kennett Square in Chester County, serves as an epicenter for the nation's mushroom production, with more than a million pounds of fungi cultivated a week. September's annual **Mushroom Festival** celebrates the famous crop with family activities, food and culinary demos. Outside-the-box foodies can venture over to **Mycopolitan** in Juniata Park. It's a quirky, cool farm raising chemical-free mushrooms – 1,200 pounds per week – in the basement of a Northeast Philly warehouse.

13. Wine Time – Philadelphia has worked hard to carve out a niche for itself in the wine world. Casual cafes such as **Tria, Fishtown Social, Jet, Vintage, Picnic, Pizzeria Beddia, a.bar** and **Panorama** promote wine awareness, with **Tria Events** serving as a private event space and public classroom for wine education. Fishtown's **Pray Tell Wines** has a tasting room and working winery, sourcing grapes from the Pennsylvania countryside. Ditto for **Mural City Cellars** on Frankford Avenue. Meanwhile, **WineDive** in Rittenhouse brings an "old Hollywood meets Atlantic City" vibe. Outside of the city, stalwarts like **Karamoor Estate, Chaddsford Winery** and **Penns Woods** dot the lush landscape.

14. Beer Town USA – The onetime beer-brewingest town in the Western Hemisphere continues to set the hoppy standard as buildings from bygone eras serve as historic backdrops in resurgent neighborhoods like Brewerytown. **Yards Brewing Company** and **Dock Street Brewery** represent the old guard, with Yards still tapping recipes from the Founding Fathers. **Victory Brewing** pours crisp lagers and experimental IPAs from their rooftop patio overlooking the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Aficionados make annual trips to **Philly Beer Week**, bookmarking bucket-list bars like **Monk's Cafe, Khyber Pass Pub** and **Standard Tap**.

15. Morning Joe – The best part of waking up is Philly in your cup. **La Colombe** is a national brand now, but the dream started when owners fell in love with Philadelphia's blue-collar charm in 1994. Their pioneering flagship **Coffee Workshop** in Fishtown is a scene; however, they aren't the only roaster in

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town. **Elixir, ReAnimator, Greenstreet, Menagerie, Forin, Ox, Rival Bros., Old City Coffee** are local favorites, while **Nook Bakery & Coffee Bar** does everything in-house, from roasting and sourcing beans to pumping out homemade baked goods. Meanwhile, **Herman's Coffee** in South Philly proves that sitting in a lawn chair with the garage door open never goes out of style.

16. I Scream, You Scream – Did you know the “Father of Ice Cream” was born in Philadelphia? **Augustus Jackson** gets credit for inventing modern ice cream by adding salt to ice, a recipe the Black chef learned while cooking at the White House for President James Madison. Today, Jackson's influence can be felt in every creamery in town, starting with **Bassett's** – America's oldest ice cream, established in 1861 – in the Reading Terminal Market. History buffs should check out **Franklin Fountain**, where the Berley brothers have whimsically recreated an ice cream parlor from 1915. Ice cream shops like **Milk Jawn, Weckerly's, Cloud Cups** and **The Igloo** offer new takes on everyone's favorite old-timey treat.

17. Water Ice – Elsewhere this frozen confection is known as Italian ice—made famous by Philly-born **Rita's**—but in Philadelphia and the surrounding area, it's “wooder” ice. Legend says the origins of water ice can be traced back to Sicily, where the locals collected snow and ice from Mount Etna and mixed it with fruit in the summertime. In the early 1900s, when Italian immigrants arrived in Philadelphia, it caught on. Superior versions can be found at **John's, Mancuso & Son, Tranzilli's, Morrone's** and **Pop's Homemade**.

18. Scrapple – Created during lean times, this cornmeal- and wheat flour-based patty of pork scraps (hence the name) has a cult foodie following, cropping up in classic and trendy breakfast dishes. It can be sourced from local farms or from most diners and breakfast counters, particularly **Dutch Eating Place, Green Eggs Café** and **Sabrina's Café**. For the short-order cooks, go to local supermarket chain Acme and look for **Habbersett** – the OGs of scrapple, doing it since 1863. Smothering it in ketchup is a *huge* debate.

19. Soft Pretzels – Another treat shrouded in mystery and steeped in tradition. A *New York Times* article claimed “pretzel-twisting” was Philly's second-highest paying job in 1861, with street vendors hand-twisting 18-inch dough rods over a burning coal fire. Today, soft pretzels are stitched into the dietary fabric. Their malty, salty smells waft down Washington Avenue every morning at **Center City Pretzel**, perfectly fresh and chewy. Other top contenders for the crown include **Miller's Twist, Pretzel Workz, Philly Pretzel Factory** and **Bernie's Pretzel Bakery** in Delaware County.

20. Bread & Cheese – Philly is raking in the dough these days, with **High Street on Market** baking innovative concoctions with buckwheat and ancient grains, **Merzbacher's** signature spin on the English muffin, **Mighty Bread Co.'s** sourdough specialties and **Lost Bread's** burnt barley baguettes. On the curd side, cheesemaking operations have multiplied in rural Bucks, Chester and Lancaster counties, turning Southeastern Pennsylvania into a veritable cheese region. No bread and cheese lover's trip to Philly is complete without a visit to the 9th Street Italian Market, home to **Di Bruno Bros. House of Cheese** and **Claudio's Specialty Foods** (makers of fresh mozzarella), with [Perrystead Dairy](#) taking home multiple World Cheese Awards in international competition.

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Always Trending in Philadelphia

21. Urban Agriculture – Urban gardening and sustainable living – supported by the city’s **Farm Philly** program, in conjunction with the **Office of Clean and Green** – are more than buzzwords. There are resources for residents to grow and maintain their own crops in community gardens, including **Sanctuary Farm** in North Philly, **Glenwood Green Acres** in Glenwood, **Klean Kensington** in Kensington and **Holly Street Neighbors** in West Powelton. Out in West Chester, James Beard Award-winning farmer **Christa Barfield** (aka **FarmerJawn**) runs field trips to her 128-acre farm.

22. BYOB – The [bring-your-own-bottle phenomenon](#) has enabled eminently talented chefs to open small storefront restaurants without the expense of one of Philly’s expensive liquor licenses—and made it possible to enjoy a high roller-quality meal without breaking the budget. Indeed, some of the greatest culinary creativity on display can be found at **A Mano**, **Mawn**, **Perla**, **Heavy Metal Sausage**, **Little Fish**, **Illata**, **Giorgio On Pine**, and dozens more.

23. Delicious Diversity – Philadelphia has long been a melting pot of vibrant cultures and diverse neighborhoods. Today, the ever-changing population guarantees the success of mom-and-pop eateries celebrating every part of the globe. From the **9th Street Italian Market** and **Little Saigon** in South Philly to the bustling marketplaces beyond the Friendship Gate in Center City’s **Chinatown**, all the way out to Northeast Philly’s warming Georgian comfort food and Southwest Philly’s flavorful **Africatown** food tours, it’s a hodgepodge of deliciousness.

24. The Best Bar Food – Eating at the bar is a great way to dine at some of Philadelphia’s most sought-after restaurants—without making a reservation months in advance. **Townsend**, **Fork**, **Zahav**, **Kalaya**, **Royal Sushi & Izakaya**, **Friday Saturday Sunday** (one-star Michelin) and others offer last-minute diners a more casual way to experience high-end food and service, without the wait.

25. Destination Dining – Outside city limits, the region’s outstanding dining options have picturesque charm. A few include **Talula’s Table** (Kennet Square), **Andiaro** (West Chester), **Charcoal BYOB** (Yardley), **Lark** (Bala Cynwyd) and **Birchrunville Store Cafe** (Birchrunville). Within the city limits, French and Korean flavors collide at one-star Michelin restaurant **Provenance** in Society Hill.

26. Vegans Rule – Multiple James Beard nominee **Vedge** sets the standard for plant-based fine dining. Its success has spawned deliciously ethical offshoots, including the buzzworthy **Pietramala** (2022 *Eater* Best New Restaurant), as well as **Charlie was a sinner.**, **Bar Bombón**, **Miss Rachel’s Pantry**, **The Nile Cafe** and **Monster Vegan**. Did you know? **LUHV Vegan Deli**, a family-run counter in the Reading Terminal Market, was the first vegan deli on the East Coast when it opened in 2018.

27. Carnivore Craze – Meat remains at the center of the plate (and the appetizer and even dessert) at a growing number of eateries. **Butcher Bar**, **Barclay Prime**, **Butcher and Singer**, **Cleavers**, **Alpen Rose**, **Saloon**, **Urban Farmer**, plus **The Prime Rib** (located in Live! Casino Hotel) buck the veg trend and celebrate the primal (and paleo) pleasures of beef, pork and lamb like the show-stopping Lamb Neck Birria at **Amá** in Fishtown.

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28. Mexican Dining – Mexican food has come to dominate the restaurant scene in recent years, lending Philly the nickname “Puebladelphia” for the deliciously dizzying influx of cuisine inspired by the Mexican state of Puebla. Diners can choose from simple storefront taquerias, sleek restaurants like Stephen Starr’s **El Vez**, elegant fine dining at **Tequila’s** and family-run eateries like **Blue Corn** and **South Philly Barbacoa**. The list keeps growing. **El Chingon** and **Cantina La Martina** were James Beard Award nominees, while **El Mictlan** keeps earning kudos from local food critics.

29. Food Halls – Philly’s food halls vibrate with the energy of fast-casual excellence. Opened in October 2025, **Eataly** – the 21,000 square-foot restaurant and marketplace, located in the **King of Prussia Mall** – is the shiniest new gem. In 2017, **Chinatown Square** transformed a vast space in the heart of Chinatown with curry, ramen, bao, poke, bibimbap and karaoke. Other must-see destinations include **The Bourse**, **Franklin’s Table**, **Reading Terminal Market**, **Wonder** and **Gather Food Hall** at Schuylkill Yards.

30. Food Tours – Guided tastings have long been a favorite itinerary item for food aficionados in America’s [Most Walkable City](#). These mouth-wateringly meandering food tours highlight the very best in Philly’s expansive culinary scene, including dim sum tastings and dumpling-making workshops in Chinatown, Veg History Tours, Tiny Table Tours, Philly Phambassadors Italian Market Tours, plus a secret [“urban gastronomy tour”](#) exploring lesser-known foodie gems.

To learn more about Philly’s award-winning food scene – from casual cheesesteak shops and old-school delicatessens to hard-to-get tables and elegant tasting menus – check out [Visit Philadelphia’s Guide to Michelin-Honored Restaurants](#).

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