

Jessica Rossi

# Beyond the cheesesteak

## Dining in Philadelphia

The Convention Center in Philadelphia is all about location, location, location. Nestled in the center of the city, it is also in the middle of the most delicious 15 blocks of Philadelphia. As the lucky attendees of ACRL 2011, you will be in the perfect place to sample the variety of cuisine this city has to offer. This article will introduce you to three very different dining areas in Philadelphia, just in walking distance of the convention center. But don't be afraid to step out of these suggested dining areas. The city is very walkable and has two major subway lines (septa.org) to easily get you to different parts of town.

Philadelphia dining is much like Rodney Dangerfield. It doesn't get much respect. It is often just known for the cheesesteak. Cheesesteaks are delicious, but they aren't the only thing the city has to offer. Just an hour and a half from the city is the farm-rich land of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. That close proximity to such farms has created a wonderful food community that supports local and sustainable food. On this list of restaurants, you will find that a number of them feature menus that change from season to season, reflecting the diversity of local agriculture. We are also home to a number of nationally known chefs and restaurateurs. You have probably seen many of them on television. We have an Iron Chef, James Beard award winners, and a number of restaurants and chefs recognized in *Food and Wine*, *Gourmet*, and *Bon Appetite*.

### Reading Terminal Market

Three words: *Reading Terminal Market* (readingterminalmarket.org). Just step outside the convention center and you will walk right into the market, one of Philly's landmark food stops. The market is home to an amazing array of local and ethnic delicacies. There is definitely something for everyone here.

The market is located in the old train shed of the historical Reading Terminal, once the epicenter of commuting Philadelphians, serving the trains in the city limits and regional rail trains. Reading Terminal Market has been in existence since 1893, and it continues to be the heart of Philadelphia's culinary scene.

Take advantage of the Pennsylvania Dutch heritage of the area by visiting many of the Pennsylvania Dutch merchants in the market. They are only there Wednesday through Saturday. Don't let the name fool you; they are actually of Germanic descent. Their homemade comfort foods will make you feel right at home. Saddle up to the small dining counter at the **Dutch Eating Place** and get a taste of the Pennsylvania Dutch staple, chicken potpie. Stop next door at **Beiler's Bakery** for some dessert and check out their shoofly pie, another Pennsylvania Dutch delicacy.

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Moving on from the Pennsylvania Dutch, Reading Terminal has something for both the meat lover and veggie lover. If you are in need of veggies, check out **Basic Four Vegetarian Snack Bar** ([mybasic4.com](http://mybasic4.com)), which specializes in vegetarian dishes ranging from veggie burgers to mock tuna fish. **Mezze** also features vegetarian options with a Mediterranean focus. If you really need to try out a famous Philadelphia cheesesteak, visit **By George! Pizza, Pasta and Cheesesteaks**. Don't forget to try the other Philadelphia sandwich staple: the roast

pork sandwich. **DiNic's** roast pork sandwich is legendary and will give the cheesesteak a run for its money.

Need a coffee break or a sweet tooth fix? **Old City Coffee** ([oldcitycoffee.com](http://oldcitycoffee.com)) is a local coffee roaster that serves up some of the best coffee in the city. If you prefer tea, the **Tea Leaf** offers loose tea of all varieties. You know what would go great with that coffee or tea? A whoopie pie from **Flying Monkey Patisserie** ([flyingmonkeyphilly.com](http://flyingmonkeyphilly.com)). Don't forget to visit either **Le Bus Bakery** ([lebusbakery.com](http://lebusbakery.com)) or **Metropolitan Bakery** ([metropolitanbakery.com](http://metropolitanbakery.com)) for morning bagels or other breakfast pastries. Or grab a baguette from either and take it back to your hotel room along with some local artisan cheese from **Fair Food Farmstand** ([fairfoodphilly.org](http://fairfoodphilly.org)) for an excellent midnight snack.

Whatever you decide to eat at Reading Terminal, it will be delicious. Most of the merchants have counters to sit at, and, if they are full, there is plenty of seating around the market. It is a more casual and quick service environment. Perfect for quick lunch or snack breaks. It is also just a great place to walk through if you have a couple of minutes between conference sessions.



Whoopie pies from Flying Monkey Patisserie. Photograph by Jessica Rossi.

## Chinatown

The convention center is also a stones throw from Philadelphia's Chinatown ([phillychinatown.com](http://phillychinatown.com)). It might look small in comparison to other cities, but it packs a lot of variety into such a small stretch of city blocks. You will find larger banquet style restaurants, small noodle shops, and fusion dining.

Starting with a more traditional approach to Chinese food, **Sang Kee Peking Duck House** (238 N 9th St., [sangkeephiladelphia.com](http://sangkeephiladelphia.com)) not only specializes in Peking duck but they also make

some of the best wonton soup in the city. Don't let the name **Dim Sum Garden** (59 N 11th St.) fool you, it isn't a dim sum parlor, though it does offer some of your favorite dim sum items. Instead you will find the special dumpling of Shanghai, *xiaolongbao*, also known as soup dumplings. They are something you just have to experience. You

### Great Philadelphia food resources

There are still so many restaurants missing from this list. It could really go on and on. Philadelphia is rich in amazing eateries. For more information on Philadelphia dining, here are some food blogs and other Web sites offering the latest news and information on the city's restaurants.

City Paper's Meal Ticket, [citypaper.net/blogs/mealticket/](http://citypaper.net/blogs/mealticket/)

Foobooz: food, drink, gossip and deals in Philadelphia, [foobooz.com](http://foobooz.com)

Philly Homegrown: real local flavor, [food.visitphilly.com/](http://food.visitphilly.com/)

Visit Philly: Restaurants and dining, [visitphilly.com/restaurants-dining](http://visitphilly.com/restaurants-dining)

Mac & Cheese: vegetarian focused blog, [macandcheesereview.blogspot.com](http://macandcheesereview.blogspot.com)

can also find soup dumplings at **Sakura Mandarin** (1038 Race St.). Sakura serves both Japanese and Mandarin cuisine. Don't forget to order the scallion pancakes or the volcano roll. **Nan Zhou Hand Drawn Noodle House** (927 Race St.) is a small restaurant serving up hand drawn noodle and shaved noodle soups. It is very casual and great for a quick cheap lunch.

Chinatown offers more than just Chinese food. **Penang** (117 N 10th St., [penangusa.com/location\\_philly.html](http://penangusa.com/location_philly.html)) offers an eclectic setting and Malaysian cuisine—good for more upscale dinners. The *roti canai* or Malaysian flatbread shouldn't be missed, and there are many vegetarian options available. Visit **Rangoon** (112 N 9th St.) for a taste of Burma. If you like your food spicy, the fire-cracker lentil fritter will get

your temperature rising. They offer a nice lunch special on the weekdays for under \$10, vegetarian options are available.

**Vietnam** (221 N 11th St., [eatatvietnam.com](http://eatatvietnam.com)) is one of Philly's best Vietnamese restaurants. It has a beautiful and modern dining room and serves up traditional pho and vermicelli noodle dishes. Their crispy spring rolls are fantastic.

While most of the restaurants listed above offer vegetarian options, here are a few restaurants that offer all vegan or vegetarian dishes: **New Harmony Vegetarian Restaurant** (135 N 9th St.), **Kingdom of Vegetarians** (129 N 11th St.), and **Singapore Chinese Vegetarian Restaurant** (1029 Race St.). They all specialize in mock or imitation meat dishes and also offer vegetable dishes.

## Midtown Village

This is one of Philadelphia's fastest growing neighborhoods. If you want to get a taste of Philly nightlife, this is the place to be. It features a wide range of BYOBs and restaurants with extensive beer and wine menus. There are also a lot of little shops and boutiques scattered throughout the neighborhood.

Philadelphia is known for its love and support of great BYOB restaurants, and Midtown Village is home to some of the best in the city. Grab a bottle of your favorite wine

at the **Wine and Spirits Store** (1218 Chestnut St., [fineinandgoodspirits.com](http://fineinandgoodspirits.com)), it's just down the street from the convention center. Don't just stop at the wine, though. **Bindi** (105 S 13th St., cash only [bindibyob.com](http://bindibyob.com)), a modern Indian BYOB,

also offers fresh fruit mixers for either vodka or rum. Just across the street is **Lolita** (106 S 13th St., cash only, [lolitabyob.com](http://lolitabyob.com)), if you prefer Mexican food and tequila. Lolita also offers pitchers of fresh fruit juice to be enjoyed with your favorite tequila. The space is small and intimate.

**Mercato** (1216 Spruce St., [mercatobyob.com](http://mercatobyob.com)) is one of Philly's best-rated BYOB and features a seasonal menu of traditional Italian-American cuisine with a modern twist. Continuing with the Mediterranean focus, **Kanella** (1001 Spruce St., [kanellarestaurant.com](http://kanellarestaurant.com)) is a Greek Cypriot BYOB.

As you walk down 13th street, just south of Market street, you will enter the heart of Midtown Village. You will be drawn to the bright neon lights of **El Vez** (121 S 13th St.,

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Visit Sang Kee for traditional Chinese cuisine. Photograph by Jessica Rossi.

aspire to being more than figureheads for the organization. The president, claimed Berry, needs to be the captain.

Good captains have the vision for what needs to happen, and motivate others to join in to achieve the mission. I'll work to inspire members to participate, to get nonmembers to consider joining, to get all of them working together to, as Berry asserted, make all of our libraries stronger. If given the opportunity, I will lead the membership to take on wicked problems, encourage those who have yet to find their place in ACRL to get involved, and bring a

new spirit of collaborative, member-driven innovation to the association.

You may have read something I've written or heard me give a talk. I hope it inspired you to think differently and challenge your assumptions. Please know that I aspire to do more than advance ideas. You can count on me being an outcomes-focused leader who values the importance of getting things done.

Whoever you decide to vote for—just be sure to vote. That is the first step in individual participation and collective action to create change. *~*

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*("Beyond the cheesesteak," cont. from page 92)*

elvezrestaurant.com). El Vez is an energetic and stylish Mexican-inspired restaurant from famed Philadelphia restaurateur Stephen Starr, who you might have seen on *Top Chef*. Get their incredible guacamole and a Granada margarita and your night will be off to a great start.

If you want a more quiet setting, **Zavino** (112 S 13th St., zavino.com) is located right across the street. Zavino

has a wine bar featuring pizza topped with seasonal ingredients. Their tasting board of meats, cheeses, and veggies is great to share with a group. Continuing with the pizza theme, the new kid on the block is **Barbuzzo** (110 S 13th St., barbuzzo.com/barbuzzo). Their cheese stuffed meatballs will make you feel like you are sitting in your Italian grandmother's kitchen, even if you don't have one. Both restaurants offer handmade pasta dishes and many options for both vegetarians and meat lovers.

**Sampan** (124 S 13th St., sampanphilly.com) has a fun hip aesthetic and offers a wide range of Asian street food. Their take on the Philly Cheesesteak features a bao bun and sriracha sauce.

Ever wanted to taste the food of an Iron Chef? Fortunately for you, Philadelphia is home to Jose Garces, winner of the second season of *The Next Iron Chef*. Garces has been a staple of Philly's emerg-

ing dining scene for many years.

**The Garces Trading Company** (1111 Locust St., garcestadingcompany.com) is a great place to sample all that this celebrity chef has to offer; it is part specialty food shop, wine bar, and restaurant. Pick up a great souvenir for your favorite foodie friend or relative. Then you can dine in and enjoy the house made charcuterie or Chicago-style deep dish pie.

These are just a few of the many wonderful eateries Philadelphia has to offer. *~*



Zavino is one of the many restaurants located in Midtown Village.

Photograph by Jessica Rossi.