

The 10 Best Places to Get a Cheesesteak in Philadelphia

BY
MARLA CIMINI

Often considered synonymous with the city of Philadelphia, the classic cheesesteak sandwich is bursting with delectable flavors and textures. Adored by food-lovers, this iconic regional specialty is decidedly unique and incredibly delicious, featuring grilled, finely chopped, rib-eye beef combined with fried onions and topped with melted cheese (Cheese Whiz, American and provolone are the most popular). At some shops, a variety of other accoutrements are available as well, such as hot peppers, tomatoes or sautéed mushrooms. The fresh bread, of course, is as important as its contents: these hearty steak sandwiches are traditionally served on a long roll, cut in two halves. Read on for the best places to buy a cheesesteak in Philly (and one in Jersey).

How to Order

This distinctive sandwich is also known for its accompanying stringent ordering process, which is considered critical in most of the legendary sandwich shops around town. Philadelphians start by requesting a specific type of cheese and then specifying if they wish to have onions – or not. So, for a steak sandwich, it's simple: “wiz wit” means with Cheese Whiz and onions; “wiz without” means no onions. After that, you can ask for any additional toppings. Any variation in this process slows down the line, so it's wise to know exactly what you want before you reach the counter.

01 of 10

Pat's King of Steaks



Courtesy of Pat's King of Steaks

[VIEW MAP](#)

ADDRESS

1237 E Passyunk Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19147, USA

PHONE

+1 215-468-1546

WEB

[Visit website](#)

Undeniably one of the most popular steak shops in town, Pat's has been open since 1930 and claims to have invented the sandwich. Situated in the heart of South Philly, Pat's is cash-only, features splashy neon signs, and always attracts a long line of hungry patrons, day or night (although it moves quickly). New customers are advised to check out their "ordering instructions" listed on their website. This iconic shop also makes pepper steaks, fries and hot dogs. It's open all year, but only has outside seating, so keep that in mind during the cold winter (or steamy summer). It's also across the street from its main competitor, Geno's.

02 of 10

Geno's Steaks



Courtesy of Geno's Steaks

[VIEW MAP](#)

ADDRESS

1219 S 9th St, Philadelphia, PA 19147, USA

PHONE

+1 215-389-0659

WEB

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Located directly opposite its number-one rival, Geno's Steaks is also a neon-covered landmark and draws in customers 24/7 – both locals and visitors alike. Generally speaking, your best bet for smaller crowds is during the day. Evenings, weekends and especially late-nights are incredibly busy. Just like Pat's, Geno's is cash-only and situated in a small, stand-alone structure with outdoor tables and chairs – and extremely limited street parking. In addition to steaks, Geno's serves up hoagies, fries and a Steak Milano sandwich – served with fried onions and oregano. Don't be surprised to see tourists tasting the specialties at both places – to determine their personal preference, of course.

03 of 10

Jim's Steaks

[VIEW MAP](#)

ADDRESS

400 South St, Philadelphia, PA 19147, USA

PHONE

+1 215-928-1911

WEB

[Visit website](#)

Situated in the middle of Philly's bustling, South Street, Jim's Steaks has been a city hotspot since opening in the mid-1970s. Customers are greeted by the front door with the aroma of sizzling onions. Here, guests order at the grill and watch their steak being made, as ingredients are added. (There's an extensive menu of hoagies here – even a vegetarian “cheesesteak” option). Jim's is also cash-only, and has some open seating upstairs as well. But please don't linger after you swallow your last bite – once your food is gone, it's customary to leave your table, as there will surely be a line of famished people seeking a table.

04 of 10

Cleaver's



Courtesy of Cleavers

VIEW MAP

ADDRESS

108 S 18th St, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA

PHONE

+1 215-515-3828

WEB

[Visit website](#)

A bit more upscale than a usual cheesesteak spot, Cleaver's is located in the city's posh Rittenhouse area, and gets buzzy with a lunchtime crowd. With a bright and cheery ambiance, Cleaver's offers a wide selection of various innovative cheesesteak varieties – and different bun options as well. Their friendly and helpful staff will help create your dream sandwich, such as the Zinger, featuring long hots and house provolone; the Pizzazz with mozzarella moons and pizza sauce, and their chicken cheesesteak hoagie, a local favorite. Salads, veggie options and creative, boozy milkshakes are also popular here.

05 of 10

Barclay Prime

VIEW MAP

ADDRESS

237 S 18th St, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA

PHONE

+1 215-732-7560

WEB

[Visit website](#)

If in the mood for luxury, check out Barclay Prime's exclusive \$120 cheesesteak. Yes, it is certainly much pricier than the usual sandwich served around town, but this posh restaurant on Rittenhouse Square adds a bit of luxury to this traditional menu staple. The Barclay Prime Cheesesteak is on the restaurant's "appetizer" menu and is made with grilled wagyu ribeye beef, and topped with foie gras, chopped onions, and truffled cheese whiz. It's served with a half bottle of champagne, the perfect accompaniment to toast this sophisticated selection.

06 of 10

John's Roast Pork

VIEW MAP

ADDRESS

14 Snyder Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19148, USA

PHONE

+1 215-463-1951

WEB

[Visit website](#)

South Philly residents in the know claim that John's is absolute tops when it comes to cheesesteaks. The self-proclaimed, "Home of the Ultimate Cheesesteak," John's is a small, laid-back local joint featuring overstuffed sandwiches dripping with cheese and bursting with flavor. It's also an ideal neighborhood destination for breakfast sandwiches, hoagies, chicken cheesesteaks and (not surprisingly), slow-roasted pork and roast beef sandwiches, which also showcase zesty spices and flavors. Be mindful of the special lines for ordering. (Everyone is treated like a local, so follow the rules). It's best to arrive before the lunch rush as seating is very limited and the lines at midday can get lengthy.

07 of 10

Steve's Prince of Steaks



Courtesy of Steve's Prince of Steaks

[VIEW MAP](#)

ADDRESS

41 S 16th St, Philadelphia, PA 19102, USA

PHONE

+1 215-972-6090

WEB

[Visit website](#)

A Philadelphia favorite in business for over 30 years, Steve's Prince of Steaks has expanded its cheesesteak empire to several locations around Philly, including Center City, University City and the Northeast. Although Steve's showcases a robust menu (including seven different types of hoagies and 10 versions of the chicken cheesesteak), it's their classic cheesesteak that made this place famous – and keeps devoted customers coming back for more. This sandwich is made with thinly-sliced beef instead of chopped meat. Their tagline, "One bite, and you'll be a loyal subject for life," rings true for many Philadelphians.

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Cifelli's Steaks and Hoagies

VIEW MAP

ADDRESS

1701 John F Kennedy Blvd, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA

PHONE

+1 215-246-0277

WEB

[Visit website](#)

When you're in Center City, follow the aroma of fried onions to the Markets at Comcast Center, an expansive food court beneath the company's headquarters. There you can order a classic cheesesteak at Cifelli's, a spot that serves a variety of sandwiches with your preferred toppings – from plain to pizza-flavored. There's often a lunch rush, and regulars adhere to the rules to ordering a steak. Cifelli's additional menu items include burgers, hoagies, sides and veggie options (like eggplant parmigiana). If you're interested in some mind-blowing entertainment after you eat, pop upstairs to view a few minutes of the stunning high-definition jumbo video screen in the building's lobby. Open seating is available and the video is on a continuous loop daily.

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Donkey's Place



Courtesy of Donkey's Place Steaks

[VIEW MAP](#)

ADDRESS

1223 Haddon Ave, Camden, NJ 08103-3105, USA

PHONE

+1 856-966-2616

WEB

[Visit website](#)

Located just outside of Philadelphia in Camden, New Jersey, the tiny, unassuming Donkey's Place was catapulted to stardom a few years ago by the late food and travel expert Anthony Bourdain. He featured the shop on his TV show, "Parts Unknown" in 2015. In the episode, he made the bold statement that, "the best cheesesteak in the area might well come from New Jersey." In fact, the state just recently opened the

Anthony Bourdain Food Trail in June of 2019, which of course, includes this establishment that opened in the early 1940s. The menu is short — and all about the cheesesteak, with a few sides, like spicy pickles and stuffed cherry tomatoes.

10 of 10

Tony Luke's



Courtesy of Tony Luke's

VIEW MAP

ADDRESS

39 E Oregon Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19148, USA

PHONE

+1 215-551-5725

WEB

[Visit website](http://www.TonyLukes.com)

A true Philadelphia culinary landmark, Tony Luke's is considered a “go-to” cheesesteak restaurant by many enthusiasts. With over 20 locations, it is arguably one of the most recognized names in the cheesesteak world. The company uses quality, all-natural ribeye beef from Midwestern farms, and their fresh vegetables are grown in the region. The tasty cheesesteaks are a specialty, but the menu also offers other favorites, including chicken cutlet sandwiches and roast pork as well. The man behind the cheesesteak is the company’s owner, Tony “Luke” Lucidonio, is a local celebrity, who has appeared in episodes of “Dinner: Impossible,” “Man versus Food,” and many other food-centered shows.