



On A Roll

THE HUNT FOR A BETTER HOAGIE

STORY KATE CHADWICK
PHOTOS AMY TUCKER

IN 2013, North Carolina graduate student Joshua Kratz created a map of the contiguous United States based solely on the answer to this question: **“What do you call the long sandwich that contains cold cuts, lettuce, and so on?”** The answers are color-coded to represent the options “sub,” “hero,” “hoagie,” or “other.” The map is largely a sea of red—representing “sub”—with a couple of faded areas where “other” makes an appearance. And then, like a defiant little thumbprint over the Philadelphia area and spilling into New Jersey, there is a smudge of blue. We got your hoagies right here.

The fact that such a thing as Wawa’s Hoagiefest even exists is pretty compelling evidence of the region’s devotion to this particular gastronomic delight. Although Wawa built their brand around the deli counter, these days their menu has evolved into a dizzying array of salads and wraps, bowls and breakfast, and as much as Wawa is sacrosanct in this part of PA, the hoagies they’re offering up these days feel more perfunctory than preeminent.

And so, after yet another disappointment with a soggy shorti overflowing with lettuce, we knew it was time to reconsider our relationship with the convenience store colossus. To that end, we hit the streets of West Chester in search of this town’s hottest hoagies (figuratively, and, in at least two cases, literally). The following are our favorite local purveyors who’re serving up sandwiches on hoagie rolls with the attention to detail this great American classic deserves.

AMERICA’S PIE

VIBE: Patriotic. No, seriously. The place is decorated in Americana, and the menu items are named after prominent American citizens. There’s plenty of seating, and it’s bright and clean. Also, the music was killer—everything from Cream to Rage Against the Machine—perfect on a Friday night.

WHAT WE ATE: This was our first stop and it set the bar pretty high. We ordered the Lincoln, a sublime combination of turkey, imported ham, pepper jack cheese, lettuce, tomato, red onion



THE LINCOLN
BY AMERICA’S PIE

and pesto mayo. Any hoagie aficionado will tell you: the roll matters. The contents can vary fairly wildly, but a roll can make or break the thing. This was a seeded Italian roll—a little crisp on the outside, light on the inside.

I’m an old school hoagie consumer, so I like oil on mine (and sometimes a little vinegar), but the pesto mayo on this provided a tangy pop of flavor that was just right. A root beer fountain drink was the perfect beverage.

“Any hoagie aficionado will tell you: the roll matters. The contents can vary fairly wildly, but a roll can make or break the thing.”

MISCELLANEOUS: I would be remiss in not mentioning the knee-buckling Chewy Marshmallow rice crispy-type thing I had for dessert—one of several tempting Sweet Treat offerings available here. This one featured brown butter and sea salt. Trust me, I’m a professional.

ROAST BEEF
BY CARLINO'S ITALIAN MARKET

CARLINO'S ITALIAN MARKET

VIBE: Carlino's is always a feast for the senses: festive, bustling, and bright, with excellent sights and even better smells. I could spend (and have spent) significant chunks of time in both this location. It's always busy, with friendly, courteous employees to get you out of there quickly—if you're so inclined... which I'm usually not.

WHAT WE ATE: The Roast Beef Hoagie here was a slam dunk: very rare and sliced paper thin, the beef was packed onto an old-world style, dense, chewy roll, along with a slice of sharp cheddar, lettuce, tomato, red onion, and a dab of horseradish cream sauce. I'm not kidding when I say I am literally salivating at the memory as I type this. This hoagie was an excellent example of a perfect sandwich, perfectly executed. And I'm saying that as someone who prefers my roast beef hot.

MISCELLANEOUS: Don't forget Carlino's is a full market. In addition to well... everything from soup to nuts here, there is an outstanding selection of beverages. (Pro tip: don't bring someone who has a tough time with decision-making.) We went with the San Pellegrino Pomegranate and Orange Sparkling Soda, and a cucumber mint lemonade from Belvoir Farms.



LOVE AGAIN LOCAL

VIBE: It's very cool here at this new vegan spot, literally and figuratively. There were even a couple of millennials seated at an outdoor table with the cutest puppy ever. The dark walls sport a chalkboard

"...very rare and sliced paper thin, the beef was packed onto an old world-style, dense, chewy roll..."

menu, the light-colored wood tables and bright green chairs provide a pop of contrast. The music was cool and background-ish, but in a fun way (think Bjork, which was playing on our visit and was lovely). Did we mention that everything on the menu is vegan-friendly? Yup, Love Again Local boasts a menu full of items that are 100% plant-based.

WHAT WE ATE: We took a break from our meat fest with Love Again Local's cured "meats," which include pepperoni, salami, turkey, pastrami, and ham, all of which are made with a wheat gluten base. We had the "Panini Italiano," a combination of salami, pepperoni, "NY Everything" cheese, lettuce, tomato, red onion, and vinaigrette on toasted bread. The "cheese" added a tangy, creamy counterpoint to the mildly spicy kick of the "meat," with everything pressed between two slices of chewy, warm

ITALIANO
BY LOVE AGAIN LOCAL





To me, cheesesteaks and hoagies are two vastly different things, but, like some marriages, this particular sandwich worked well together in spite of itself.

panini bread, available in white or multigrain (we chose white).

MISCELLANEOUS: The fountain soda here is by Maine Root, and it's wonderful. I'm not in the habit of drinking a lot of soda, but then I'm not in the habit of eating six sandwiches pretty much right in a row, either. We tried the Blueberry and loved it; the handsome gent next to us recommended the ginger ale.

BENNY'S PIZZA

VIBE: This place is an old school pizza joint, and I'm not saying that like it's a bad thing, because it's a very, very good thing. It's unpretentious and unassuming, which they can be, because if you've been around and serving food

since 1959 like Benny's has, you are clearly doing something very, very right.

WHAT WE ATE:

At the recommendation of

the proprietor, I ordered a cheesesteak hoagie, something I would not ordinarily do. To me, cheesesteaks and hoagies are two vastly different things, but, like some marriages, this particular sandwich worked well together in spite of itself. The steak had a great flavor, the roll was tasty and fresh, as was the lettuce and tomato, and they did not skimp on the cheese—which is critical in a proper cheesesteak, in my humble opinion. Clearly these people are town treasures.

MISCELLANEOUS: Benny's has their own bottled sodas, with vintage flavors like Black Cherry and Vanilla Cream. Added bonus: candy at the counter, convenience store-style, including Swedish Fish, a personal favorite of mine. They

have a \$6 daily lunch special, too, which you can learn more about on page 51.

COLONIAL VILLAGE MEAT MARKET

VIBE: This is a small town grocery store on steroids, with a very prominent deli department that was bustling when we arrived; there was even an employee discussing catering options with a couple of customers. There is no seating here, so we took our sandwich to go, and I also grabbed some prepared hot wings and macaroni and cheese to take home for dinner the next night.

WHAT WE ATE: We ordered an Italian Hoagie (finally!), and it reminded me of the hoagies of my youth in West Philadelphia. When I took it in my hand it was solid as a baseball bat, and heavy, not to mention long—a lot of sandwich for \$6.50. The deli clerk asked if I wanted oil and vinegar (yes, always with an Italian); the lettuce was properly shredded, and the tomatoes in particular were outstanding—exceptionally fresh and

**ITALIAN HOAGIE
BY COLONIAL VILLAGE
MEAT MARKET**

ripe. We were surprised to find peppered ham on the sandwich, but pleasantly so.

MISCELLANEOUS: My only regret was not bringing a grocery list with me, and I knew better, because my late mom was a big fan of Colonial in Haver-town back in the day. Colonial carries groceries, along with produce and a great selection of refrigerated meals to go, and they have an unparalleled meat department. (And the excellent music continued here: The Rolling Stones' "Beast of Burden" flooded the speakers as soon as we walked in.)

WEST GOSHEN DELI

VIBE: Your classic small-town delicatessen. It's located just off Market Street on your way out of town, so it's usually quiet and rarely too crowded.

WHAT WE ATE: Once again, I deviated from my well-tread culinary path and ordered a corned beef hoagie at this deli. Don't get me wrong—it's not that I don't like corned beef; it's just that I typically eat it with Swiss cheese and spicy mustard on rye, not on a hoagie roll with lettuce, tomato, onions, and provolone.

But clearly I'm an idiot, because that hoagie was delicious. Possibly some of the best corned beef I've ever had, an incredibly fresh roll, and a choice of hoagie sizes (small, medium and large) made this one a standout. We ordered a small, and it was compact in size, but given the circumstances, it was just right. And I'll go back for a corned beef on rye for sure.

MISCELLANEOUS: Since this was our last stop, we took this hoagie to go, but there is plenty of seating at the West Goshen Deli. They also make breakfast sandwiches here, AND they have lottery tickets and takeout beer.

West Chester is undisputedly home to some excellent places to eat, from walk-up taco bars to high-end, sit-down, steak dinner restaurants. But if the desire for a spectacular sandwich overtakes you, rest assured: West Chester's got your hoagies right here. 



**CORNEBEEF HOAGIE
BY WEST GOSHEN DELI**

