CHINATOWN NEIGHBORHOOD GUIDE
Culture, Food, Nightlife & More In Philadelphia’s Historic Chinatown

PHILADELPHIA, January 7, 2019 – Beyond Philadelphia’s historic Friendship Arch at 10th and Arch Streets lives a thriving Asian neighborhood, settled in the mid-19th century by Cantonese immigrants. Stretching from Vine to Arch Streets between 9th and 12th Streets, Philly’s Chinatown is packed end-to-end with restaurants and stores that represent Hong Kong, Cantonese, Sichuan and Taiwanese cultures, with a sprinkling of Korean, Thai, Malaysian, Burmese and Vietnamese thrown in for good measure. Chinatown is active and authentic, popular for steaming platters of hand-stretched noodles, seasonal street festivals, a modern food hall (Chinatown Square), locally guided tours, rolled ice cream and much more.

Here’s the scoop on the food, drinks, goods and culture that make Philadelphia’s Chinatown one of the city’s most dynamic neighborhoods:

Restaurants:
- **Bai Wei** – Traditional cooking of China’s Hunan province is the focus at Bai Wei, but the restaurant, formerly named Sakura, also tosses dim sum favorites and some fiery Sichuan dishes into the mix. 1038 Race Street, (215) 873-8338, baiwei.restaurant
- **Banana Leaf** – A casual atmosphere complements Banana Leaf’s Malaysian cuisine, as do Thai, Indonesian and Indian influences. The deep-flavored specialties here include roti canai, curried chicken over coconut rice, mango tofu and Chow Kueh Teow noodle. Note: Banana Leaf is a bring-your-own-bottle (BYOB) establishment. 1009 Arch Street, (215) 592-8288, bananaleafphilly.com
- **Bonchon** – Korean fried chicken obsessives find plenty of crunch and spice at this franchise of an international chain. Open until 2 a.m., the kitchen serves wings and drums with a variety of sauces, plus rice cake in chili sauce, japchae, bulgogi—and an amazing selection of soju cocktails. 1020 Cherry Street, (267) 639-6686, bonchon.com
- **Bubblefish Bubble Tea & Sushi** – This hopping spot stays open until 11:30 p.m. during the week and until 12:30 a.m. on weekends. The mostly light fare menu includes Japanese cuisine such as poké bowls, sushi, onigiri and tonkatsu don, along with bubble tea from a long list of flavor options. 909 Arch Street, (267) 930-7634, bubblefishphilly.com
- **Chinatown Square** – In this ambitious day-to-night operation, multiple vendors represent cuisine from all over the globe, from sushi, Korean BBQ and Southeast Asian curries to halal street food and gourmet burgers. But this food hall features more than just food: The hall also offers an expansive lounge and multiple karaoke rooms. 1016-18 Race Street, (215) 925-1111, chinatownsq.com

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• **Chubby Cattle** – This locally owned outpost of a Las Vegas chain delivers hotpot soups via conveyor belt. Diners choose a base and the add-ins (purple yams noodles, tofu, lobster balls, more) on an iPad for high-tech, high-flavor experience. 146 N. 10th Street, (866) 622-8853, [chubbycattle.com](http://chubbycattle.com)

• **David’s Mai Lai Wah** – Up-late studiers, industry folks and other night owls hankering for satisfying Chinese eats come here after midnight for salt-and-pepper squid, dumplings in ginger-scallion sauce and beef with pickled mustard greens. 1001 Race Street, (215) 627-2610, [davidsmailaiwah.com](http://davidsmailaiwah.com)

• **Dim Sum Garden** – This long-running Race Street favorite offers an abundant selection of classic dim sum bites. The low-cost eats here include their famous pork soup dumplings, pan-fried dumplings and red bean cakes. A back room is available for large groups. 1020 Race Street, (215) 873-0258, [dimsumgardenphilly.com](http://dimsumgardenphilly.com)

• **E Mei** – Home to some of the most authentic Sichuan cooking in the city, this kitchen delivers country-style chicken with pickled pepper, garlic eggplant, shredded potato, fish filet in hot and spicy sauce and, for the spice-averse, snow pea leaves. 915 Arch Street, (215) 627-2500, [emeiphilly.com](http://emeiphilly.com)

• **Empress Garden** – Peking noodles with meat sauce, rice flour-encased meatballs and more Taiwanese dishes make this friendly little spot—one of few neighborhood specialists in the cuisine of Taiwan—a go-to. 108 N. 10th Street, (215) 592-0739, [empressgardenphiladelphia.com](http://empressgardenphiladelphia.com)

• **Hakka Beef House** – Thick, chewy noodles are the centerpiece of this quaint parlor, dishing out Hakka or Indo-Chinese dishes aplenty. Bowls of deep, herbaceous broth with twists of noodles come accessorized with chopped pork, brisket, vegetables and more. 927 Race Street, (267) 318-7532

• **Little Sheep** – Mongolian hot pots steam up the tables at the Philly outpost of a large, yet somehow still under-the-radar, chain. Diners choose a soup base, proteins and an array of vegetables and noodles to dip and cook in aromatic broth. 1017 Arch Street, (215) 923-9222

• **M Kee** – This diminutive eatery lures in passersby with its lacquered ducks hanging in the window. The temptation continues with traditional Chinese barbecue spareribs and roast pork, served over noodles, congee and rice. 1002 Race Street, (215) 238-8883

• **Nan Zhou Hand Drawn Noodle House** – Lunchtime visitors pack into this no-frills spot, where the star feature is made-from-scratch noodles, hand-drawn or shaved, swirled in rich broth, tossed with peanut sauce or stir-fried. 1022 Race Street, (215) 923-1550, [nanzhounoodlehouse.com](http://nanzhounoodlehouse.com)

• **Nine Ting** – This contemporary eatery’s black lacquered booths beckon lovers of hot pot and Korean barbecue, especially on cold days. Either way, it’s prepared right at the table and served all-you-can-eat style for a very good value. 926 Race Street, (215) 238-9996

• **Nom Wah Tea Parlor** – The stylish sibling eatery to a big name in New York dim sum, Nom Wah specializes in shareable Chinese small plates, both classic and contemporary. Eaters can pair chrysanthemum or *pu-er* tea with delicacies such as turnip cake, soup dumplings and fried crab claws stuffed with shrimp. 218 N. 13th Street, (267) 519-2889, [nomwah.com](http://nomwah.com)

• **Oishii Poké** – Hawaiian raw fish salad stars at this quick-service stop on Arch Street. Customers choose from signature dishes or a build their own poké bowl, sushi burrito or sashimi salad before selecting ingredients. 938 Arch Street, first floor rear, (267) 909-8358, [oishipoke.com](http://oishipoke.com)

• **Rangoon** – The city’s premier Burmese restaurant has successfully hooked Philadelphians on Thousand Layer Bread, fresh tea salad, chickpea tofu—appetizers are standouts—with plenty of vegetarian options. 112 N. 9th Street, (215) 829-8939, [rangoonphilly.com](http://rangoonphilly.com)

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• **Red Kings 2** – Late-night karaoke (until nearly 3 a.m. on weekends and 2 a.m. during the week) and the irresistible lure of Sichuan peppercorns make this restaurant a major draw. Loyal diners insist that the Dan Dan noodles, cumin lamb and spicy boiled fish are the best in town. 1006 Race Street, (215) 238-1392, redkings2restaurant.com

• **Sang Kee Peking Duck House** – The flagship of a local empire, Sang Kee built its name on noodle soups, garlicky greens and, of course, roast duck. Patrons eagerly sample the Hong Kong fare on two floors of the restaurant. 238 N. 9th Street, (215) 925-7532, sangkeechinatown.com

• **Spice C** – With a flair for the dramatic, this Chinese noodle house lets patrons watch chefs skillfully turn fresh dough into hand-pulled and hand-shaved noodles, flinging their handiwork into the air, stretching and separating the dough for Spice C’s soups and stir-fries. Also for sale here: T-shirts that declare, “Love is … getting fat together! So, let’s eat more!” 131 N. 10th Street, (215) 923-2222, spicecnoodle.com

• **Tai Lake** – The tanks of fish and frogs up front are a good indicator of the freshness of ingredients at this venerated seafoodery. Diners choose from authentic delicacies such as crabmeat and asparagus soup, chili-baked shrimp and sautéed conch. 134 N. 10th Street, (215) 922-0698, tailakeseafoodrest.com

• **Tasty Place** – Hungry neighborhood dwellers head underground to the Chinatown Mall for a true taste of Hong Kong. For two decades, Chef Simon Sei has satisfied their cravings for salt-baked wings and squid, roast pork ho fun, homey soups and spare ribs. 143 N. 11th Street, (215) 592-8990

• **Terakawa Ramen** – Japanese noodle bowls topped with roast pork, soft-boiled egg or soy-flavored chicken are the main attractions at this sleek fast-service spot. Patrons can sample platters with homemade curry, as well as fluffy or crispy buns filled with slowly braised pork, lettuce, tomato and spicy mayonnaise. 204 N. 9th Street, (267) 687-1355, terakawaramenphilly.com

• **Tom’s Dim Sum** – Its humble setting in an underpass only adds to the charm of this quick-eat spot, owned by soup dumpling master Tom Guo. Diners can mix and match steamed buns, dumplings and entrees over rice and still spend less than $20. 59 N. 11th Street, (215) 923-8880, tomsdimsum.com

• **Vietnam Restaurant** – The food at this handsome spot is impossibly quick, surprisingly inexpensive and deliciously authentic—and has been so since the early 1980s. Think crepes, broken rice platters and steaming bowls of pho. 221 N. 11th Street, (215) 592-1163, eatatvietnam.com

• **Xi’an Sizzling Woks** – Celebrating the bold cuisine of northwestern Xi’an, this restaurant offers unconventional specialties like liang pi (cold skin) noodles, group-friendly spicy chicken and noodle (thick noodles, bone-in chicken and potato in slightly spicy curry sauce), plus dumplings in spicy and sour soup and fiery hot pots. 902 Arch Street, (215) 925-1688, xiansizzlingwoksphilly.com

• **Yamitsuki Ramen** – Japanese street food enjoys creative culinary twists at this ramen-ya, which stands out for both its food and décor—check out the full-sized Iron Man costume on display in the front window. Ramen finds space on the menu, as do steamed buns stuffed with pork or chicken, ethereal snow ice and tea bar beverages. 1028 Arch Street, (215) 629-3888, yamitsukiramen.com
Quick Bites & Treats:

- **Bread Top House** – Breakfast at this corner cafe starts the day off right—and for a bargain. Freshly baked coconut buns, fruit smoothies and milk teas hit the spot, and generally cost around $1. 1041 Race Street, (215) 925-3802

- **Heung Fa Chun Sweet House** – Quick, light meals are the specialty at this unassuming snack stop. Favorites include sweet or savory *dou hua* (tofu custard), sticky rice with Chinese sausage and fried sesame balls. 112 N. 10th Street, (215) 238-8968

- **Hidden Gem Cafe** – Hong Kong-style breakfast, including the otherwise locally elusive—and internationally trendy—jianbing, a traditional, stuffed crepe typically made by street vendors in China, Hong Kong French toast (with or without peanut butter) and select savory snacks are on the menu at this all-day spot. 122 N. 10th Street, (267) 606-6625, hiddengemcafetogo.com

- **Kuriimii, A Soft Serve Jawn** – Black sesame, lychee, mango and charcoal vanilla are a few of the unconventional soft-serve flavors at this fun-loving ice cream shop, where unlimited toppings include cookies, Fruity Pebbles, Kit Kats and Pocky. 1023 Cherry Street, (215) 964-1223, kuriimiisoftserve.com

- **Mango Mango** – Black sesame paste soup, mango sundae and durian mille crepe are among the authentically Hong Kong-style desserts at this modern cafe. 1013 Cherry Street, (215) 922-2233, mangomangodessert.com

- **Mayflower Bakery and Café** – This mainstay for cheap meals welcomes guests for breakfast or lunch. Behind the glass displays sit crispy, oven-fresh delicacies, like taro and red-bean buns, coconut bread, egg tarts and even hot-dog buns. 1008 Race Street, (215) 629-5668

- **Mr. Wish** – For fruity tea and all-things creamy and sippable, this cheery drink shop delivers. Later-than-average hours make it a great place to visit before or after a concert at the Troc. 216 N. 10th Street, (267) 457-2650, mrwishusa.com

- **QT Vietnamese Sandwich** – When the banh mi craving hits, this bright, friendly luncheonette delivers. The menu includes hoagies both meaty (the house special includes barbecue pork and Vietnamese ham) and vegetarian (lemongrass tofu, all layered with cilantro, fresh cucumbers, pickled carrots, mayo, pâté and fresh jalapeños). 48 N. 10th Street, (267) 639-4520, qtvietnamesesandwich.com

- **Ray’s Café & Teahouse** – Known for its siphoned specialty hot coffees and 12-hour drip cold-brew, Ray’s draws caffeine-fix connoisseurs to its friendly, old-school space. There’s also a full menu of imported Taiwanese teas, smoothies, desserts—coffee jelly made from the shop’s own blend—and beef noodle soup and dumplings. 141 N. 9th Street, (215) 922-5122, rayscafe.com

- **Tea Dó** – This modern teahouse serves creative drinks and snacks all day long. A full selection of teas—with or without bubbles—accompanies eats like gyoza, curry fish balls and assorted onigiri. 132 N. 10th Street, (215) 925-8889, tea-do.com

- **Tsocaa & bbq Chicken** – Korean-fried chicken, including excellent honey garlic wings and “cheese teas,” drinks with cream cheese-like toppings, are the specialties of the house. But not barbecue: The “bbq” in the name stands for “best of the best quality.” 938 Race Street, (267) 519-8303

- **TT Skewer** – With about a half dozen seats, this tiny, couple-run, evening-only spot puts a lot of love into its Northern China-style (charcoal-roasted) meat and *mantou* (steamed bun) skewers and hot pots. 56 N. 9th Street, (215) 460-6617

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ViVi Bubble Tea – This cheerful teahouse offers delicious tapioca drinks, along with amazing Earl Grey floats and a photogenic blue, purple and orange “Blue Galaxy” beverage, but the reason to dine-in is the addictive, inexpensive popcorn chicken, which comes with a variety of toppings, including yummy plum. 145 N. 10th Street, (267) 318-7384, vivibubbletea.com

Yummy Yummy – For the cost- and taste-conscious, the teas, sticky rice, pork- and mushroom-filled rice rolls and made-to-order bubble waffles at this Friendship Gate-side spot are must-orders. 52 N. 10th Street, (215) 625-9188

Shopping:

Asia Crafts, Inc. – The city’s main outlet for Hello Kitty and her Sanrio pals stocks its shelves to the brim with officially licensed merch. Shoppers can find just about any item stamped with their iconic images, plus snacks and candy galore, at this fun Japanese toy and novelty store. 124 N. 10th Street, (215) 925-3974, facebook.com/asiacrafts

Asia Supermarket – Set next to Tasty Place in the subterranean Chinatown Mall, this food market offers a down-home shopping experience. Noodles, tea, condiments, cookware and a wide selection of herbal medicines line the aisles. 143 N. 11th Street, (215) 928-9888

Chinese Culture and Arts – One of the neighborhood’s best-kept shopping secrets, this store is one where bargaining is allowed and encouraged. Offerings include imported mahjong sets, Buddha sculptures, teapots and more, all at solid prices. 126 N. 10th Street, (215) 928-1616

Ga-In BeautyZone – Korean beauty experts deliver the goods at this well-stocked cosmetic store. In addition to makeup, masks and skin care products, Ga-In offers eyelash extensions and micro-blading. 127 N. 11th Street, (267) 210-0314

Invisible Fake – This sleek boutique accommodates shoppers with a flair for high-style streetwear with its smartly curated seasonal selection. The selection includes jerseys, hats and hoodies from Japanese labels such as Undercover, SOPHNET, Comme des Garçons and more. 118 N. 9th Street, (267) 930-8546, facebook.com/invisiblefake

Tuck Hing – The stock varies from week to week at Chinatown’s longest-running grocer. But shoppers can always count on superb Chinese sausage, dried oysters and other staples of the Asian kitchen. 218 N. 10th Street, (215) 627-2079

Bars & Nightlife:

Bar.Ly – The shifting trends in Chinatown have brought about a more modern bar culture, with an emphasis on craft cocktails, beer and sports-viewing. There are 60 beers on tap and a global pub-grub menu featuring tater tots, burgers, kimchi pizza and Vietnamese pork chops. 101 N. 11th Street, (215) 922-2688, bar-ly.com

Hi Kori – This L-shaped bar pouring in the Chinatown Square complex serves original tea-infused cocktails and an excellent selection of Japanese whiskey. A smattering of booze-friendly street food bites completes the experience. 1016-18 Race Street, (267) 758-6118, facebook.com/hikori.phila

Hop Sing Laundromat – Chinatown’s surreptitious speakeasy, concealed behind an unmarked Race Street gate, hand-cracks ice and squeezes fruit juice to order for its exquisite cocktails. Proprietor Lê has strict rules for entry: Allowed in are those who comply with the dress code and turn off their cell phones. 1029 Race Street, hopsinglaundromat.com

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• **NOTO** – The acronym stands for “Not Of The Ordinary,” and with 22 VIP bottle-service tables, three bars and the capacity to hold up to 980 clubgoers, Philly’s largest nightclub delivers on that promise. The upscale venue combines superior service with international DJs. 1209 Vine Street, (215) 607-6686, notoftheordinary.com

• **Tango** – Dinner and entertainment meet at this neon-lit combination eatery and karaoke bar. The menu features snacks like Thai chili wings, crab Rangoon and shrimp and chicken lettuce wraps, plus luxe private singing suites. 1021 Arch Street, (215) 925-8100, tangophilly.com

• **The Trocadero Theatre** – The ever-versatile former burlesque theater gives fans the chance to attend shows both large and small—whether it’s international bands, hip-hop artists, indie rockers or the campy Movie Monday series. 1003 Arch Street, (215) 922-6888, thetroc.com

• **Yakitori Boy** – At this hotspot, the night can start with yakitori, sushi or sake bombs — but it always ends with singing. Those who prefer more intimacy can present their musical stylings to friends in private karaoke rooms or, if booked in advance, a private lounge. 211 N. 11th Street, (215) 923-8088, yakitoriboy.com

**Arts & Culture:**

• **10th Street Plaza** – Capped by a pergola and guardian lions, this cornerstone park flanks Chinatown’s north end. A statue of Lin Zexu honors the Fujian province. 10th & Vine Streets

• **Asian Arts Initiative** – This community-based arts center engages people to create art that explores the diverse experiences of Asian-Americans, addresses social context and impacts the community in a positive way. The organization offers a full calendar of events, including exhibitions, public performances, an out-of-school youth program and more. 1219 Vine Street, (215) 557-0455, asianartsinitiative.org

• **Chinese Zodiac Walk** – The 95 bronze medallions embedded in the neighborhood’s sidewalks represent the Chinese calendar year. Look closely for all 12 animals, designed in a paper-cut style by Andrews/LeFevre Studios and the 10-foot medallion displaying all of the zodiac animals.

• **Friendship Gate** – Built by Chinese artisans and installed in 1984, the dramatic gilt-painted entry symbolizes the connection between sister cities Philadelphia and Tianjin. Architect Sabrina Soong designed the structure to recreate a Qing Dynasty style with Tianjin tiles. 10th & Arch Streets

• **Mural Arts Philadelphia** – Many Chinatown walls depict the area’s rich history and vision for the future, thanks to larger-than-life works created by Mural Arts designers and painters. *How We Fish* is part of a citywide project to engage workers, business leaders and residents in thinking about the role of work in the community. Tours depart from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts’ Hamilton Building. 128 N. Broad Street, muralarts.org/tours

• **Philly Food Adventures** – Food writer and blogger Jamie Shanker welcomes groups of four to 20 for her 2.5-hour jaunt around the neighborhood. Meeting under the neighborhood’s iconic arch, she offers insights into Asian cultures before taking eaters to multiple destinations for dumplings, noodles and under-the-radar street fare. phillyfoodadventures.com

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*Note to Editors: For high-resolution photos and high-definition B-roll of Greater Philadelphia, visit the Photos & Video section of visitphilly.com/mediacenter.*