

## Geno's, Tony Luke's, and Jim's Philly Cheesesteak

Reviews by Todd Hoerner

When in Philadelphia, you have to try an authentic "Philly Cheesesteak." Making six trips to Philadelphia for road surveys has given a few of us a chance to sample three of the better known cheesesteak stands around the city.

While the menus at each of these steak stands contained a long list of cheesesteak variations, hoagies, and cutlets, according to the native Philadelphians that we were working with, the "original" cheesesteak starts with cheese wiz. To order a cheese wiz steak you simply have to state "wiz steak" (Illinois translation: "I would like a cheesesteak with cheese wiz and that will be all"). To order the cheese wiz steak with fried onions the order changes to "wiz-wit" (Illinois translation: "I would like a cheesesteak with cheese wiz and I think I will try some fried onions this time"). In order to make a comparison of the different cheesesteak stands fair, I decided to try a "wiz-wit" from the three different locations we attended. The individual reviews are as follows:

**Geno's Steaks**  
**1219 S. Ninth St.**  
**Philadelphia, PA 19147**  
**215-389-0659**  
**[www.genosteaks.com](http://www.genosteaks.com)**

Geno's is one of the better-known steak places in Philadelphia. Sitting across the street from one of its biggest competitors (Pat's Steaks), Geno's is certainly known for its personality as well as its flavorful steaks. While waiting for your order at this outdoor steak stand, you can spend your time looking at all of the autographed photos of famous (and some not-so-famous) customers. I have been to Geno's three times on different trips and I have yet to have a bad steak. The precisely seasoned steak meat at Geno's is chopped into strips and placed on a very tasty roll. Condiments available at a do-it-yourself stand outside include items such as mustard, ketchup, pickles, and hot peppers. Based on a recommendation from a native Philadelphian, I now prefer my cheesesteaks with ketchup. It may sound weird, but try it. You won't be disappointed. Geno's is definitely worth the trip to South Philly. The food (steak and roll) and atmosphere cannot be duplicated. However, parking is scarce.





**Tony Luke's Old Philly Style Sandwiches**  
39 E. Oregon Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA 19148  
215-551-5725  
www.tonylukes.com

If you find yourself down by one of Philadelphia's many sports stadiums, you aren't far from Tony Luke's. Sitting in the shadow of an elevated portion I-95, Tony Luke's is another outdoor steak stand that is worth a stop. Tony Luke's seems to have a little wider menu of steaks and hoagies with a few more specialty sandwiches. For example, you can get a variety of beef, pork, veal, or chicken sandwiches. Some come with a topping of spinach or broccoli rabe. I never tried one of these "green" sandwiches, but they looked pretty good. The "wiz-wit" steak that I had at Tony Luke's was similar to Geno's as far as the steak style goes, but I would have to say that I was a little more partial to Geno's. Still, Tony Luke's was very good and is worth a trip to the far Southeast side of Philadelphia. Next time I am there, I think I am going to try one of their famous Roast Pork Sandwiches. The variety of good food is impressive at Tony Luke's and parking is much easier than at Geno's.



**Jim's Steaks**  
400 South St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215-928-1911  
www.jimssteakshilly.com

While the original Jim's Steaks is on South St. in central Philly, we actually ate at their Northeast location at Bustelton & Cottman Avenues (at the Roosevelt Mall). The first two nice things about this Jim's Steaks location that I noticed were that it was indoors (a welcome sight in late November) and they had a bathroom. This was the third different steak place that I had attended, and I have to say that I was surprised to find that it was my favorite. As with the other two steak stands, for comparison's sake I ordered a "wiz-wit." The steak at Jim's was more finely chopped than the strips at Geno's. This was probably the feature that put Jim's at the top of the list for me. A bed of flavorful chopped steak on an equally tasty roll made this my favorite steak place in Philadelphia.





**Johnny's Hots**  
**Delaware Avenue (North of Spring Garden)**  
**Philadelphia, PA**  
**215-423-2280**

Finally, if you are not in the mood for a Cheesesteak, one of my favorite lunch trips involves heading down to Delaware Avenue for a "hot-sausage" at Johnny's Hots. On the near Northeast side of Philadelphia (near the river) is a famous hot dog and sausage stand called "Johnny's Hots." Being an Illinois native, I was familiar with a Chicago style hot dog and an Italian sausage, but I had never had a Philadelphia-style hot sausage before. The version of "hot sausage" served at Johnny's is best described as a very spicy hot dog (i.e., it has the consistency of a hot dog rather than a traditional Italian sausage) that is about the size of a Ballpark frank. This hot sausage served on a very tasty fresh bun is one of my favorite quick and inexpensive lunch stops in Philly. Well worth the trip!

