

# Travel

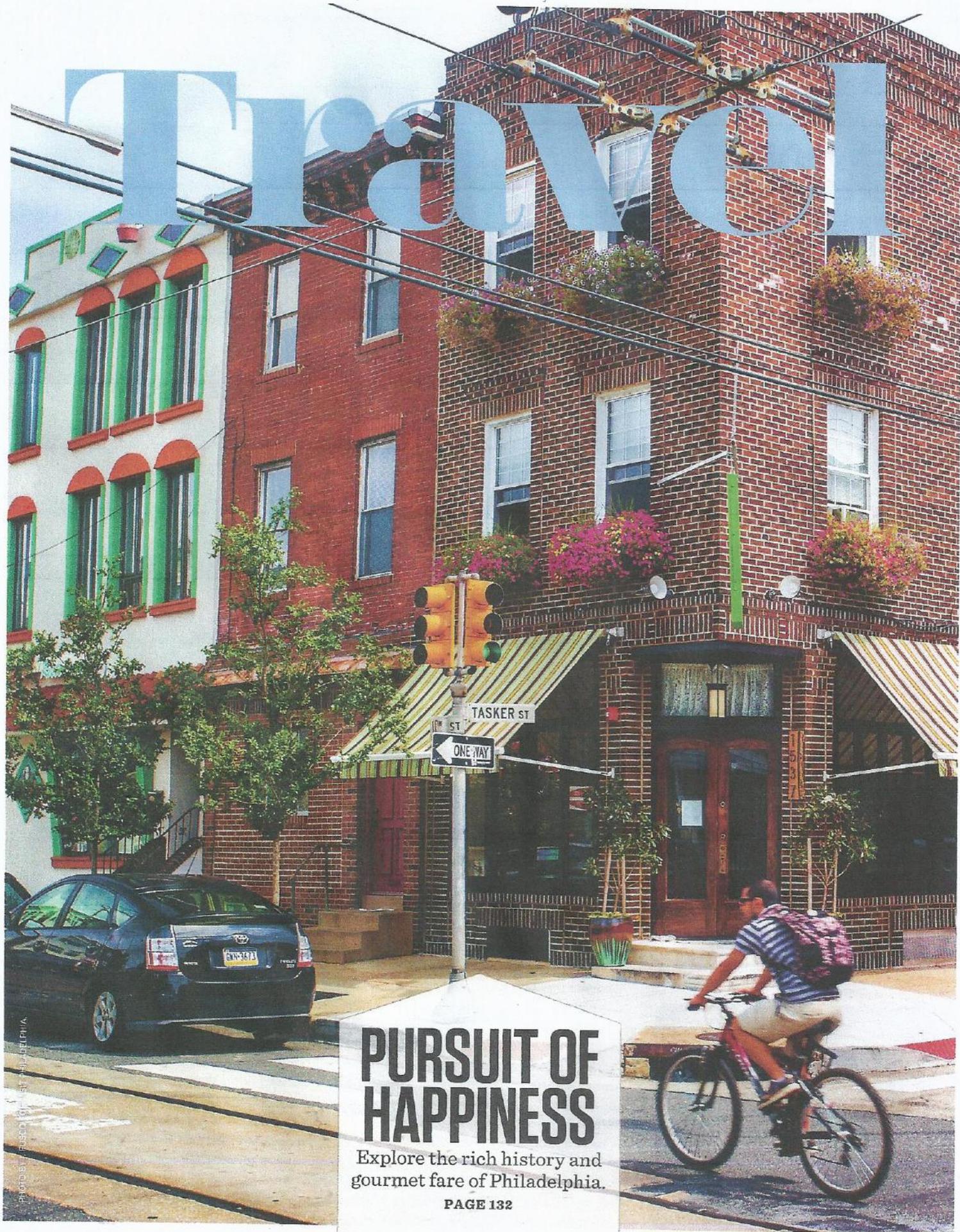


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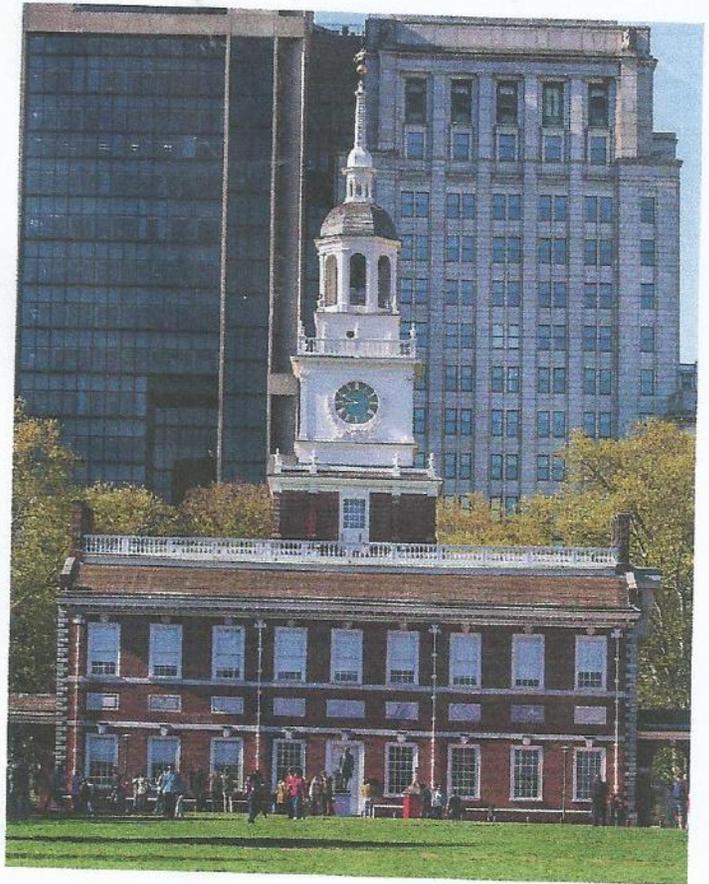
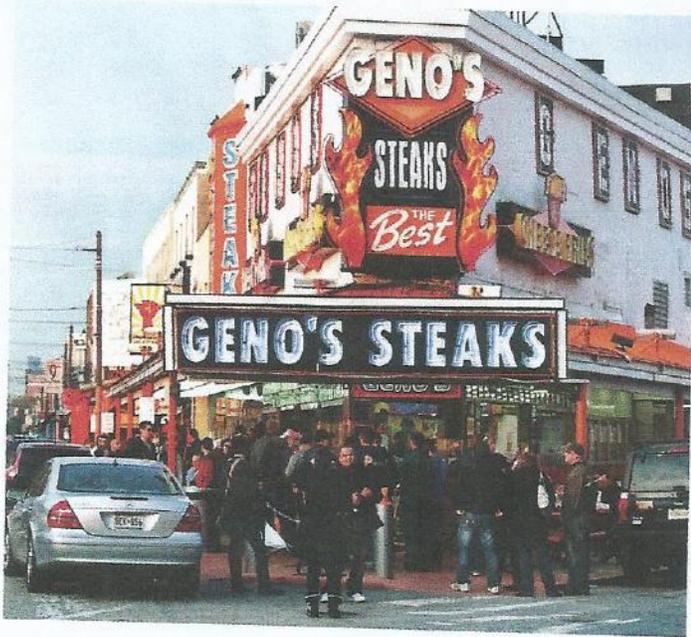
**PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS**  
Explore the rich history and gourmet fare of Philadelphia.  
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# ON A ROLL

Discover Philadelphia's emerging food scene—and try an old classic while you're there

BY BECCA HENSLEY



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Guests wait in line at famous Geno's Steaks; the exterior of historic Independence Hall; a mouthwatering Philly cheesesteak

**S**tand on **East Passyunk**, an Italian-American-infused strip in the southern part of **Philadelphia**, and you'll have to make an important decision: **Geno's** or **Pat's**?

Long the culinary symbol of the City of Brotherly Love, the Philly cheesesteak tops the list of food adventures best tested on their own turf. Mimicked in eateries across America, this towering sandwich, served on a crusty roll, heaped with peppers and fried onions, layered with finely sliced rib-eye beef and crowned with gooey Cheez Whiz and a dollop of ketchup, had a historical purpose here:

It was originally developed as sustenance for dockworkers and other laborers who needed calories aplenty in record time.

Allegedly invented in the 1930s by Pat and Harry Olivieri, the sandwich and its popularity lives on despite Philadelphia's rising reputation as one of America's top contemporary dining cities. To try the cheesesteak—and you must—choose between **Geno's Steaks** and **Pat's King of Steaks**, located across the street from one another. After your nosh, yield to a nap or take a bike ride along the beautiful riverside city's myriad bike-friendly streets, which are easy to navigate thanks to William Penn's visionary city plan, a neat crisscross of grid-like paths.

Having already gobbled up a cheesesteak in the past, I visit the neighborhood with my family to test out the revitalized gourmet scene. An artsy, edgy enclave, chock-full of galleries, vintage shops, coffeehouses, alluring boutiques and gastropubs, East Passyunk is best known for its "red gravy" Italian spots. Called "restaurant row" by insiders, the street's series of catawampus historic buildings lend a picturesque gravitas. Within, refurbished interiors hold gastronomic gems,

such as newly opened **Brigantessa** near the **Singing Fountain**. The brainchild of James Beard nominee Joe Cicala, the bi-level eatery coddles like a well-fitted glove and exudes a convivial, tavern-like feel. It even has a Vesuvius ash pizza oven brought from Italy by ship that warms the place.

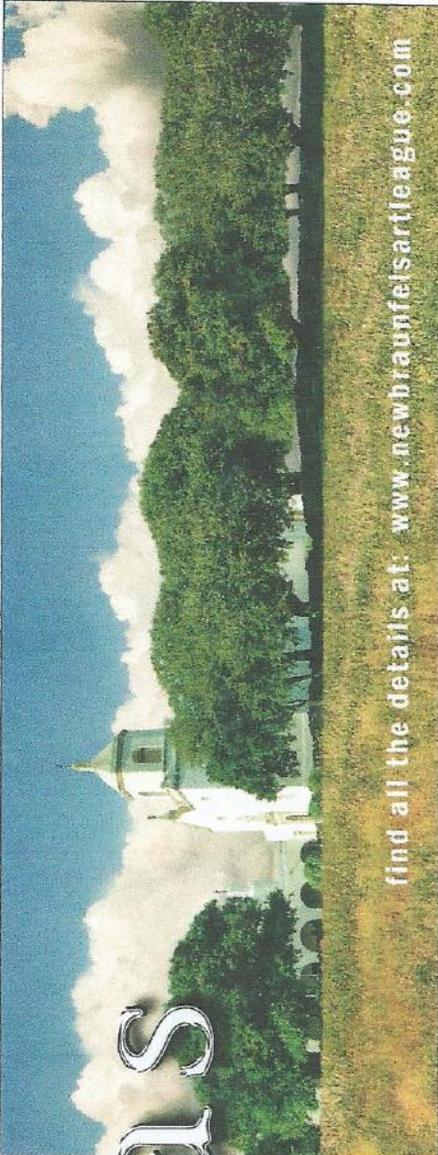
Though irresistible menu courses, such as wood-grilled octopus and potted smoked duck rillette with pickled mustard seeds, will

## Insider Tips

For a glitzy taste of the past, stay at the Ritz-Carlton Philadelphia, a retrofitted, century-old bank building.

BYOB is popular here. With a big DIY culture, Philly has more than 200 restaurants that encourage you to bring your own booze.

Join the city in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Gay Rights Movement, with signature events taking place over Fourth of July weekend.



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TRAVEL  
NORTHEAST

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call to you, save plenty of room for the pizzas. In speakeasy mode, the restaurant offers off-the-menu items—secret, chef-made, Neapolitan-style pizzas in funky shapes that must be requested. Ask for *Il Meravigliano*, a half-calzone, half-pie, stuffed with sheep's milk ricotta and topped with buffalo mozzarella, basil, roasted mushrooms and olives. Or, get the *Stella*, a star-shaped pie filled with housemade pork sausage, San Marzano tomatoes and creamy mozzarella.

In **Old Town**, just a couple of miles away, we make tracks to **Independence Hall** and admire the **Liberty Bell**. Like everyone else, we run up the 72 steps of the **Philadelphia Museum of Art** in honor of *Rocky*. At the **Barnes Foundation**, a glorious collection of impressionist and early modern paintings fuels our spirits. And at **Reading Terminal Market**, we walk the aisles, awed by



Reading Terminal Market

products such as jerky and cheese made and sold by Amish vendors and other farmers, butchers and artisans.

Amid all the history, **High Street on Market** beckons. Inviting, it's the laboratory of Eli Kulp, a *Food & Wine* Best New Chef 2014. Open for all meals, the innovative space excels in bread-stuff, which it treats as an art form. For brunch, indulge in pastrami hash (farm egg and Russian dressing bedecked), and at night, sample the caraway rye rigatoni. Next door, another of Kulp's restaurants, **Fork**, comes with a take-away booklet, which details the local provenance of the eatery's mostly homegrown ingredients. It includes explanations for dishes like onions & cream, from a Penn Dutch cookbook, and vollkornbrot, regional rye and spelt. In Philly, food rules and history has legs. ■