

food&drink

A HISTORY LESSON, IT'S WHAT'S FOR DINNER

By Kristen Franke and Eliza Rothstein

At the end of the Taste of Philadelphia Food Tour, our guide Carolyn Wyman left us hungry, wide-eyed and smiling. Wyman literally wrote the book (a biography actually) on SPAM and Jello, making her well qualified to answer any of our Philly dining questions. Her tour focuses on the history of foods, ranging from Breyer's Ice Cream to Snapping Turtle Soup, which form a part of Philadelphia's blue collar legacy. "As the tour comes to a close, I won't say bon appetit," she said loudly over the bustling noise of the market, "but I will leave you with this: 'Yo, eat up.'" And we did.

A crash course in Philly food culture, A Taste of Philadelphia walks you through the well-known and appreciated Reading Terminal Market, providing samples of traditional Philly eats along

the way. Held Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays by reservation at 12th and Filbert Streets, the tour introduces you to the culture and current offerings of the 115-year-old marketplace.

The tour pays homage to the history of Philly by following the evolution of the city's iconic foods. Did you know that worldwide companies have used the Philadelphia name to sell their food products? Ever heard of scrapple, or tried Spataro's cream cheese and olive sandwich? Sampling Bassett's famous ice cream and Fisher's soft pretzels made right in front of our eyes, we passed counter after counter of fresh and dry aged meats, cheeses, bright, fresh produce and chocolate displays up the wazoo, learning the answers to debated topics such as the etymology of the word "hoagie."

Among the nearly 100 stalls,

old photographs, vintage iceboxes and antique advertisements connect the modern market with its noteworthy past.

Phrases like "Drink Butter-milk and Live Forever" decorate the stalls and teach visitors about the vast changes that have taken place in the market since the days before refrigeration. But some things stay the same, and many of the family-owned shops have been passed down through the generations. By the end of the tour you will be so engrossed in the wonders of the market that you may consider donning the cheesesteak hat Wyman provides for daring visitors.



RACHEL BAYE

Enough to make one question Fro Gro's concern with the aesthetics of produce.

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