



JEWISH DELIS: AN AUTHENTIC WAY TO EXPERIENCE NEW YORK

Matt Alderton | Special for USA TODAY

Few things are as quintessentially “New York” as the Jewish deli.

“We call New York the Big Apple, but nobody goes to New York to eat apples. They go to New York to eat overstuffed pastrami sandwiches on rye,” says Ted Merwin, author of *Pastrami on Rye: An Overstuffed History of the Jewish Deli*.

David Sax, author of *Save the Deli: In Search of Perfect Pastrami, Crusty Rye and the Heart of Jewish Delicatessen*, says that after a period of decline, “Jewish delis are hip again.”

Here are five of the most delicious examples.

CARNEGIE DELI

WHAT TO ORDER: The Woody Allen — a 4-inch tower of corned beef and pastrami between two slices of rye (\$29.99)

Many New Yorkers wept in September when owner Marian Harper announced that the famous deli would be closing after nearly 80 years in Manhattan’s Theater District. If you hurry, you can still make it: The Midtown institution will serve its last slice of pastrami on Dec. 31.

854 Seventh Ave.; 212-757-2245; carnegiedeli.com

BEN’S BEST

WHAT TO ORDER: Stuffed Cabbage Hungroise — filled with lean ground beef and rice, served with peas and carrots (\$10.75)

This spot in Queens is a “destination deli,” Merwin says, crediting the food of third-generation owner Jay Parker for attracting celebrity customers like George W. Bush, Rudy Giuliani and Martha Stewart. Well worth the hike from Manhattan.

96-40 Queens Blvd.; 718-897-1700; bensbest.com



DREW ANGERER, GETTY IMAGES

KATZ’S DELICATESSEN

WHAT TO ORDER: Katz’s Pastrami Hot Sandwich — smoked, hand-carved and served with mustard; don’t ask for mayo! (\$19.95)

Katz’s has been a fixture on the Lower East Side since 1888, making it the oldest surviving Jewish deli in the world, according to Sax, who calls it “the Yankee Stadium of Jewish delis.” The cash-only restaurant is best known for its cameo in *When Harry Met Sally*.

205 E. Houston St.; 212-254-2246; katzsdelicatessen.com

MILE END DELICATESSEN

WHAT TO ORDER: Poutine — fries, cheese curds and chicken gravy topped, if you choose, with smoked brisket (classic, \$9/\$13; smoked meat, \$13/\$16)

Mile End in Brooklyn is a nouveau take on the classic Jewish deli. Specializing in “Montreal-style” meats cured and smoked on site, it’s known for contemporary and upscale remixes of deli fare — a surprising mash-up of hipster sensibilities with Yiddish traditions.

97 Hoyt St.; 1-718-852-7510; mileenddeli.com

2ND AVE DELI

WHAT TO ORDER: Jewish Penicillin — matzo ball soup with carrots and choice of noodles, kasha or rice (\$8.95)

For more locals and fewer tourists, head to this family-owned restaurant that dates to 1954 (although it moved from its original Second Avenue location in 2006). Sax says its menu tastes “like you’re having dinner at your Jewish aunt’s house — even if you don’t have a Jewish aunt.” And unlike Carnegie and Katz’s, it’s certified kosher.

162 E. 33rd St.; 212-689-9000; 2ndavedeli.com

You have until Dec. 31 to dine at the Carnegie Deli, famous for its piles of pastrami, plates of pickles and portraits of personalities.