



TOP OF THE HEAP



Port Orange's Famous Philly's: One of the Nation's Top Cheesesteaks

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PORT ORANGE — Naples has its pizza; New Orleans, the beignets. In Paris, you might want to try the escargot; in Buffalo, give a nod to the chicken wings. Certain cities are famed for their gastronomical specialties.

In Philadelphia, it's the "Philly" — a delicious, steaming, cheesesteak sandwich on a roll. If Joe Trapuzzano had been born earlier and set up shop here in Southeast Volusia in say, 1920, that mouthwatering delight might have been called a "Harbor Oaks."

That's how good his sandwich is.

"Nah, we're proud of our Philly here at 'Famous Philly's.' And, we've got one of the best!" exclaimed the transplanted Philadelphian. Looking around at the crowd at 5901 S. Ridgewood Ave., the smiling restaurateur clearly loves his job. For the past 10 years, Joe Trapuzzano has served tens of thousands of Philly's here, just north of the three bridges on U.S. 1.

"It's all about the people," said Mr. Trapuzzano. "I've been in food and entertainment, really, all my life."

He comes from a restaurant family, back in Philadelphia and south Jersey with his father running a restaurant and before his father, his grandparents.

"It goes way back," said Joe concentrating, "at least four generations."

Across the counter, the 5th generation culinarian was wiping down the shiny surface. "Yeah, I pretty much grew-up here," said Joe's son, Nick Trapuzzano. "I started working here when I was about 12 or 13."

Now, at 21 years old, he's already an old hand.

The menu has it all: steak, cheesesteak, onion and cheese steak, mushroom, pepper, and just about any combination you can imagine. They even have it with Teriyaki sauce. The sandwiches come in 7-inch, 9-inch, 18-inch, or for the truly ravenous, the 22-inch, Belly Bustin' Philly.

"We've got a challenge here," grinned Joe. "You eat the 22-inch Philly by yourself in 22 minutes, you win a \$50 prize and get to join in the bigger challenge in the fall. Plus, you

don't have to pay for the Philly."

With a shrug he nonchalantly tossed in, it's only an inch a minute. So far, nobody has even come close.

"They've all had to pay up, \$23.32 for the 22-inch," said the man willing to issue challenges — and to rise to them.

"Famous Philly's Beef & Beer has won the best Philly Cheese Steak in this region for the past nine years in a row," said Joe. Reaching back behind the counter, he snagged some reference material. "The Great Philly Cheesesteak Book" opens conveniently to the page featuring the handful of superior cheesesteak restaurants in the Sunshine State. Of course, the Port Orange restaurant is featured.

"Our secret is our carefully developed blend of beef." So good, in fact, Joe is well on the road to making it available statewide; potentially, nationwide.

"We'll be distributing to your favorite grocery store, we hope, in the next 90 days." He said they're also setting up a display case right in Famous Philly's.

"It'll be called Famous Philly's Market Place," he added. Just then, a distinguished looking man strode up to the sandwich store impresario.

"I've never eaten here before," said retired Lt. Col. Richard Schamay, "but I was assigned to Philadelphia back when I was in the Marine Corps. I've eaten plenty of Philly's since then. This is the best Philly I've had outside of Philadelphia."

Lt. Col. Schamay then shook Joe Trapuzzano's hand, "Keep up the great work, I'll be back."

"See, that's what this place is all about," said Joe. "Feeding people something good that they love. It's great!"

If you want to learn more about Famous Philly's or Joe's latest venture — the boxed specialty meat — call (386) 767-6338 or go online to FamousPhillys.com.

