



The Philadelphia Inquirer
2025 SHORE GUIDE

EDITOR'S NOTE

LET'S GO DOWN THE SHORE

Even if you didn't grow up piling into a station wagon with a week's worth of sunscreen and snacks, going down the Shore still finds a way to wrap you in its enduring embrace.

It could be your first pepperoni pie from Bakeria 1010 or your 1,000th slice from Manco and Manco: You already know how perfect pizza tastes after a too-much-sun day at the beach. You don't have to be a veteran of boardwalk

putt-putt to know that mini golf just hits different on a salt-air vacation. Maybe you have yet to climb inside Lucy the Elephant, but you can feel her quirky, benevolent, 143-year-old presence looming large over Margate.

This inaugural Inquirer Sunday Special is a celebration of the Shore's magic. Our cover story takes you on a tour of the most beloved pizzas along the beaches — an essential summer taste memory. You'll also find guides to our favorite restaurants, chill places to grab a drink, indie fashion boutiques, bringing your pup to the beach, the top concert tickets, and even the lowdown on cannabis delivery (we're on vacation!).

Whether you return to the Shore each summer or you're discovering its charms for the first time, consider this your invitation to make it your own. — EVAN S. BENN

Note: Places mentioned in Shore Guide stories are listed from north to south.

We'd love your feedback!



As a subscriber, your opinion is important. Please take a few minutes to complete our survey on the 2025 Shore Guide.

This page: Lifeguards keep watch at the beach in Cape May. On the cover: Pizza from Zio Niccolo and model from Mercury Talent Management photographed on Sea Isle Beach by Neal Santos / For The Inquirer on May 12, 2025.





CHEESESTEAKS
TO TRY



Alejandro A. Alvarez / Staff Photographer

ROLL CALL

Plenty of beach-town joints sling forgettable cheesesteaks. For true satisfaction, these three nail it. **BY TOMMY ROWAN**

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When it comes to the Jersey Shore's cheesesteak scene, there are scores of spots peddling sandwiches that scratch the itch. I've tried a half-dozen just this year, and have been eating them, seasonally, most of my adult life.

Unfortunately, most will hand you frozen sirloin that's chopped into charred pieces, slapped on a freezer-burnt roll, and topped with a cheese that wouldn't age even if you left it out all summer.

But there are a few spots mixed between the tourist traps that can deliver something closer to that taste

of home: a fresh-baked roll, tasty meat options, and cheese that doesn't soak the whole thing into submission.

Three cheesesteaks to try this summer:

White House Subs

ATLANTIC CITY

The walls of White House Subs at 2301 Arctic Ave. in Atlantic City are covered with framed, yellowing photos of the celebrities who've passed through the city's premier cheesesteak maker: Frank Sinatra, Jimmy Fallon, the Beatles.

After nearly 80 years in business — Anthony Basile opened it in 1946

— White House Subs still offers one of the best steaks you can get at the Shore. (There is a second location, in the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, but you can ignore it.)

The cheesesteaks (\$23.50 for a whole loaf, \$11.75 for normal size) are prepared in plain sight, filling the air with wafts of oiled beef and griddled onion. The shop offers only sliced provolone or American, which is placed on top of the top-round roast while cooking, melting into the meat along with short strings of fried onion.

The rolls are local, hailing from Formica's Bakery, and hold up through the last, ideal bite.

Sugar Hill Sub Shop

MAYS LANDING

The Sugar Hill Sub Shop is a humble, one-story building at 5445 Somers Point Rd. in Mays Landing, about 16 miles from Ocean City, 18 miles from Atlantic City, and a world away from Philadelphia.

A simple yellow sign declares: "Since 1982. Over 1 billion sold!" One can debate how many have actually been sold, but what makes this

A cheesesteak submarine at White House Subs in Atlantic City is one of the best you'll find down the Shore.

easy-to-overlook spot alluring is its no-frills product and deep local pride.

All of the sandwiches are made to order, and the stock moves quickly. The rolls are from Formica's; there's Italian sub bread and a choice of multigrain baguette or seeded Italian for an additional \$1.

For the 9-ounce cheesesteak (\$12.10), the shop offers a full complement of cheeses: American, pepper jack, Swiss, provolone, mozzarella, and Cooper Sharp. The sliced sirloin griddles up well along with a scattering of sautéed sweet white onions. It's wrapped tight — a loaded missile of a sandwich that hits the spot.

Johnny Longhots

WILDWOOD

Of the various cheesesteak-chain options at the Shore, the one to try is Johnny Longhots. The chain's catchphrase is "Where New York meets Philadelphia." I don't know about all that, but the franchisee who owns the Wildwood location is definitely bridging the gap.

The Wildwood location, at 3115 Pacific Ave., leans deeply into Philly branding — maybe too deeply. One of the Rocky movies is always playing on a flatscreen; a Sylvester Stallone mural greets you at the entrance; the definition of "jawn" is written on a wall. It's loud, figuratively and audibly. But it has plenty of inside seating, and the sandwiches have substance.

The basic cheesesteak is priced at \$13.25. It comes with a choice of American, provolone, or Whiz, and either seeded or unseeded Liscio's rolls. For an extra \$1.25, the cheese choices expand to pepper jack, Swiss, mozzarella, and Cooper Sharp; sharp provolone is \$2. Either roll will do, but the Whiz is a little watery, so for the sake of structural integrity, it's safer to go seeded.

The 12 ounces of chopped sirloin are well seasoned with salt and pepper, and cooked with care — the fatty leftovers trimmed off before it was all piled onto the roll. Consider adding the namesake longhots for an extra few bucks and a kick.



BEST
PIZZA



SUN, SAND, SLICES

Pizza on a beach vacation is as essential as sunshine and broad-spectrum SPF. These seaside greats will keep your crew happy as a clam (pie). **BY MICHAEL KLEIN**

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My summertime beach meal, whether with friends or family, is pizza. More shareable than sandwiches, pizza is the only option when you have to satisfy a hangry crowd craving takeout. This also happens to be a particularly glorious time for pizza fans because the choices down the Shore — between old-school standbys and newer upstarts — are plentiful. Here are a dozen favorite Jersey Shore pizza destinations, from Long Beach Island to Cape May.

THE UPSTART

BLVD Pizza

SURF CITY

Mike Franzoni was running an acai bowl and smoothie shop in a Long Beach Island strip mall when he started messing around with pizza. Three summers ago, he said, the slice pop-up “kind of overtook the bowls.”

He flipped Incredibowls into BLVD, a takeout-only shop. The accolades have since poured in, particularly for his square **Grandma** pizza, which gets plum tomatoes ladled alongside the mozzarella before it’s finished with basil, extra-virgin olive oil, and Pecorino Romano.

“I think there was a need for good pizza down here,” Franzoni told me.

He corrected himself: “There is good pizza here, just [a need for something] different — more like New York-style rather than Shore-style.”

Franzoni smiled. “I think people know what I mean when I say that.”

1503 LONG BEACH BLVD., SURF CITY, 609-494-5623; INSTAGRAM.COM/BLVDPIZZALBI

THE FAMILY SPOT

Carluccio's Coal Fired Pizza

NORTHFIELD

Carlo Citera was slinging pies in a Trump Marina food court when Golden Nugget took over in 2011 and ordered the vendors to leave. He moved to the mainland, where he crammed a coal-fired oven into a shuttered Dunkin’ in Northfield — which is readily apparent from the snug counter and table seating at his always-bustling shop.

The coal-oven wings, redolent of rosemary, make a terrific side to the pizzas — not only the beautifully charred 12-inch coal-fired varieties but the New York-style, Sicilians, and flatbreads displayed in the case as slices to go.

Your appetizer could be a coal-fired **Bufalina** (a veritable salad on a pizza with ricotta, basil, truffle oil, pesto, arugula, tomatoes, prosciutto, and buffalo mozzarella), followed by a juicy **Grandma**, which Guy Fieri raved about a decade ago on *Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives*.

1200 NEW RD., NORTHFIELD, 609-641-4011; CARLUCCIOSCOALFIREDPIZZA.COM



Above: The Margherita pie at Bakeria 1010 in Ocean City starts with a sourdough crust. Monica Herndon / Staff Photographer Previous page: Enjoying Zio Niccolo Pizza on the beach. Neal Santos / For The Inquirer



Michael Klein

THE PIZZA WIZARD

Tony Boloney's

ATLANTIC CITY

Tony Boloney's motto seems to be "more is more," whether it's flavor combos or portion sizes at owner Mike Hauke's funky, graffiti-covered shop.

The **K-Pop Mic Drop** pizza starts with a black sesame seed crust and gets Korean fire chicken (gochujang buldak), scallions, and cheeses; it's served with chopsticks.

There's a pizza whose name, referring to someone who's highly inebriated, I cannot print. It has beer-battered chicken or cauliflower, honey stout barbecue sauce, aged mozzarella, and sharp cheddar. Some are barely pizzas at all. The **Taco Taco Taco** is a collection of tacos encircling a mound of guacamole.

For the **Swine Fighter**, the pizzaiolo adds an obscene amount of broiler-charred pepperoni cups onto a red cheese pie — maybe three or four times the usual pepp load. The resulting

grease from the pepperoni pan is mixed with mayo to create a sauce that's squirted on top. Stent sold separately.

300 ORIENTAL AVE., ATLANTIC CITY, 609-344-8669; TONYBOLONEYS.COM

CARE FOR A DRINK?

Tony's Baltimore Grill

ATLANTIC CITY

Tony's Baltimore Grill — its seafood supplier was in Baltimore when it opened nearly 100 years ago — has withstood time, trends, disco, and casino gambling, still basking moodily in its neon glow of nostalgia and kitsch.

You should order a crispy, thin-crust 12-inch bar pizza — whole pies only — to accompany your red-sauce Italian favorites. The **Damon Tyner**, devised by a former local judge, gets you a half-pepperoni, half-sausage, amped by chopped hot peppers sprinkled throughout.

The adjacent bar is open 24 hours, and the kitchen is open till 2 a.m. weeknights and 3 a.m. weekends.

2800 ATLANTIC AVE., ATLANTIC CITY, 609-345-5766; TONYSBALTIMOREGRILLAC.COM

The **Mex-corn Husker** pizza at Tony Boloney's, above, stars roasted corn and Mexican string cheese. Below, a **Bakeria 1010** worker holds a **Spicy Roni** pizza.

DATE-NIGHT PIZZA

Saltwater

MARGATE

If you don't head to David and Lori Salvo's high-energy Margate bistro for spritzes and martinis and a plate of the gigantic, hand-rolled ricotta gnocchi or maybe a cutlet, you're there for the crusty, puffy-crust rectangles and rounds that even caught critic Craig LaBan's fancy.

The **reds** get a simple sauce that's little more than hand-crushed tomatoes and oregano with flourishes of basil, while the **whites** come up under a zesty blend of Pecorino and mozzarella.

Sidewalk seating offers a respite from the lively din indoors.

9401 VENTNOR AVE., MARGATE, 609-289-8078; SALTWATERMARGATE.COM

NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

Squares & Fare

SOMERS POINT

Dominic Russo's social-media following clamored for the pizza pop-ups he ran out of his kitchen. Last year, he opened a restaurant in a former Laundromat across from Charlie's in Somers Point.

It's a neat, tiled workroom with no sign outside (only a subtle "S&F" on a sticker) and a double oven to bake

his pneumatically airy, thick-crust red rectangles, whose edges get those toasty, cheesy wisps known as "frico."

Demand is still high, and sellouts are frequent. I scored a **vodka pie** as a walk-in shortly after the 3 p.m. opening, but I would advise ordering online.

There are five tables for two, so take-away is best.

7 E. NEW JERSEY AVE., SOMERS POINT, 609-404-8790; SQUARESANDFARE.COM

THE DOUGH WHISPERER

Bakeria 1010

OCEAN CITY

Mike Fitzik has been delighting Shore pizza fans since 2017, when he started casual pop-ups out of a friend's garage in Margate.

Since then, he's bounced around: Atlantic City, Linwood, Ocean City, Philly (briefly), and now back in Ocean City with this modest Italian-style bake shop (with a few tables for dining in) amid a strip of stores downtown.

Fitzik's airy, 18-inch rounds and 17x12-inch rectangles — the sourdough starter, he says, was smuggled in from Naples — stay crispy amid a staggering payload of toppings: The **Spicy Roni** features mozzarella, San Marzano tomatoes, Pecorino Romano, pepperoni, shaved jalapeño, and hot honey.

BAKERIA 1010, 955 ASBURY AVE., OCEAN CITY, 609-600-7023; BAKERIA1010OCNJ.COM



Jose F. Moreno / Staff Photographer



Michael Klein

THE O.G.

Manco & Manco

OCEAN CITY

Manco's sells the Ocean City boardwalk pizza that many grew up on: light-crust, gently baked, 18-inch rounds. Simple, tasty, and one to share with friends. (But not a seagull — you learn at a young age to guard your slice while walking the boardwalk.)

Part of Manco's appeal is the floor show: Watch the pizzaiolo stretch and toss the dough cartoonishly high and then plop it down on the counter for a dusting of cheese and swirls of marinara from the sauce hose before sliding it into a revolving oven.

One note for 2025: A whole plain pie is \$25.75 and most are \$39.75 — among the pricier pizzas around.

NINTH AND THE BOARDWALK, OCEAN CITY, 609-399-2548, 12TH AND THE BOARDWALK, 609-398-0720, EIGHTH AND THE BOARDWALK, 609-399-2783, AND 19 BETHEL RD., SOMERS POINT, 609-927-9900; MANCOSPIZZA.COM

BEACH PIZZA

Zio Niccolo Pizza

SEA ISLE CITY

It's \$5.45 for a slice of pepperoni? You have to know that at Zio Niccolo, it's crispy and thin-crust with minimal flop, and it's cut from a 22-inch pie.

My pizza math tells me that the slices at Nicholas Sidoti's pizzeria on the promenade in Sea Isle are 67% larger than the 18-inchers you see all over. (Sidoti's whole pies are 16-inchers.)

Most customers, including beachgoers who get delivery to their umbrellas,

stick with the plain and pepperoni, though the house special **Zio Niccolo**, with its chunky San Marzano sauce, fresh mozz, and basil, is a good bet.

11 43RD ST., SEA ISLE CITY, 609-478-2524; INSTAGRAM.COM/ZIONICCOLOPIZZA

IMAGINATION STATION

Seven Mile Pies

STONE HARBOR

You could probably eat every day at this low-key parlor, tucked into a minimal in Stone Harbor's downtown, and not get bored. The varieties seem endless — **mac and cheese! honey hot chicken! bang-bang shrimp!** — and the thin crusts stand up well to the kitchen's heavy hand.

There's an indoor dining room festooned with movie posters as well as an umbrellaed picnic setup outside. Don't miss the loaded fries.

261 96TH ST., STONE HARBOR, 609-368-7645; SEVENMILEPIES.COM

THE NEAPOLITAN

Poppi's Brick Oven Pizza

WILDWOOD

The Jersey Shore is a land of deck ovens, turning out N.Y.-style pies. Props to Brendan Sciarra, who converted a Wildwood pizzeria into this family-friendly-but-fine-for-date-night destination a decade ago, choosing a wood-fired brick oven for Neapolitan-style pizzas.

The whole 12-inchers, with their pillowy, smoky crusts, share the menu with starters, sandwiches, and dinner-time entrees.

The **fig pie** is a favorite: mozzarella, gorgonzola, and Parmesan, chopped figs, sautéed onions, and extra-virgin olive oil, capped with sliced prosciutto di Parma.

It's BYOB, though wines from Hawk Haven Vineyard are available.

4709 NEW JERSEY AVE., WILDWOOD, 609-600-3964; POPPISBRICKOVEN.COM

BREAKFAST PIZZA

Lucky Bones Backwater Grille

CAPE MAY

There's a vague seafaring feel to this cozy, roadhouse-style bar-restaurant on the main drag into Cape May, whose menu ably covers those who might want to share one of 12 brick-oven pizzas while someone else goes the sandwich-salad-entree route.

Or, perhaps, a late breakfast, when the oven turns out a **Croque Madame** pie with Locatelli and Gruyère cheeses, soppressata, bacon, and sunny-side-up egg.

The **clam pizza**, reminiscent of the New Haven specialty, includes chopped garlic, fresh oregano, and local clams, all cloaked in a heavy layer of mozzarella and Parmesan.

1200 ROUTE 109, CAPE MAY, 609-884-2663; LUCKYBONES.COM



Above, the Damon Tyner pizza at Tony's Baltimore Grill, above, is half pepperoni, half sausage, with hot peppers throughout. Right, pizza makers work the dough at Manco & Manco.

Michael Klein

SHORE
ICON

Charles Fox / Staff Photographer

(STILL) LOVING LUCY

Step inside Lucy the Elephant, the 143-year-old Shore monument to kitsch. **BY STEPHANIE FARR**

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As someone who doesn't visit the Jersey Shore often, what I look for when I do go isn't sun or sand, it's kitsch. I want the most gimmicky and sentimental experiences available, whether it's the sensory overload of the Wildwood Boardwalk or the nostalgia of Silverball Retro Arcade in Asbury Park.

Lucy the Elephant, the Margate pachyderm whose legend looms as large as her ears, has long been on my kitsch list, but I had yet to visit her. The why at this point is irrelephant. The time had finally come to make Lucy's acquaintance.

Billed as the nation's oldest roadside attraction and "the only elephant in the world you can walk through and come out alive," Lucy is six stories high, 60 feet long, and 143 years old, making her older than the Statue of Liberty and the Benjamin Franklin Bridge.

I already knew Lucy was a cutie patootie from photos, but two things struck me when I saw her in person. First, there's a large window directly in the center of her derriere. I later learned staffers refer to this window as Lucy's "pane in the butt," and, aside from making me snicker like an 8-year-old, it did serve another purpose.

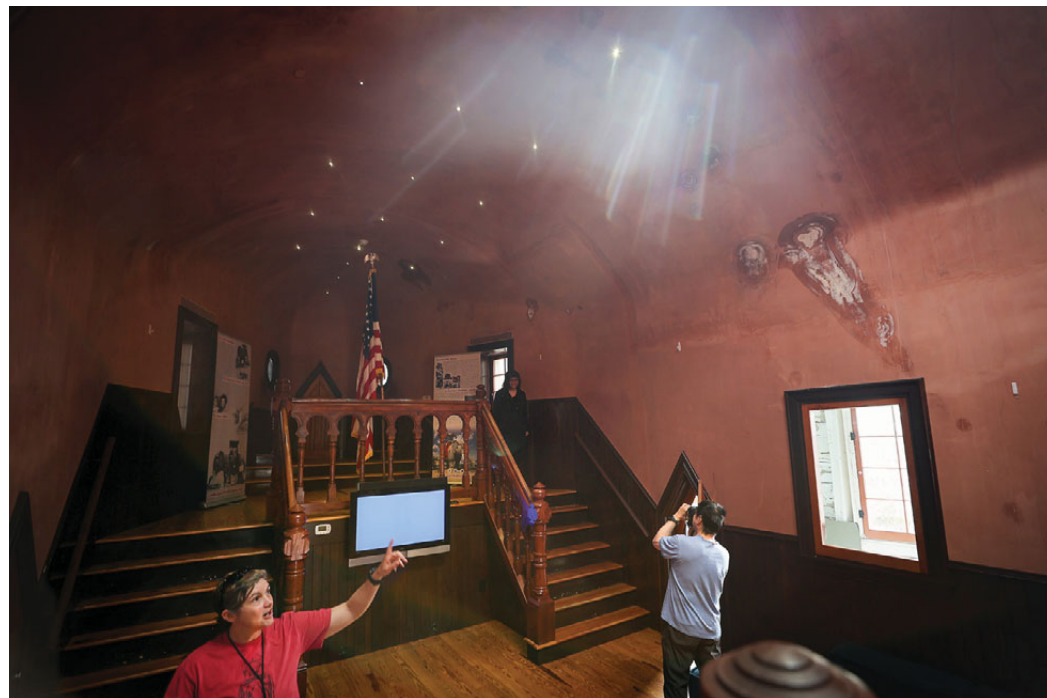
According to Richard Helfant, Lucy's executive director and CEO, the rear window was for lighting. "When she was built there was no electricity," he said.

The other thing that struck me when I saw Lucy was the adorable pink tongue sticking out of her mouth that I'd never noticed in photos. It's a small but playful detail that



Built in 1881 as a real estate office, Lucy the Elephant still brings smiles after many storms, including two direct lightning strikes.

Tom Gralish/ Staff Photographer



Visitors can get inside glimpses during tours of Lucy. David Maialetti/Staff Photographer



A view looking out to the ocean from Lucy's right eye. David Maialetti/Staff Photographer

illustrates this elephant has sass. I like sass.

You can only see the inside of Lucy on a guided tour, the days and times of which vary depending on the season. I arrived early and bought my \$9 ticket at the temporary gift shop (the main gift shop is undergoing a renovation).

The streets of Margate were empty that Wednesday in April, and I was the only person on my 11:45 a.m. tour. I didn't introduce myself as a journalist to my guide, Liz Larkin, because I wanted the real experience, and Larkin didn't question why a grown woman was touring a giant elephant alone on a weekday. I liked her from the start.

We entered the elephant through a small door in her left hind leg. Inside, we climbed a narrow, winding staircase into Lucy's cavernous interior, which Larkin explained was built like the bottom of a ship, flipped upside down.

There were two doors on either side of Lucy's innards and a raised platform directly ahead. Above us, a skylight gave the space a cool, blue glow.

FORMERLY KNOWN AS ELEPHANT BAZAAR

I learned Lucy was built by James Lafferty Jr., an eccentric Philadelphian

(my favorite kind!), who took out a U.S. patent on all animal-shaped buildings.

"He thought animal-shaped buildings were going to be a huge deal," Larkin said.

Lafferty built Lucy — who was originally named Elephant Bazaar — as a real estate office in 1881 to attract the attention of prospective property buyers.

Three years later, Lafferty built a second pachyderm structure nearly twice as tall on Coney Island called Elephantine Colossus, which served as an amusement attraction until it burned down in 1896. A third elephant edifice, the Light of Asia, was constructed in Cape May by another real estate developer, but was torn down in 1900.

ONLY LUCY SURVIVES

She was given her name by the matriarch of her second owners, the Gertzen family, who purchased Lucy in 1887 and charged visitors 10 cents to go inside.

In her lifetime, Lucy has played many parts. She's been a home, a real estate office, a beer garden, a roadside attraction, an Airbnb (for one weekend), a wedding venue, and a speakeasy.

This elephant has also weathered many storms, including Hurricane Sandy, and survived two direct lightning strikes.

"Anybody who tells you lightning doesn't strike twice, let them talk to Lucy because it does," said Helfant, who was inside Lucy when one of the bolts hit.

Lucy even survived imminent destruction after she was condemned in 1962, abandoned, and left to deteriorate for seven years until the Save Lucy Committee was formed. Following fundraising efforts, in 1970 the committee moved her two blocks to where she stands today, restored her, and opened her for tours again in 1974.

Our final stop was Lucy's howdah, or the riding carriage on her back. I could see for miles out into the ocean and all around Margate. I even spotted a water tower with Lucy's portrait.

There were small details of the tour that were particularly charming, like a door that led to a tiny bathroom dating to 1902 and a small nook on a staircase where giant, plastic peanuts are hidden. I especially loved looking out of the porthole windows in Lucy's eyes, and seeing the ocean from her point of view.

CUTER THAN CITY HALL

I was lucky to get a one-on-one tour. On rainy days in the summer, Helfant says tours run at capacity — 48 people max — the entire day. (Tip: On sunny summer days, Lucy is busy in the morning and evening, but slower in the afternoon.)

More than 150,000 people visited Lucy last year, and 37,000 took a tour, which I pointed out to Helfant was more than three times the amount of people who toured City Hall.

"Lucy is cuter than Philadelphia City Hall," he said.

I couldn't argue with that. There's just something about Lucy that captures people's hearts. She's been the subject of songs and documentaries and has been featured in movies like *National Lampoon's Vacation* and TV shows like *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.

For those who know Lucy best, like Helfant, she's so much more than a roadside attraction.

"There is 100% a life to Lucy. She is not just a building," he said. "It's amazing, we have little kids come for the first time and ask questions like: 'What do you feed her?' They think she's real — and we do too."

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Lucy is located at 9200 Atlantic Ave. in Margate. For dates and hours of operation visit lucytheelephant.org or call 609-823-6473.

- Tours of Lucy are not ADA accessible. Once her new gift shop and visitors center is completed, virtual reality tours of Lucy will be offered.

- Don't skip the gift shop. Not only is it where you buy your ticket and can use the bathroom, it offers the widest array of elephant merchandise I've ever seen.

- Hungry after your tour? I had a good lunch and great service next door to Lucy at Ventura's Greenhouse Restaurant, 106 S. Ben-ton Ave, in Margate.



PET
TIPS

PUP & AWAY

From beach walks to dining out, everything you need to know about bringing your dog down the Shore. **BY HIRA QURESHI**



Malachy Egan/ For The Inquirer

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Every summer, twin Yorkies Lilo and Stitch head to Atlantic City and Ventnor for a Shore getaway filled with sandy sprints, splashing in the waves, and catching sunsets.

“They run right to the beach as soon as we get down the Shore,” said their owner, Jacqueline City, a 28-year-old South Philly resident.

While many beaches prohibit pets during peak summer months, there are still ways to bring your dog along — if you know where to go and how to prep.

“Being a proactive pet parent and paying attention to not just your pup but those around you is key,” City said.

Are dogs allowed on the beach?

Most Shore towns restrict dogs on beaches during summer, but many allow leashed pets in the offseason. Rules vary by town.

ATLANTIC CITY: Leashed dogs allowed on beach mid-September through Memorial Day.

OCEAN CITY: Leashed dogs allowed on beach Oct. 1–April 30.

WILDWOOD: In North Wildwood, leashed dogs are allowed on the beach anytime except when lifeguards are on duty (9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.). Dogs are never allowed on the boardwalk.

CAPE MAY: Leashed dogs allowed on beach Sept. 15–May 15.

Are there any dog-friendly beaches?

Yes — if you know where to go, there are several sandy areas where leashed dogs are welcome, even in the summer.

Melissa Misthal and her husband have spent the last eight years exploring the Shore with their morkie poo, Brie, documenting their favorite finds at @monmouthdognj on Instagram. Another seasoned road-tripper, Alexis Walling, posts her Shore experiences with her English bulldog, Buckley, at @doggiroadtrippin.

Some of Mishthal’s and Walling’s go-to spots for on-leash adventures in the sand:

ASBURY PARK DOG BEACH (8TH AVENUE)

FISHERMAN’S COVE (MANASQUAN)

SPRING LAKE DOG BEACH

ISLAND BEACH STATE PARK (LANOKA HARBOR): Dogs must be leashed and are not permitted on the swimming beach during the summer.

BRIGANTINE NORTH-END BEACH: Leashed dogs allowed year-round.

VENTNOR BEACH: Between 7 and 9 p.m.

LONGPORT DOG BEACH (EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP)

WILDWOOD DOG PARK & BEACH: Dogs must be leashed on the beach but are allowed off-leash in the dog park.

CAPE MAY (LOWER TOWNSHIP, ALONG THE DELAWARE BAY): Leashed dogs are allowed after 4 p.m. and before 11 a.m. between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Stay safe on the sand

To keep beach time safe and fun for everyone, City recommends some easy tips:

BRING FRESH WATER AND A BOWL. No one wants your dog drinking salty ocean water.

WATCH FOR SIGNS OF OVERHEATING. Especially during peak sun hours.

PROTECT THEIR PAWS. City uses Pawtection balm to prevent sand and pavement burns.

STAY ALERT DURING DIGGING OR PLAY. Eating sand can lead to serious health issues.

USE A LEASH.

Where to eat

Dining with your dog down the Shore is easier than you’d think. Misthal and City have compiled dog-friendly spots they like to visit with Brie and Lilo and Stitch, from beachfront patios to pup-approved ice cream shops.

LONG BEACH ISLAND: Sea Shell Resort & Beach Club, Wally’s

BRIGANTINE: Richman’s

ATLANTIC CITY: Back Bay Ale House, Tennessee Avenue Beer Hall, Vagabond Kitchen & Taphouse

VENTNOR: Doggie Beach Boutique, The Dorset

MARGATE: Johnny’s Café

STONE HARBOR: Salty Paws Pet Café

WILDWOOD: Bagel Time Café, Dog-tooth Bar & Grill

CAPE MAY: Rusty Nail at Beach Shack, The Blue Pig Tavern

Where to stay

Use pet-friendly filters on Airbnb and Vrbo, or check BringFido.com for dog-friendly lodging.

MISTHAL’S HOTEL PICKS: Drifting Sands Oceanfront (Long Beach Island), Harrah’s Resort (Atlantic City), Beach Colony Resort (Wildwood Crest), Marquis de Lafayette (Cape May.)



Inquirer food reporter Kiki Aranita, who frequently travels with her Chihuahua, Coconut (left), swears by the Boarding House in Cape May for its thoughtful service and local treats for four-legged guests. “I would send every dog owner there,” she said.



FAVE
RESTAURANTS



Tom Gralish/ Staff Photographer

SHORE STANDOUTS

Seven local restaurants where Craig LaBan wishes he could eat all summer, every summer. **BY CRAIG LABAN**

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My mission each summer is to dive into the Jersey Shore's restaurant scene to find what's fresh in beach dining. This spring, I began revisiting spots I've covered in years past — special places that I'm looking forward to re-experiencing again and again.

Clemmy's

WARETOWN

This modern American BYOB just north of Manahawkin was such a hit when I visited last summer, I believe chef and co-owner Allen Walski is a talent to keep an eye on.

A recent revisit to this airy 44-seater in a Waretown strip mall made the trip worthwhile, with gorgeous local scallops from Viking Village served as a crudo in citrusy brown butter, handmade agnolotti stuffed with foraged ramps, and an epic pork chop Milanese buried in tufts of salad and shaved parmesan over smoked tomato sauce. Don't skip the signature orange cake made by the chef's mom.

290 US-9, WARETOWN; 609-891-4066;
CLEMMYSRESTAURANT.COM

La Cabañita Mexican Restaurant

MANAHAWKIN

Over the past decade, Mexican cooking has become one of the Shore's essential food groups, with dozens of excellent taquerias and cantinas from Long Beach Island to Cape May. This summer, I'm looking forward to four-year-old La Cabañita in Manahawkin.

Dolores Alvarado's charming, flower-fringed building is a destination for bountiful platters reminiscent of her native Veracruz, including stellar shrimp cocktail, flaky masa empanadas, and a molcajete overflowing with fresh chorizo and tender carnitas bathed in her signature green salsa, all served with velvety handmade tortillas. Clemmy's Walski says La Cabañita is his go-to for birria.

621 E. BAY AVE., MANAHAWKIN; 609-488-2056; LACABANITARESTAURANTNJ.COM



Find smoky smash burgers, ribs, brisket, and sides at Wildwoods BBQ, above. Opposite page: Fresh-seared tuna at Clemmy's in Waretown.

Tyger Williams/ Staff Photographer



Jose F. Moreno/ Staff Photographer

Cafe 2825

ATLANTIC CITY

No one does tableside theatrics better than Cafe 2825, the clubby 39-year-old Atlantic City stalwart where virtually every party requests the rolling cart for hand-stretched mozzarella, still warm with sweet butterfat; toothy house-extruded spaghetti with truffled cream twirled inside a wheel of Pecorino Romano; or simply a classic, anchovy-laced Caesar.

What defines Cafe 2825 is the quality, overseen by chef-owner Joe Lautato, whose repertoire of dishes like baked

clams oreganata, tender braciolo, and dreamy, deluxe veal parm make the case for this iconic restaurant as one of the finest practitioners of classic Italian American cooking anywhere.

2825 ATLANTIC AVE., ATLANTIC CITY; 609-344-6913; CAFE2825.COM

Reed's Farm

EGG HARBOR

Since Caroline "Cookie" Till of Margate's renowned Steve & Cookie's took over this 78-acre farm in Egg Harbor Township in 2020, it is turning out nearly 30,000 pounds of organic produce each summer, from 12 varieties

of heirloom tomatoes (try the Jersey Devils) to Jenny Lind melons that are part of an official Slow Food Foundation Farm plot to preserve endangered heritage food.

The farm hosts monthly fundraiser pop-ups during the summer with chefs (like Philly's Greg Vernick), but the bountiful market and cafe are a daily draw, with pizzas baked in an outdoor oven, fresh soups and seasonal fruit pies, plus an apothecary line of teas and tinctures made from herbs grown on-site.

5075 SPRUCE AVE., EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP; 609-457-0273; REEDSORGANICFARM.ORG

Homemade tortillas, like for gorditas al pastor, above, make dishes shine at La Cabañita in Manahawkin. Opposite page: Fresh clams with white wine-butter sauce being prepared at Hooked Up Seafood in Wildwood, and pasta getting the cheese-rind treatment at Cafe 2825 in Atlantic City.

Dot's Pastry Shop

OCEAN CITY

Longtime Shore-goers can be provincial about their favorite haunts, especially when it comes to doughnuts. I've been so fixated on the boardwalk beauties at Brown's Restaurant that it took me more than two decades to wander just a few blocks south to appreciate Dot's Pastry Shop. Established in 1947, this family-run gem's longevity is rooted in old-fashioned quality. The sticky buns are the best on the island — satisfyingly rich, but not leaden — while the glazed doughnuts are airy and flavorful.

Still, the real treasures are the famous cream-stuffed doughnuts buried in powdered sugar. "I'll have one of those!" I said, before the cheerful young counter woman added two, shaking her head with a smile. "I'm doing you a favor," she said. "One is a mistake."

3148 ASBURY AVE., OCEAN CITY; 609-399-0770; DOTSPAstrySHOP.COM

Wildwoods BBQ

NORTH WILDWOOD

Great barbecue is a rare commodity that's devilishly hard to sustain in the Philadelphia region. But Wildwoods BBQ is one of our best current



Courtesy Cole Griffin



Charles Fox/ Staff Photographer

contenders, a year-round operation in North Wildwood operated by two childhood friends from Australia, David Gill and Joel Romano.

"Gilly," who honed his pit craft at Hometown Bar B Que in Brooklyn, turns out a fantastic pepper-encrusted brisket, tender pulled pork, and tawny-skinned chickens. Romano, the former chef at the Goat's Beard pubs, lends a creative touch, putting smoked beets over tzatziki dusted with dukkah. The cumin-y Aussie sausages and housemade hot dogs are also a draw for a take-home "barbie," while the exceptional smash patty burgers made from the brisket trim are another reason to visit.

701 NEW JERSEY AVE., NORTH WILDWOOD; 609-600-3292; WILDWOODSBBQ.COM

Hooked Up Seafood

WILDWOOD

The fish doesn't get any fresher than at Hooked Up Seafood, the cheerful,

no-frills shack set along the Rio Grande Avenue causeway in Wildwood. The picnic table where you're devouring bigeye tuna tacos, garlicky steamer clams, and blackened John Dory is likely just a few feet from where Capt. Bill Bright has moored his commercial fishing boat, the Defiance.

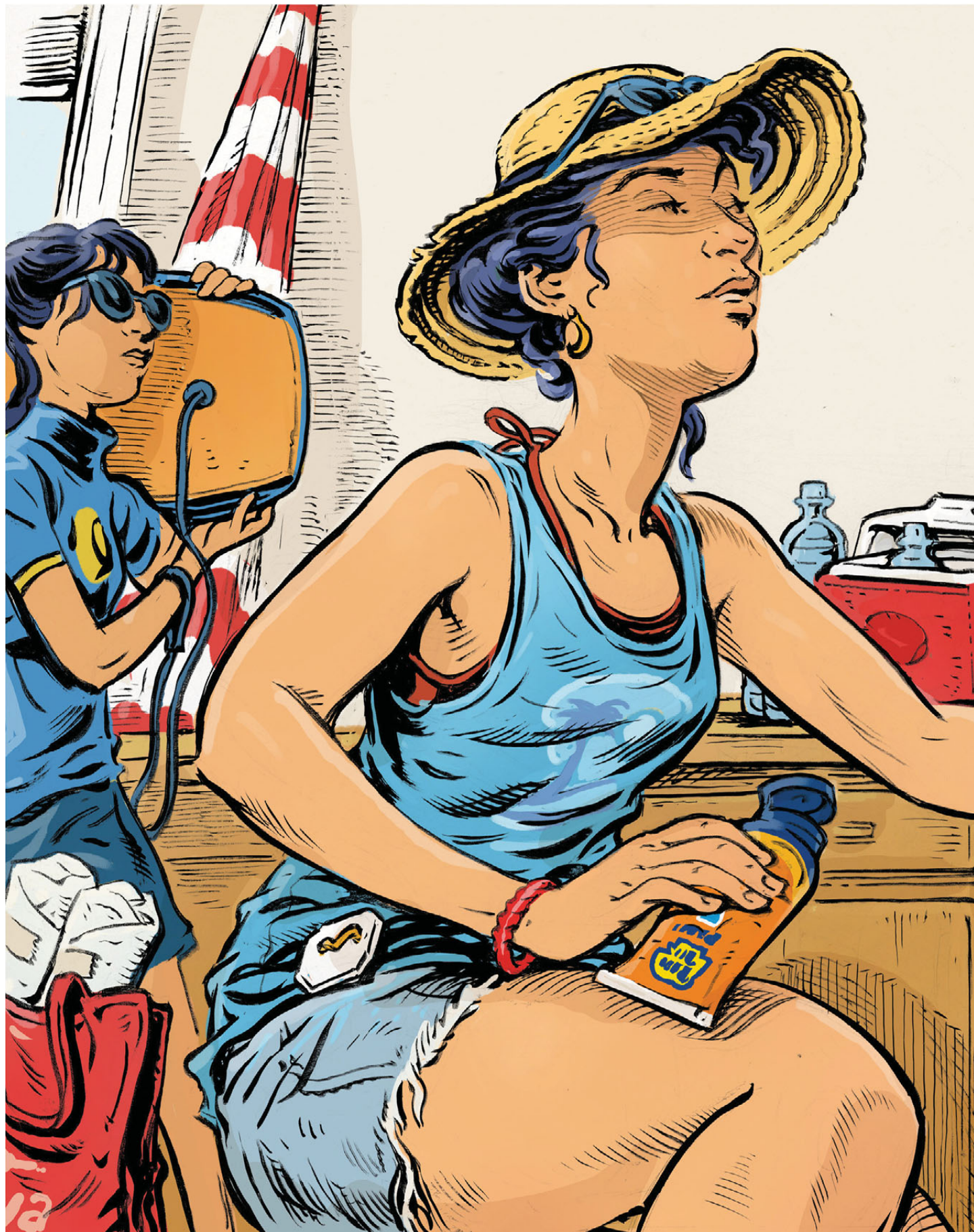
After 16 years in business, Bill and Michelle Bright's four children — Tess, Sara, Sam and Will — have taken the lead. You'll still find the peerless seafood (simply grilled or hand-breaded in a cornmeal crust), creamy chowders, Jersey stone crab claws, and littlenecks cleaned and sorted on-site, all fished by the Brights, their extended family, or friends. The next generation is also launching a seafood charcuterie program, a partnership with a local winery, and gluten-free options.

1044 W. RIO GRANDE AVE., WILDWOOD; HOOKEDUPSEAFOOD.COM

NOW YOU SEE IT

What's a trip to the beach without a puzzle to keep your vacationing mind sharp? Grab a pen or pencil and see how many of these Shore essentials you can find:

- Sunscreen
- Hoagie
- Water
- Book
- Beach tag
- Boogie board
- Towel
- Sunglasses
- Beach cooler
- Football
- Floppy hat
- Cover up
- Flip-flops
- Beach bag
- Bathing suit
- Hair tie
- Umbrella







COCKTAIL
BARS

COASTAL COOL

From Long Beach Island to Cape May, seven Jersey Shore bars where the vibes meet the tide. BY JENN LADD



The second-floor deck at Bird and Betty's in Beach Haven is a see-and-be-seen spot with a welcoming crowd and solid wine list.

Jenn Ladd

JLADD@INQUIRER.COM

From Barnegat Light to Beach Haven and from Atlantic City to Cape May, I have scoured the Shore bar scene in search of great bars. Good drinks and food are key, but even more important is the atmosphere. These seven bars don't disappoint, whether you're looking for an upscale experience (a frothy

cocktail on the porch of a Victorian inn, anyone?) or something way more low-key (Yuengling and shuffleboard it is).

Hudson House Bar

BEACH HAVEN

Once crowned the best bar in all of New Jersey, "The Hud" is a dive by price (cash only; \$4 for a frosty mug of Yuengling) and appearance. Wood

paneling? Duct-taped Formica bar? Check and check. But the vibe is almost wholesome: Retirees hog the shuffleboard table while twentysomethings shoot hoops or "bowl" on the old-school arcade games. Inflatable sharks and generations-old beer merchandise decorate the bar, where the crowd gets younger as the night wears on. Who could blame them? With everything from pool to Ms. Pac-Man, this is the best place to hang since the boardwalk.

19 E. 13TH ST., BEACH HAVEN; 609-492-9616; INSTAGRAM.COM/HUDSONHOUSELBI

Bird and Betty's

BEACH HAVEN

The open-air second story of this bay-side bar feels like a South Philly roof party: Fresh-faced patrons lounge on wicker chairs and cushy sofas, making room on their firepit tables for Neapolitan-style pies and fried chicken sandwiches. The cocktails here skew sweet, but there's a lengthy wine list and well-executed food. Like most places on LBI, the crowd here all seems to know one another, but they're welcoming. A friendly local shared a slice of pizza and explained the Bird's Cup: a contest to see which boat can ring up the highest bar tab during Beach Haven's long-running fishing tournament.

529 DOCK RD., BEACH HAVEN; 609-492-3000; BIRDANDBETTYS.COM

The Seed

ATLANTIC CITY

Fans of Human Robot will love the Seed, an Atlantic City brewery that serves ultra-foamy side-pull pours, a Czech tradition popularized stateside in Philly by Human Robot. (The owners are friends.) Not only do Sean Towers and Amanda Cardinali brew knockout beers — from dark lagers and Italian pilsners to dry-hopped saisons and double IPAs — they also designed the chicest, coziest warehouse taproom around, decorated with a hodgepodge of antique chandeliers, grandfather clocks, and houseplants. Plan to stay for an entire afternoon: It shares a complex with a distillery and an ax-throwing center.

204 N. DELAWARE AVE., ATLANTIC CITY; 609-246-7324; THESEEDBEER.COM



Tom Gralish/ Staff Photographer



Tom Gralish/ Staff Photographer



Tom Gralish/ Staff Photographer



Charles Fox/ Staff Photographer

Nucky's

VENTNOR CITY

Compared to the many massive bar complexes at the Shore, the speakeasy at Nucky's feels intimate. There are no Prohibition-era antics here: Just walk in, pony up to the marble bar, and order a cocktail. The bartenders shake and stir up a long list of classics, whether they're decades-old (sazerac, New York sour, Mary Pickford) or modern-issue (mezcal Paloma, espresso martini, Aperol spritz). You can stay put or take

those drinks into the old Art Deco film house next door, which screens mainstream features and occasional classics.

5211 VENTNOR AVE., VENTNOR CITY; 609-289-8305; NUCKYSKITCHEN.COM

The Watering Hull

STONE HARBOR

There's a pervasive preppiness to the Watering Hull, conveyed by its whitewashed walls, reclaimed wood accents, and burlap-wrapped acoustic panels. But the patrons who find

their way to this bar in Stone Harbor's Harbor Square know how to throw down with the best of them. Margaritas, mojitos, crushes, and transfusions — the bartenders here crank them out. And while it's not beachside, the Hull almost seems to sway when a breeze rolls in through the garage-door balcony. Conch fritters, fish tacos, and other tropical fare reinforce the vibe.

261 96TH ST. SECOND FLOOR, STONE HARBOR; 609-830-3106; THEWATERINGHULL.COM

Clockwise from above: A saison aged in a wine barrel gets poured at *The Seed* in Atlantic City, where a mural colors the front entrance. The patio of *Taco Caballito* in Cape May is a great perch for margaritas and more. An old fashioned is among the classic cocktails you'll find at *Nucky's* in Ventnor.

The Ebbitt Room

CAPE MAY

There's probably no better perch to soak in Cape May's Victorian grandeur than the porch of the Ebbitt Room at the Virginia Hotel. Sink into the deep cushion of a wicker armchair, order a drink, and admire the architectural details on neighboring B&Bs. The cocktail menu reflects the hotel's old-meets-new history, with well-done classics and approachable riffs, including a maple Manhattan, blue cheese martini, red wine-topped margarita, and several offerings spiked with produce from sister establishment Beach Plum Farms.

25 JACKSON ST., CAPE MAY; 609-884-5700; CAPERESORTS.COM/VIRGINIA-HOTEL/EBBITTROOM

Taco Caballito Tequileria

CAPE MAY

It's not hard to find a margarita down the Shore, but few places will rival the selection and quality of those served at Taco Caballito. There's 10 flavors — jalapeño, strawberry, blueberry, prickly pear, rosemary-lemon, etc. — and a frozen option, too, all sporting fresh-squeezed lime. Have your answer prepared for whether you want a sugar, salt, chipotle salt, lemon sugar, or chipotle sugar rim. Even when slammed, the efficient bartenders can turn around an order for a smoky piñata marg and a tray of coconut shrimp tacos in minutes.

429 BEACH AVE., CAPE MAY; 609-884-4800; TACOCABALLITOTEQUILERIA.COM

LIVE
MUSIC

The Avett Brothers are scheduled to play at the Hard Rock in Atlantic City on Aug. 9. Charles Fox/ Staff Photographer

SUMMER'S HOTTEST CONCERTS

From music fests on the sand to big-name acts at intimate venues, these are the Shore shows to check out. **BY DAN DELUCA**

DDELUCA@INQUIRER.COM

This summer's busy music schedule at the Shore is without any over-size Atlantic City beach concerts for the second year running. But there's plenty of action in casino showrooms, Cape May, Asbury Park, and along the boardwalk. And if it's a toes-in-the-sand music festival you seek, the Barefoot Country Music Fest is happening in Wildwood from June 19-22 and Sea. Hear. Now is back on the Asbury beach Sept. 13-14.

Casino headliners

Atlantic City casinos are busy with marquee headliners most weekends. Sister rockers **Ann and Nancy Wilson** of Heart kick off the season at Hard Rock Live May 31.

Ledisi, the New Orleans-born R&B singer who sang "Lift Every Voice and Sing" before the Eagles won the Super Bowl, plays Caesar's on June 6. **Marsha Ambrosius**, the British R&B singer who was formerly one half of Floetry, opens. That same night, **Khalid** plays Hard Rock as part of the North to Shore Festival.

Josh Homme brings the **Queens of the Stone Age** to Hard Rock on June 13, and Canadian producer/composer

David Foster plays Caesars on June 14 along with his wife, **Katharine McPhee**, and trumpeter **Chris Botti**.

British heavy metallers **Def Leopard** pour sugar on the Borgata Event Center on June 28, the same night **Jackson Browne** plays at Hard Rock.

The UPenn grads of the **Disco Biscuits** do the Music Box at the Borgata July 4 and 5. **Darius Rucker** of Hootie & the Blowfish plays at Hard Rock on July 12, and headliners at Ocean's Ovation Hall include **Michael Franti & Spearhead** on July 18, **Gin Blossoms** on July 19, **Daryl Hall** on July 25, and **Ashanti** on Aug. 1.

Last summer, the **Black Keys** canceled a tour that would have brought them to the Wells Fargo Center in Philly. This year, **Dan Auerbach** and **Patrick Carney** are back, playing the cozier Borgata Event Center on Aug. 9.

They'll have crosstown competition at the Hard Rock that night from the **Avett Brothers**, the North Carolina band whose shipwreck musical *Swept Away* had a Broadway run last year.

Boston long-standing punk band **Dropkick Murphys** teams with **Bad Religion** at Ovation Hall Aug. 15. **Steve Miller** plays the Hard Rock on Aug. 22, and **Hank Azaria**, the actor and vocal chameleon who voices many Simpsons characters, brings Springsteen

tribute **EZ Street Band** to the Music Box on Aug. 23.

Elvis Costello and the Imposters' "Radio Soul" tour, focusing on Costello's early output, plays the Borgata Sept. 19. Mexican cumbia sonidera band **Los Ángeles Azules** is at the Hard Rock on Sept. 20.

Shows around A.C.

The Who will play Boardwalk Hall on Aug. 23, and Mexican norteño band **Los Tigres Del Norte** is there on Sept. 20.

Anchor Rock Club, the New York Avenue venue by the A.C. Boardwalk, has an active summer schedule. New York skate punks **Murphy's Law** play there May 30, and indie band **Balance and Composure** is up on June 6. Philly drag star **Martha Graham Cracker** does the Anchor on July 5 and veteran Philly punks **Dead Milkmen** play July 12.

On July 19, the Anchor will cross-promote the **Making Waves festival** with Philly's Making Time DJ and impresario David Pianka, who promises a "transcendental futuristic sound experience on the New York Ave. beach" followed by late-night adventures inside the Anchor.

On the way to Atlantic City, **Beard-fest** happens in the Pinelands Reserve outside Hammonton from June 26-30. Break out the tie dye, learn how to



'Emo cowgirl' Megan Moroney will perform at the Barefoot Country Music fest next month in Wildwood. John Shearer / Getty Images

A LITTLE BIT OF COUNTRY

June's Barefoot Country Music Fest on the Wildwood beach features the genre's biggest names, rising stars — and Boyz II Men. **BY DAN DELUCA**

The largest music bash on a South Jersey beach this summer is Barefoot Country Music Fest, happening between the two Morey's Piers in Wildwood from June 19 to 22.

Now in its fifth iteration, the BCMF drew 35,000 people a day to the doo-wop seaside resort last year, and it continues to grow. The 2025 lineup features several of the biggest acts in mainstream country, plus a number of recommendable rising stars on the undercard, along with one name-brand Philly fave you wouldn't expect to see at a country festival.

THURSDAY, JUNE 19

The festival kicks off the night of the 19th with country-pop soft-rock trio **Rascal Flatts**, which has scored 16 No. 1 country hits, including its signature "Bless This Broken Road."

The pick of the night — and maybe of the festival — is **Megan Moroney**, the Georgia-born singer who identifies as an "emo cowgirl" and demonstrated her canny songwriting skills on last year's breakout album *Am I Okay?*

FRIDAY, JUNE 20

On the 20th, 2023 CMA Entertainer of the Year **Lainey**

Wilson — the first woman to take the award home since Taylor Swift in 2011 — tops the bill.

Also on tap is "Breakup Over Breakfast" singer **Avery Anna**, whose new album *Let Go Letters* responds to missives from fans. And on the second stage, the one not to miss is **Kaitlin Butts**, the country and rock singer from Ardmore, Okla., whose new high-energy *Roadrunner* is inspired by Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!*

SATURDAY, JUNE 21

Boorish "Try That In A Small Town" star **Jason Aldean** is the main attraction on the 21st. But also playing the main stage is a welcome surprise: Philly's own **Boyz II Men**, continuing to court a country audience that the "I'll Make Love To You" trio initiated with a collaboration with country artist Brett Young.

The other can't-miss act the Saturday of the fest is **Willow Avalon**, the Georgia up-and-coming country singer, who was terrific when she played the Foundry at the Fillmore this year. She is also playing dates with Willie Nelson this summer.

SUNDAY, JUNE 22

The big-name headliner on the fest's final day is **Jelly Roll**, the face-tattooed hip-hop-loving country star.

And the name to look out for on that day's bill is **Bayker Blankenship**, the teenage Tennessee songwriting wunderkind who went viral with "Maxed Out" and whose new single is "Thinking Of Me."

For tickets and information about accommodations: barefootcountryfest.com.



Michael Franti & Spearhead bring their live show to Ocean's Ovation Hall on July 18. David Simchock / Zuma Press / TNS



juggle, and check out **Sug Daniels**, **Fawziyya Heart**, **Snacktime**, **Tauk**, **Minka**, and **Zion Marley and the Bearspace**.

Also, the Lizzy Rose Music Room in Tuckerton presents a clutch of cool shows, including **John Gorka** on June 4, **Chris Smither** on June 27, **Poppa Chubby** on July 18, and **Griffin House** on Sept. 10.

Asbury Park

As part of the North to Shore Festival, **Steel Pulse** plays at the Stone Pony on June 19, and **Larkin Poe** is at Asbury

Lanes on June 22. The Shadow of the City festival featuring **Jack Antonoff's Bleachers** is on June 28, and **George Clinton & Parliament Funkadelic** with **Living Colour** play June 29, both at the Stone Pony Summer Stage.

Texas bluesman **Gary Clark Jr.** plays the Stone Pony Summer Stage on July 5. The intriguing team up of 1990s alt-rock guitar heroes **Dinosaur Jr.** and indie rocker **Snail Mail** play the Pony on July 19.

The O.C. theme song "California"-singing band **Phantom Planet** is at the Wonder Bar in Asbury on July 27,



Sug Daniels, left, is on the bill at **Beardfest** in Hammonton in June Elizabeth, Robertson/ Staff Photographer. **Nick Lowe** and **Los Straitjackets**, above, perform at Asbury Lanes on Aug. 15, Courtesy Jay Price.

and **Guster and the Mountain Goats** play the Pony on Aug. 1.

Nick Lowe and **Los Straitjackets** play pure pop at Asbury Lanes on Aug. 15, and **Dogs in a Pile** plays the Stone Pony Summer Stage on Aug. 31, with **Low Cut Connie**.

Ocean City Music Pier

Music at the indoor auditorium on the Ocean City Music Pier gets underway — appropriately enough — with the **Beach Boys**. It's the Mike Love-led Beach Boys, with no involvement from resident genius Brian Wilson, playing two shows each June 23 and 24.

Jon Anderson of the English prog-rock band **Yes**, is now touring with a group of Yes superfans known as the **Band Geeks**. Together they play the Pier on July 7.

The Wailers reggaeify the Pier on July 14, and Yes fans get catered to again when keyboard player **Rick Wakeman** plays the Pier on July 21.

Aug. 11 is for the Monkees' **Micky Dolenz**, and Aug. 18 is a mouthful: The Orchestra Starring **Former Members of Electric Light Orchestra** and **ELO Part II**. Members include Philly musician **Cliff Hillis**.

The great **Mavis Staples**, the powerhouse voice of the Staple Singers, whose career dates to the turbulent

days of the Civil Rights Movement, plays the Pier on Aug. 25, with **Jeffrey Gaines** opening.

Cape May and the Delaware beaches

Down at the bottom of the Garden State Parkway, there's one concert series at Convention Hall and another called **Rootstock** at Hawk Haven Vineyard.

The former features Nashville songwriter and guitarist **Mac McAnally** on July 6 and a pair of oldies acts: the **Drifters** on July 20 and **Herman Hermits** starring Peter Noone on July 27.

At Hawk Haven, **Joslyn and the Sweet Compression** plays July 12, **Kaleta & Super Yamba Band** on July 19, **Conjunto Philadelphia** is Aug. 9, **Glen David Andrews** is Aug. 16, and back-to-back brass bands with **Brass Queens** on Aug. 23 and **Ocean Avenue Stompers** on Aug. 30.

If you take the Cape May-Lewes Ferry across the Delaware Bay, you'll find Memphis soul and funk band **Southern Avenue** playing Dogfish Head Brewing & Eats in Rehoboth on May 31. **The Bacon Brothers** play the Bottle and Cork in Dewey Beach on June 29, and **Tommy Conwell & the Young Rumlbers** play there on July 27.

MINIATURE
GOLF

PUTT AROUND

Mini Golf: Because you can't spend ALL your shore time on the beach.

BY KRISTINE VILLANUEVA, FOR THE INQUIRER

Lazing on the beach is a quintessential Jersey Shore summer activity, but sometimes, you want to mix up the fun. Enter mini golf. The Garden State is home to some stunning full-size golf courses, with a golf culture that runs deep. But not all putting requires polos and tee times. Mini golf is laid-back, accessible, and a perfect way to earn bragging rights with friends and family while chasing those elusive holes-in-one.

Whether you're putt-putting on a sunny day near the Atlantic or under neon lights at night, here are six of the best places to play a mini round down the Shore.

Smuggler's Quay Adventure Golf

SEASIDE HEIGHTS

Smuggler's Quay is the ultimate mini golf experience. With two 18-hole, multilevel courses to choose from, players will discover mountain caves, waterfalls, and pirate treasures. The course also offers views of Breakwater Beach and the Seaside boardwalk. Plus, Smuggler's Quay lights up at night, creating a glowing backdrop for your game.

800 OCEAN TER., SEASIDE HEIGHTS; 732-793-6488; CASINOPIERNJ.COM/MINI-GOLF

North Beach Mini Golf

ATLANTIC CITY

Located in Atlantic City's newest stretch of boardwalk, North Beach Mini Golf is a great BYOB option for playing a game with a view. Take in the Atlantic City skyline and the Absecon

Lighthouse while playing the only craps table-themed hole in the world. Try your luck here before hitting the real tables later. Be sure to reserve a time online before you go.

120 EUCLID AVE., ATLANTIC CITY; 609-246-7183; NORTHBEACHMINIGOLF.COM

Congo Falls Adventure Golf

MARGATE

Congo Falls in Margate is a great family-friendly option located two blocks from the beach and from Lucy the Elephant. The first nine holes of the course are ADA-compliant, and golfers with special needs are welcome to play twice to get in a full round. This jungle-themed course features waterfalls, caves, and a rope bridge. Bonus: A fun, Plinko-style game at the end gives players a chance at a free round.

9312 VENTNOR AVE., MARGATE; 609-823-1211; FACEBOOK.COM/CONGOFALLSADVENTUREGOLF



Malachy Egan/ For The Inquirer

Medieval Fantasy Mini Golf

OCEAN CITY

Trade in waterfalls and palm trees for castles and dragons at this medieval-themed course under the neon glow of black lights. This Ocean City staple is one of the largest mini golf courses on the boardwalk. Think whimsical, fantasy, ren-faire without needing a time machine. Plus, it's open seven days a week, rain or shine — a great pick for competitive families.

1336 BOARDWALK, OCEAN CITY; 609-938-0579; OCEANCITYMINIGOLF.COM

Starlux Mini Golf

WILDWOOD

Why settle for one theme when you can have three? Starlux Mini Golf in Wildwood offers 27 holes spread across boardwalk-retro (Wildwood trivia and memorabilia), beach (world's largest

artificial sand dune and castle), and ocean-themed (giant water fountains) courses, just steps from the boardwalk. This spot is dog-friendly, accessible, and has a food truck on site for snacks.

4800 OCEAN AVE., WILDWOOD; 609-846-1048; MOREYSPIERS.COM/EXPLORE/STARLUX-MINI-GOLF

Cape May Miniature Golf

CAPE MAY

Cape May boasts some of the most picturesque beaches down the Shore, but it's worth taking a break from the sand for a round at Cape May Miniature Golf. A favorite for families, the course has a play-through cave and a 38-foot-long hole. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., groups of four or five can play for a flat rate of \$35.

315 JACKSON ST., CAPE MAY; 609-884-2222; CAPEMAYMINIGOLF.COM



SHOPPING



Clockwise from left: Rebecca Seidenberg snaps a selfie in her Off Seids shop in Margate, Courtesy Rebecca Seidenberg; Willow & Stone in Cape May has contemporary styles for women and men, Courtesy Ashley Cribb; Ventnor's Flying Point sells brands like Faherty, Marine Layer, and Rag & Bone, Courtesy Theodora Agrios.



THREAD LIGHTLY

From curated finds to breezy essentials, these 11 beach-town boutiques are worth a visit. **BY ELIZABETH WELLINGTON**

EWELLINGTON@INQUIRER.COM

There comes a time in every Jersey Shore-goer's life when more than a snarky T-shirt, a snazzy cover-up, or an eye-popping beach towel is needed to make a sunny first impression.

So, what to do if you forget your favorite eyelet dress, sea foam clutch, or salmon trousers at home?

Worry not. These beachside boutiques can help you level up your no-shower happy-hour fashion game.

Flying Point

VENTNOR

At Flying Point, you'll find wide-legged trousers, spaghetti-strap maxis, and hoodies appropriate for under-the-tent events, dinner outings, and, yes, even weddings. The Ventnor store is husband-and-wife team Mark and Shannon Zuccherro's second at the Shore — the other is in Atlantic City's Ocean Casino. Featured brands include D-Supply, Faherty, Marine Layer, and Rag & Bone.

7320 VENTNOR AVE., VENTNOR; 609-246-6245; FLYINGPOINTSURF.COM

Knit Wit

MARGATE

Knit Wit is the Shore boutique for women craving classic Philly style with colorful, beachy vibes. Venerable fashion czarina Ann Gitter — who brought Michael Stars and premium denim to the City of Brotherly Love in the '90s — is the queen of the 3,000-square-foot specialty store, where she sells coveted L'Agence floral blazers, Cinq a Sept maxi dresses, and Il Bisonte handbags.

8001 VENTNOR AVE. #11, MARGATE; 609-822-9442; SHOPKNITWIT.COM

Off Seids

MARGATE

Land a last-minute invite to a beachside bar mitzvah or barbecue? Off Seids owner Rebecca Seidenberg has you covered. Seidenberg opened the seasonal concept boutique six years ago. It's her second Off Seids, the first is in Greenvale, Long Island. Its smart Smythe blazers, airy Philosophy Di Lorenzo Serafini dresses, and skinny Tiger of Sweden men's suits bring a New York state of mind to Jersey.

7805 ATLANTIC AVE., MARGATE; 516-625-4444; OFFSEIDNEWYORK.COM

Sunset Outpost

MARGATE

Farah Burns designed luxury bathrooms in New York before opening her celebrated, upscale knickknack store by the water. Burns, a Margate native, always had a passion for the

little luxuries: candles, reed diffusers, journals, wine glasses, salad bowls, and greeting cards. Sunset Outpost has all the fixings needed to give your Shore home a personal touch.

22 S. DOUGLAS AVE., MARGATE; 347-231-2707; INSTAGRAM.COM/SUNSET_OUTPOST

Shop Sixty Five

MARGATE

At Shop Sixty Five, frayed cutoffs aren't just for teens. Moms can also feel confident in wide-legged denim, rompers, and gingham shorts. Linda LaRosa — who has a second Shop Sixty Five in West Palm Beach, Fla. — has a long history of selecting the best of Zimmerman, Alice + Olivia, Rag & Bone, Generation Love, and Aviator Nation.

8411 VENTNOR AVE., MARGATE; 609-541-4539; SHOPSIXTYFIVE.COM

J-Lor

MARGATE

Lori Casale replenishes novelty denim plus mesh wide-legged trousers and strapless boho dresses each week for her shop. Casale, a Margate native, describes her 11-year-old boutique as a dress-up/casual haunt for women in their 30s, 40s, and 50s who appreciate sophisticated pieces like a crochet midriff sweater from Cabellero, a mini dress from Ser.o.ya, or a silky shell from Melissa Nepton.

9315 VENTNOR AVE., MARGATE; 609-541-4188; INSTAGRAM.COM/JLORFASHIONS

Bedazzled

MARGATE

Bedazzled is about all that's beautiful and wearable, says owner Ruth Krass. Her sizable boutique offers the latest in Donald Pliner shoes and Alice + Olivia evening wear. Bold, bright silhouettes from Essential Antwerp and Gabriel, both seen on Netflix's *Emily in Paris*, stand out on Krass' racks. Comfy, fitted pieces from Italian ready-to-wear brand Tina Stephens sell so well here, Krass opened a Tina Stephens boutique in Ocean City (745 Asbury Ave.) this month.

9309 VENTNOR AVE., MARGATE; 609-487-1400; BEDAZZLEDBOUTIQUE.COM

Addison Bay

AVALON

Yogis, tennis players, and pickleball aficionados all find their way to Addison Bay, where they fall in love with the brand's signature preppy stripes. Marguerite Adzick founded the Center City-based athleisure brand in 2018, and over the years its leggings, zippered outerwear, hold-it-all-in sports bras, and practical gym bags have become the Pilates-to-cocktail pieces we didn't know we needed.

2619 DUNE DR., UNIT #2, AVALON; (609) 830-3591; ADDISONBAY.COM

Skirt

STONE HARBOR

Maureen Doron has packed her Stone Harbor boutique with terrycloth

blazers — yes, there is such a thing, and I am obsessed — from 209 Mare; frocks from Veronica Beard; and all the pleats, tucks, and eyelets you can stand from Ulla Johnson. Pearl bracelets and necklaces from Philadelphia jewelry designer Joie DiGiovanni's are absolutely precious.

272 96TH ST., STONE HARBOR; 610-520-0222; INFO.SHOP-SKIRT.COM/STONE-HARBOR

Maggie's Boutique

WILDWOOD

Magdalena Arroyo works with manufacturers, Shore residents, and showrooms to secure the best, never-worn designer pieces at a fraction of the price. Some of the womenswear pieces are consignment. (That means you might find a never-been-worn

Chanel.) Others come straight from Anthropologie's cutting-room floor. Think 700-square-foot of affordable fashion.

3415 PACIFIC AVE., WILDWOOD; 609-408-8871; INSTAGRAM.COM/MAGGIES_BOUTIQUE_WILDWOODNJ

Willow & Stone

CAPE MAY

A light crewneck sweater or a printed shawl comes in handy on breezy summer evenings. Cynthia Huff's Willow & Stone offers cozy, contemporary fashions for men and women. Her selection of collared, button-up shirts (Hawaiians are the store's specialty) and an array of floral-print dresses are a cross between beach resort wear and more refined fashions.

215 DECATUR ST., CAPE MAY; 609-827-1159; INSTAGRAM.COM/WILLOWANDSTONE_CM



Fashion guru Ann Gitter's Knit Wit stocks in-demand blazers, bags, and dresses in a 3,000-square-foot showroom in Margate. Courtesy Knit Wit.

GETTING
THERE

Photos by Tom Gralish/ Staff Photographer

BEYOND THE BLUEBERRIES

Hammonton has become more than a pit stop to the Shore. It's a destination unto itself. **BY MIKE NEWALL**

MNEWALL@INQUIRER.COM

Don't misunderstand: The Atlantic County halfway-to-the-Shore hamlet is still the "Blueberry Capital of the World."

The delicious, made-from-scratch blueberry pies at Red Barn Farm, Cafe, & Pie Shop are still stuffed silly with blueberries. The blueberry sundae at the Royal Crown Homemade Ice Cream and Grille is still a summer must. The blueberry cannoli at Cacia's Bakery are still



A vintage car cruises the main strip of Hammonton, above. Opposite page: Hammonton is the self-proclaimed blueberry capital of the world, but it has a lot more going for it than fruit.



worth the 35-mile drive from Center City. And there's no reason you can't just have a Wet Snout Blueberry Pancake Stout for breakfast at Snouts and Stouts Brewing.

It's just that Hammonton, which my colleague Craig LaBan recently labeled as one of "the most delicious cities in South Jersey," has so much else going on besides its famous berry.

It's become a hub for great Mexican cuisine to go along with its enduring collection of Italian businesses. The annual Hammonton Food Truck Fest (June 7 this year), with its nearly three dozen food trucks, draws 15,000 visitors each summer.

Main Street — which technically has three names, none of them Main Street — is thriving, with three breweries, a distillery, a wine bar, one of the best antiquing and vintage scenes around, a vibrant Arts District, a homey history museum, and a beautification effort that has provided a fresh shine while retaining the old charm.

The result is that Hammonton — a quick jump off the Atlantic City Expressway, its historic train station

only an hour's ride on NJ Transit from 30th Street Station — is no longer just a pit stop on the way to the Shore.

It's a destination all its own.

TASTE OF ITALY

The beating heart of Hammonton's large Italian American community is the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Festival, which runs July 14-19. Believed to be the oldest Italian festival in the United States, it celebrates its 150th anniversary this year with rides, fireworks, nightly entertainment, and tons of food.

Brunni's Pizza has been a Hammonton institution since 1956. Current owner Enrico Collini still makes the thin-crust, old-school pies from the same recipes perfected by Americo Brunni back in the day.

Bagliani's Italian Market is another mid-century time capsule. And the family-owned speciality grocer isn't just a Hammonton gem but one of the best Italian import stores in the entire Philly region, according to LaBan.

Bagliani's shelves burst with Sicilian cheeses, salumi, olives, and dried

pasta. You can get the shop's fresh-made Italian sausage served up hot on a roll or buy links by the pound for the grill.

And you can't go wrong with any of the cannoli at Cacia's Bakery or Mannino's Cannoli Express. (LaBan declared Mannino's blueberry cannoli his favorite anywhere outside of Isgro's in Philly's Italian Market.)

TACOS TOO

At El Nuevo Mariachi Loco, housed in an eye-catching Victorian downtown storefront, chef Robert Diaz plays tribute to his Poblano roots with chicken enchiladas in mole sauce and electric salsas.

El Mariachi makes all its tortillas in-house, including thicker huaraches and quesadillas folded around huitlacoche and Oaxaca cheese, or orange-and Coke-braised carnitas.

Located in a one-time diner, the Marquez Mexican Grill recently expanded to two other locations in Hammonton, with more seating for customers to enjoy tacos and burritos, and a new butcher's counter.



Clockwise from left: Rocco's Town House manager Jewel Demsak shows off the restaurant's old-school pay phone; a vendor helps a customer at the Antique Marketplace; fresh sausage on display at Bagliani's Market.

ANTIQUES ROADSHOW

With its mid-century clock still ticking, and over three dozen vendors, it's easy to get lost in Hammonton's Antique Marketplace, a two-floor wonderland housed in an old furniture shop.

"You can find anything in here," longtime vendor Denise Baranowski said.

Beyond the Marketplace, the town's half-dozen antique shops — and its more modern Toy Market — offer tons of great finds for children and collectors all year.

'THEY LOVE IT'

It used to be that only locals knew that "Everybody Meets at the Town House!" as the sign reads in the dining room of Rocco's Town House.

The former 1940s tavern is now a popular bar and restaurant, which manager Jewel Demsak said still serves a steady stream of regulars — only now with more fresh faces than ever thanks to Hammonton's rising profile.

"We get at least 10 people a week who say it's their first time ever coming here," she said. "They come in and they love it."

MORE ALONG THE WAY

Four other spots to check out between Philly and the Shore. **BY CRAIG LABAN**

CLABAN@INQUIRER.COM

My family is notoriously slow to get out the door to start vacation, even when we're heading somewhere as exciting as the Jersey Shore.

But I've started to believe that it's just their devious strategy to assure a good meal.

We'll have barely crossed the Walt Whitman Bridge before the cries of hunger suddenly begin coming from the back seat, as if the mere 90-minute journey from Center City is simply too long to bear without sustenance: "What's for lunch?!"

And I'll admit: The options are so tempting, from raw oysters and fried clam rolls to barbecue, pozole, hoagies, and pie. My stomach starts growling too. If there's a bigger challenge than hitting the road, it's deciding where to go.

SWEET AMALIA MARKET AND KITCHEN

You can practically taste the ocean at this dreamy roadside stand turned market-cafe, even though it's only half-way between the city and the Shore, set amid the farmland near Vineland.

Chef-partner Melissa McGrath effortlessly channels South Jersey's best ingredients with inspired dishes featuring Mid-Atlantic oysters, creative sandwiches, and local produce for picnic table feasting.

The raw bar is essential, showcasing Sweet Amalias from co-owner Lisa Calvo's oyster farm on the Cape May Peninsula, along with oysters from other Jersey farms. You can get them fried, baked, or raw in "Sweeties" platters splashed with creative seasonal toppings, including a fennel, ginger beer, and buttermilk dressing for spring;

Above, diners enjoying oysters at Sweet Amalia Market and Kitchen in Newfield. Below, Ruthie Henri plates barbecued chicken at Henri's Hotts in Folsom.



Vernon Ogradnek / For The Inquirer



Monica Herndon / Staff Photographer

summer versions have ranged from gazpacho to melon salsa.

The stunning sandwiches are also worth the trip — not only the various seafood rolls (the fried clam is a favorite), but the stellar Italian hoagie, superb eggplant cutlet, and arguably the best BLT on the planet when Jersey tomatoes are ripe.

Finish with the luscious strawberry biscuit and whipped cream for dessert, and you'll understand why I don't really even need a trip to the Shore as an excuse for a Sweet Amalia run.

994 HARDING HWY., NEWFIELD; 856-839-2478; SWEETAMALIA.COM/MARKET-KITCHEN

HENRI'S HOTTS BARBEQUE

Ruthie Henri has kept the smoker fires glowing at arguably South Jersey's best barbecue joint since her husband and cofounder, Doug Henri, died in 2021, carrying the pit master's torch at this Black Horse Pike roadhouse in his stead.

The St. Louis-cut ribs remain a particular favorite, along with the slow-smoked chicken, tender pulled pork, and corn pudding. But Henri's is just as known for its expansive weekend soul-food buffet, which showcases some of the region's best fried chicken.

1003 E. BLACK HORSE PIKE, FOLSOM; 609-270-7268; BESTBBSQJ.COM

PAL JOEY'S DELI

Sometimes we don't make it very far at all before lunch. But that's probably because we took a detour through Gloucester County for some excellent hoagies at this classic Italian deli in Sewell.

The sharp Italian hoagie is fantastic, a perfectly layered blend of meats and finely shredded veggies (including pickled peppers) that makes for a hearty sandwich without it feeling

overstuffed. I especially love the Chicken Giuseppe, a crisp chicken cutlet hoagie topped with juicy bruschetta tomatoes and provolone.

660 WOODBURY GLASSBORO RD., SEWELL; 856-415-9600; PALJOEYSDELI.NET

CUSTARD HUT

We can almost smell the ocean air by the time the Custard Hut comes into view. Somers Point is our last stop on the mainland, just across the bay from our ultimate destination in Ocean City.

But there's something to be said for one perfect cone of soft-serve before crossing the bridge, unloading the car, and planting chairs in the sand for a couple weeks. It just so happens that this family-owned ice cream stand, started in 1977, makes some of the richest custard around.

With this one final pause to get out of the car, stretch our legs, and devour our cones (a chocolate-vanilla swirl for me, please), the final leg of our trip is short and very sweet. There's another C-Hut location just south in Upper Township, near the causeway to Sea Isle City.

710 NEW RD., SOMERS POINT; 609-653-0420; AND 109 NJ-50, OCEAN VIEW; 609-390-0361

CANNABIS
DELIVERY

WEED ON WHEELS

While most Shore towns still ban cannabis dispensaries, delivery services offer a legal way to bring bud to your door.

BY HENRY SAVAGE

HSAVAGE@INQUIRER.COM

This will be the third summer since recreational cannabis was legalized in New Jersey. While the industry is outgrowing its infancy elsewhere in the state, the majority of municipalities along the Shore still ban dispensaries and other cannabis businesses.

Atlantic City is the major exception — it now has more dispensaries than casinos and is preparing to debut some of the state's first licensed cannabis lounges.

Public consumption and use in rental properties is still prohibited, which makes it difficult for many vacationers to legally light up during their stay.

Still, adults 21 and older can legally bring cannabis into Shore towns if it's purchased from a licensed New Jersey dispensary. And yes — you can get it delivered.

Even though nearly 70% of New Jersey's 564 municipalities have opted out of cannabis businesses, delivery services are still allowed to operate in those areas, according to the state's Cannabis Regulatory Commission.

Weed delivery services cannot be "hampered in any jurisdiction, whether they are opted out or not," said commission spokesperson Toni-Anne Blake.

Dispensaries that deliver

SHORE HOUSE CANNA: From Cape May north to Ocean City. shorehousecanna.com

HIGH ROLLERS DISPENSARY: From Ocean City north to Brigantine and Atlantic City. highrollersdispensary.com

SUNNYTIEN: From Sea Isle City north to Atlantic City. sunnytien.com

For a full list and map of verified adult-use dispensaries in New Jersey: nj.gov/cannabis/dispensaries.

How it works

Ordering cannabis online isn't much different than ordering takeout. Visit a dispensary's website, browse products, and choose between pickup or delivery.

Unlike pizza delivery, weed orders don't show up in 30 minutes or less — customers typically schedule a window for delivery, from an hour to a few hours later, said Dave Christian, principal and cannabis consultant at Shore House Canna in West Cape May. Most dispensaries don't charge a delivery fee.

Tips to know

HAVE PAYMENT AND ID READY: Customers must present ID and can pay via cash or digital app if not prepaid. Only the person who placed the order can accept delivery.

ORDER TO A RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY: Cannabis products can only be delivered to a permanent or temporary residence, which includes rental properties, Airbnbs, and hotels. Weed cannot be delivered to businesses, like bars or restaurants, or public places, like the boardwalk, beach, and parks.

BUY IN BULK: Many dispensaries offer discounts for larger orders.

BEWARE OF ADS: When searching for legal weed delivery services, adults should visit the websites of approved cannabis dispensaries to avoid possible scams.

"It's hard to tell when you go on a website or just search for 'cannabis weed delivery' or 'weed delivery' because a lot of different results will pop up," said Jon Cohn, owner of Atlantic City's High Rollers dispensary. "I urge people who want to smoke lab-tested, legal cannabis products to order delivery from a licensed delivery company or cannabis dispensary."



Malachy Egan/ For The Inquirer

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TAG, YOU'RE IT

What to know about 2025 prices, free beach options, and last-chance discounts. **BY SAM RULAND**

SRULAND@INQUIRER.COM

Whether you're a dedicated beach bum, a weekend warrior, or someone who just wants to dip their toes in the water for a day, there's one thing you'll need to consider: beach tags.

While some Shore beaches are still gloriously free (shout-out to Wildwood and Atlantic City!), most require visitors to shell out for a daily, weekly, or seasonal badge. Prices range from \$8 for a single-day pass to \$200 for a season-long tag.

Many towns offer preseason discounts if you plan ahead, and some have reduced rates for seniors, kids, and veterans. Visit each town's website for information how and where to purchase beach tags.

Free beaches

SANDYHOOK: No tags required, but parking is \$20 per car or \$100 for a season pass.

ISLAND BEACH STATE PARK: No tags required, but parking is \$6 on weekdays and \$10 on weekends.

ATLANTIC CITY: No beach tags required.

CORSON'S INLET STATE PARK: No tags required.

STRATHMERE: No tags required.

NORTH WILDWOOD, WILDWOOD AND WILDWOOD CREST: No tags required.

Daily beach fees

MONMOUTH BEACH: \$13

DEAL: \$12

OCEAN GROVE: \$13

AVON-BY-THE-SEA: \$12

BELMAR: \$12

SEA GIRT: \$12

LAVALLETTE: \$13

BARNEGAT LIGHT: \$10

BEACH HAVEN: \$10

OCEAN CITY: \$10

STONE HARBOR: \$8

Snag a deal

BARNEGAT LIGHT, BEACH HAVEN, HOLGATE, AND LONG BEACH TOWNSHIP: Season pass \$40 before June 15; \$50 after.

VENTNOR: \$10 before May 31; \$20 after.

MARGATE: \$10 before May 31; \$20 after.

OCEAN CITY: \$30 before May 31; \$35 after.

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I | ALWAYS PHILLY

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