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If you could choose one deli.... - Manhattan - Chowhound

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## If . ou could choose one deli....

My husband and I, along with our 2 teenage boys, will be in Manhattan for 2 days at the end of May. We won't have time to try too many restaurants, but we definitely want to have the quintessential NY deli experience! Which one should it be and why?

Cast your vote here...

Thanks!

Nina



By Nina on Jan 13, 2005 06:39 AM

18 Replies so Far

Sorry to disappoint you. There are no nyc delis left. You can go to the tourist attraction Katz Deli, but it would be wrong to call it quintessential as it is typical of nothing.



By Delikatz on Jan 13, 2005 07:09 AM

re: [Delikatz](#)

That's total BS. Katz is the real deal - it's only been there about one hundred years. So go to Katz and have pastrami, knish, and anything else. You will love the place.



By Major League on Jan 13, 2005 08:01 AM

re: [Delikatz](#)

You know what? Choose one from those that are around today.

I don't really think the person who posted the question is going to be able to go back to 1957 for the way it used to be.

Sheeeeeeeesh.



B. Ro. Vey on Jan 13, 2005 07:18 PM

Katz's Delicatessen is by far your best choice for a "quintessential NY deli experience." It's been around since 1888, so I guess they know what they're doing. Standouts are their pastrami and corned beef sandwiches (big enough for 2), hot dogs (some say they're the best in the city), and their soups -- Matzo ball soup is quite good.

Anyone referring to Katz's as a "tourist trap," don't know what they're talking about.



By Foodboy on Jan 13, 2005 08:43 AM

re: [Foodboy](#)

Second Avenue Deli (10th and 2nd) is no slouch either. Best corned beef in the universe.



By tweedy on Jan 13, 2005 08:55 AM

Katz's (205 E. Houston) and the 2nd Ave. Deli (2nd Ave & 10th St.) are good choices. As others have noted, Katz's does have tourist appeal since it appears in a number of movies. That doesn't make it bad though.

Carnegie Deli (55th st and 7th ave) is also good.



By sparky on Jan 13, 2005 09:12 AM

As others have noted, you would probably be very pleased with either Katz's Deli or 2nd Avenue Deli.

0 Conventional wisdom is that Katz has the best pastrami and 2nd Ave has the best corned beef and matzoh ball soup, but honestly I think you'd be delighted with either place.


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I like the "Instant Heart Attack" sandwich (which terrifies purists) at 2nd Ave - it's two huge potato pancakes (instead of bread slices) with your choice of pastrami, corned beef, etc.

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Katz's I always order the old-school pastrami sandwich and a cream soda. Don't take table service; order at the counter and tip the counterman a buck while he slices your pastrami.

Like

-  [Email](#) If it matters to you, 2nd Ave is actually a kosher deli, while Katz is not.
- [+Share](#) Location and website pointers:

2nd Avenue Deli  
156 Second Avenue  
New York, NY 10003  
(212) 677-0606  
<http://2ndavedeli.com>

Katz's Delicatessen  
205 E Houston St  
New York, NY 10002  
(212) 254-2246  
<http://www.katzdeli.com/>

- er

Link: <http://enrevanche.blogspot.com>

By enre. anche on Jan 13, 2005 09:56 AM

Katz's is the place for Pastrami.

2nd ave is the place for chocolate babka. It's amazing!



By Dave on Jan 13, 2005 10:21 AM

I prefer Katz's over 2nd Ave. It's more fun and more of a spectacle, and to quote the OP, more of an "experience." Foodwise, both are pretty great and 2nd Ave. is better if you're looking for more low-key (it's smaller and quieter, though not exactly quiet.) Everyone's right in saying the pastrami's better at Katz's and the corned beef's better at 2nd Ave. but like I said, both are great spots.



By Bowfing on Jan 13, 2005 10:51 AM

To add to the 2nd ave/Katz's debate

I think the food is ver. good at both. What type of atmosphere do you want?  
2nd ave is more like a restaurant, Katz's has more of a cafeteria feel to me - very open.



By Shorts on Jan 13, 2005 11:03 AM

The quintessential deli in NY is 2nd Avenue in my mind. They are on top of their game for every Jewish specialty. Katz's makes amazing pastrami, which is what they stake their reputation on. Carnegie is a fun tourist destination, but not as good as Katz's or 2nd Ave.

Also, maybe this is personal bias, but I wouldn't label a deli serving Philly cheese steaks as quintessential.



By Josh on Jan 13, 2005 11:56 AM

definitely katz's . Best pastrami in manhattan.



By anon. on Jan 13, 2005 12:41 PM

#1 Choice is Katz's. It hasn't changed much since pushcarts lined the Lower East Side over 100 years ago. You'll feel the history. Head to Houston & Ludlow Street and you'll see the big sign that says "Katz's That's All" - That's all you need to know. Check out that old poster that urges you to "send a salami to your boy in the army" and take a check as you enter this temple of pastrami and good eats. Don't lose that check.

Second choice is the Second Avenue Deli on 10th Street & Second Avenue but you'll be sitting at a regular table or a booth. Delicious food but not as colorful as Katz's.



By Flynn on Jan 13, 2005 12:58 PM

I am a frequent visitor to NYC and enjoy both Katz's and 2nd Avenue. What's also fun about both are their locations. Katz's is a great way to get yourself a quick peak at the Lower East Side, while 2nd Avenue gets you to the East Village.

These are areas that a lot of tourists don't visit, especially on a short visit. So, you might want to consider which area you'd like to at least see for a couple of minutes...since you have such a brief stay.



B. oke. dokey on Jan 14, 2005 07:30 AM

I have been to Katz's deli 3 times in my life, the first two times were absolutley phenominal. Great pastrami, good corned beef, but this last time (a year after the second time I went) was awful. The corned beef (that my father had) tasted like wax and the pastrami was gut wrenching. Granted, it may have been an off night (which I thought they didn't have) but I will never be going back.



By LESEater on Jan 14, 2005 08:20 AM

re: [LESEater](#)

That's dumb



By Boots on Jan 14, 2005 04:14 PM

Nobody ever suggests it, too bad, they are missing out:

On the upper west side is Barney Greengrass (yes, they do have a branch at the Barney's (unrelated) department store in LA.) Also called "the sturgeon king", it's on Amsterdam at 86th.

The vibe here is a little more sedate, more yuppie, but this store is authentic and old and beautiful. Start with some sturgeon (my advice, eat it plain, even a bagel will overwhelm the subtle flavor), taste some sable (this oily fish is not all that pleasing, really, but you don't see it everywhere), and if you are a real lox connoiseur try that, though if you just "like" lox you'll not like theirs any more than others. And then, have an unassailable pastrami sandwich.

(Otherwise, I agree with the other posters comparing 2nd Ave's better corned beef, and Katz's better pastrami, but let me go further than the others: who really loves corned beef anyway? Therefore, Katz's wins for being pastrami, and huge and juicy. Carnegie, BTW, is terrible.)

Barney Greengrass pastrami is a more refined product, in the more upscale sense, it seems they start with better brisket and it comes out more tender, more like a fine meat, still with an excellent pastrami flavor.

Nearby just to visit you can take a stroll through Zabars (Brodway and 80th) a largescale deli-market, pretty impressive by New York standards, but getting tired, and not keeping up with "modern" aesthetics like Whole Foods (whose food I despise, but NYers can't be choosy). Just south of Zabar's is an H&H Bagels worth

walking into just to see the messy slopp. largescale production.

If you loved your visit to Zabar's and are crying "more more" then you could grab some picnic stuff to take back to your hotel at Fairway Market in the 70's on Broadway. And, to be really nuts, on your way there stop by Bearded Papa or whatever that Japanese creampuff place is called and there imagine this: when it opened people were queued up and down the street waiting to get in while the workers got RSI syndrome working the cream pump.



By Curriculum Vitae on Jan 15, 2005 04:56 PM

I would check out "Big Al's Super Cool Deli." It's much better than Katz's or 2nd Avenue.



By Earl on Jan 18, 2005 09:44 AM

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