

*Excerpt*

*The 8 Wonders of Cincinnati*

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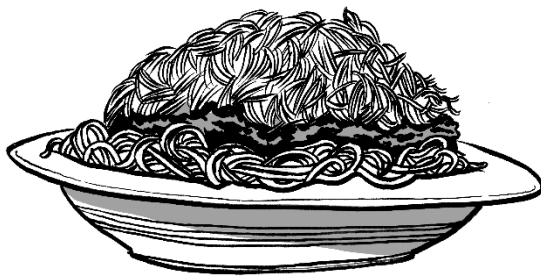
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## Chapter 5

### Food

#### Chili

Cincinnati chili is different from most other chilis: no hot jalapeño or habanero peppers, no chunks of stew beef, no colorful flashes of diced bell peppers. Instead, the palate tastes nuances of allspice, garlic and cumin. Some people swear they taste cinnamon, cocoa and Worcestershire sauce. Cincinnati chili is also not served in a bowl with a piece of corn bread on the side but on spaghetti, accompanied by a bag of oyster crackers.



Many people point out that Cincinnati's chili is Greek, and that's why it's different. But that's not completely correct. Cincinnati's first chili makers were brothers Tom and John Kiradjieff, who emigrated from what we now know as the Republic of Macedonia (just north of Greece) and ended up in Cincinnati.

In 1922, the Kiradjieffs opened a hot dog shop in the burlesque theater on Vine Street between Eighth and Ninth Streets. It had been called the Gaiety Theatre, but now it was called the Empress. The Kiradjieffs planned to serve Greek food in addition to the hot dogs, but their home cooking was not finding

a wide audience. To broaden their appeal to their very German clientele, they concocted a recipe that was reminiscent of the flavors of their homeland and then doctored it.

"They added a dozen spices like chili, plus garlic and onions, and ground beef," Tom's son Joe said in an October 2013 interview. He described how his father and uncle came up with their unique recipe, but he still hedged when describing the spices, even after more than ninety years of the family business.

The brothers served the mixture steaming hot over spaghetti. It was a big hit. They called their restaurant Empress Chili, after the burlesque theater. When his father's health declined, Joe Kiradjieff started operating the Empress empire in the 1950s. Joe retired in 2009, after selling Empress to another chili family.

If you go to Greece, you might find stews with the flavors that resemble Cincinnati's chili but nothing called "chili" with cheese on the top and spaghetti on the bottom. You certainly won't find any three-way, four-way or five-ways; the Kiradjieffs came up with that concept. A three-way is spaghetti, chili and cheese. A four-way adds beans or onions. A five-way adds both. They served a plate with a couple of hot dogs on the side with some steaming chili and cheese on top (known as "Coneys" after New York's Coney Island).

In the 1920s, a young Greek named Nicholas Sarakatsannis stopped in the Empress Chili parlor looking for a job and was immediately put to work. Within short order, he felt he could come up with a better recipe but didn't want to compete directly with the Kiradjieffs, so he crossed the river. Thus, in 1928, Dixie Chili was born in Newport, where it still operates today just north of Eighth Street. It has since expanded in many ways. It has three locations, many food offerings and even a six-way, composed of chili, spaghetti, beans, onions, cheese and fresh garlic.

Another Greek Nicholas got his start with the Kiradjieffs: Nicholas Lambrinides. Like Nicholas Sarakatsannis, Lambrinides wanted to open his own chili parlor, so he headed for Price Hill. In 1949, he and three of his sons opened the first Skyline Chili parlor at the intersection of Glenway and Quebec Avenues. The original westside parlor has been demolished, but Skylines can be found throughout Cincinnati and as far away as Naples, Florida.

In 1940, a single chili parlor quietly opened in Camp Washington, logically called Camp Washington Chili. In 1951, Johnny Johnson—then a Greek immigrant, now the Johnson family patriarch—started working at Camp Washington Chili, and he’s never worked anywhere else. Although the restaurant was rebuilt because of widening of the street, it has always been right where it is now: Hopple Street off I-75.

Camp Washington Chili was featured on Travel Channel’s *Man vs. Food* and has won numerous awards, including a James Beard award in 2000. In 2013, *Smithsonian Magazine* named it one of “20 Most Iconic Food Destinations Across America.” It was Johnny Johnson’s son-in-law, Joe Papakirk, who bought Empress Chili from Joe Kiradjieff in 2009.

Cincinnati boasts about two hundred chili parlors, but the biggest contenders for Greater Cincinnati’s favorite chili boil down to Empress, Skyline, Dixie, Camp Washington and Gold Star (started by four Jordanian brothers named Daoud). The best Cincinnati chili is a big debate that will never be settled. One thing that most native Cincinnatians agree on, however, is that chili spaghetti should not be twirled; cut into it so that all the layers are in each bite.<sup>i</sup>

### Ice Cream and Candy

Because of Cincinnati’s many German and Greek immigrants, the city has had a long tradition of great restaurants. Cincinnati is famous for its “chili wars.” But a frosty war wages at the other end of the meal in a bitter battle for the title of best sweets of the Queen City.

However, Graeter’s and Aglamesis Brothers are not the only sweet temptations in town. Cincinnati is home to a host of confectionary families. Here’s the scoop on four of them, from the oldest to the youngest.

#### Graeter’s

The Graeter family came to the United States in the mid-1880s from Bavaria. Young Louis Charles “Charlie” Graeter worked as a teenager in a market on Court Street, at the foot of the Sycamore hill. One of his assignments was to make ice cream. Because of a lack of refrigeration, he had to make it in small batches using rock salt and ice around the tub of cream and sugar to freeze it into ice cream. This knowledge served him well after he married Regina Berger, and they opened a store of their own. Charlie and Regina established the first Graeter’s store in 1870 in East Walnut Hills, at 967 East McMillan. There they made ice cream and candies in the back of the store, sold them in the front and lived upstairs.

After her husband’s life was cut short by a streetcar accident in 1919, Regina continued to run the store and created the phenomenal success it is now. She opened a second store in Hyde Park, which is the oldest Graeter’s store still operating today.

In 1934, Regina bought a location on Reading Road for expanded production capability. From there, the business is run by Charlie and Regina’s great-grandsons: Richard, Bob and (wait for it) Chip. A fourth generation of Graeters runs the company now, with stores as far away as Columbus and Lexington. Still, the dense, delicious ice cream is made the same way that Regina and Charlie made it—two gallons at a time.<sup>ii</sup>

Graeter’s also offers candies and a full-service bakery. Stop in some morning in any of the twenty Cincinnati shops for a cup of coffee and a kruller. If you’re on the road, you can find Graeter’s in Chicago, Dayton, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Lexington and Louisville. To ship some chips to your friends, go to [www.graeters.com](http://www.graeters.com).



#### Aglamesis Brothers

In 1908, sixteen-year-old Thomas Aglamesis (pronounced “a-glah-MEE-siss,” not “a-gluh-MEE-seez”) left Sparta, Greece, and his many siblings to seek his fortune in the United States. His father had just died, and as the eldest son, he needed to ensure the welfare of his family. His brother Nicholas soon joined him. They started working in downtown Cincinnati in the “Old Arcade,” where they learned how to make ice cream.

They saved up enough to open their own place, and in 1908, they bought a store in Norwood, calling it the Metropolitan. The Aglamesis brothers also churned all their ice cream flavors by hand, using metal cylinders with rock salt and ice to freeze the cream mixture. They soon added candies to their offerings in the store.

In 1913, the Aglamesis brothers bought another store in Oakley, on Madison Avenue, where they made chocolate candy from scratch in the back of the store. This store is the main store today and is a beauty to behold, with Tiffany

lamps and marble counters and tabletops from Portugal. In 1922, an ice cream plant was added behind the store to expand production. Gleaming French kettles of copper sit in the plant in which the ice cream is made.<sup>iii</sup>

One of the other “offerings” at the Metropolitan was more in the line of “eye candy.” The Chakiris family moved from Greece to the United States in 1916. Against patriarch Aristotle’s wishes, son Stylianos “Steve” wanted to be an actor. However, Aristotle won, so Steve stayed in the family’s confectionary business. He went to work for the Aglamesis brothers at the Metropolitan before going off on his own. In 1933, Steve’s son George was born. Seven years later, the family moved to California. There, George was able to achieve his father’s dream: he became an actor. He won the 1961 Academy Award for best actor in a supporting role for his role as Bernardo in *West Side Story*.<sup>iv</sup>

Caught in the Great Depression, Thomas and Nicholas sold the Metropolitan and changed the name of their company to Aglamesis Brothers. In the 1950s, Nicholas died and Thomas’s health was failing, so Thomas’s son James took over the company. Jim Aglamesis still runs the company as of this writing. A store has been added, in Montgomery. The chocolate candies and ice cream are still made in the Oakley store, the “sincere” way.

To order some sweets for your sweetheart (or yourself), visit [www.aglamesis.com](http://www.aglamesis.com).

### *Esther Price Candies*

Wasn’t Esther Price from Dayton? Yes, she was. But many people in Cincinnati think she was a Cincinnati, and the company that she founded in Dayton is now being run by a second generation of Cincinnatians, so it’s worth a nod here.

In a home ec class in school, she learned how to make fudge, and her life was changed forever. Even when she graduated from school and got a job in retail, Esther continued to make candies for her friends and co-workers, to great accolades.

Finally, she gave in to her destiny and opened her own store in 1926. She prided herself on using the finest butter and cream for her candies. She created a local favorite when she and the folks from Mike-Sells (now Mikesells) potato chips teamed up and created the (now famous) chocolate-covered potato chip, available from October to March.

In 1976, Price sold the company to four men from Cincinnati, including one named Jim Day. Today, Jim Day’s descendants own Esther Price Candies. Although the company headquarters is still in Dayton, the distinctive gold box can be found in dedicated Esther Price stores in Cincinnati, as well as in many area Kroger supermarkets. Esther Price (born in 1905) died in 1994.<sup>v</sup>

### *Fawn Candy Company*

When Paul “Pep” Guenther returned from World War II in 1946, he and his wife, Jean, opened a candy store in Cheviot. Jean’s Greek heritage helped shape the flavors that went into the sweets they created.

Since 1984, Fawn Candy has been owned by Jean and Pep’s daughters: Kathy, Jackie, Jean and Jane. They own two stores, one on Harrison Avenue in Green Township and one in Rookwood Pavilion. They’ve now been joined by their children, nieces, nephews and grandchildren, making four generations of Fawn Candy.<sup>vi</sup> They are also great community citizens and often help with local fundraisers through sale of their products. Find them online at [www.fawncandy.com](http://www.fawncandy.com).

### *Jean-Robert de Cavel*

Jean-Robert de Cavel always loved to cook. Even when growing up in Lille, France, he knew his destiny. He told journalist Alyssa Brandt, for a 2013 article in *Cincinnati Magazine*, “Even in the Boy Scouts I wanted to be the cook.”<sup>vii</sup> De Cavel became an apprentice at a restaurant in a train station while he attended culinary school. After a mandatory military stint, he was off to chase his dream.

In the 1990s, Jean-Robert de Cavel traded in the “bleu, blanc et rouge” of France for the red, white and blue of the USA. As executive chef first at Le Regence (the restaurant for the Plaza Athénée Hotel) and then La Gauloise in New York City, he thought he would stay in the Big Apple. When the owners of La Gauloise started battling, de Cavel was told he could buy them out or leave.

About that time, a friend and fellow chef named Daniel Boulud told de Cavel of the upcoming need for a chef at the Maisonette. Although de Cavel was tempted by the five stars (after all, Le Regence had only four), he was not sure he wanted to move to the Midwest. While his German girlfriend, Annette Pfund—an assistant room service

manager at the Plaza Athénée—visited her family in Madrid, de Cavel flew to Cincinnati to cook a meal for the Comisar family, owners of the Maisonette. Because de Cavel's luggage had been lost, he had only his travel clothes for his first night in town. The Maisonette had a very strict dress code (jacket and tie for men, dresses or skirts for women), so he could not even sample a meal at the Maisonette. Instead, the Comisar cousins, Nat and Marc, took de Cavel to another restaurant of theirs: Chester's Roadhouse in Montgomery.

De Cavel made the short list of three chefs to prepare a meal at the Maisonette. Once the committee tasted his first course, it was a done deal. He, Annette and his cat (Escoffier) moved to Cincinnati, where de Cavel became the *chef de cuisine* at the Maisonette. He thought he might stay three or five years.

The Maisonette was truly one of the gems in the Queen City's crown. De Cavel served as the Maisonette's *chef de cuisine* from 1993 to 2002. For forty-one years, it was ranked as a five-star restaurant by *Mobil Travel Guide*. In fact, it was the most highly ranked restaurant in North America. Nevertheless, it closed its doors in 2005.

De Cavel became the face of Cincinnati cuisine when he entered into a business partnership with Martin and Marilyn Scripps Wade. Through their Jean-Robert French Restaurant Group, they opened several more restaurants. Jean-Robert at Pigall's opened on Fourth Street and earned four Mobil stars. The Jean-Robert French Restaurant Group was also to include the JeanRo Bistro, Pho Paris, Greenup Café, Lavomatic and Twist.<sup>viii</sup>

Sadly, as he was getting ready to open the bistro, the de Cavel family faced a heartbreaking tragedy when their three-month-old daughter, Tatiana, died from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. They established the de Cavel Family SIDS Foundation, Eat.Play.Give ([www.eatplaygive.net](http://www.eatplaygive.net)). Through the foundation, they have raised close to \$1 million, which has gone to research grants and a memorial scholarship at the Midwest Culinary Institute.

Unfortunately, Wade and de Cavel had a falling out, which ended in closing most of the group's restaurants and de Cavel facing a one-year noncompete agreement. During that year, not able to open any restaurants, de Cavel still stayed busy. He cooked for many charity events, generously giving of his own time and money. He also became the chef-in-residence at Cincinnati State's Midwest Culinary Institute. Thus, instead of (or in addition to) his many "unofficial" protégés, he officially became the mentor for hundreds of would-be chefs.

Currently, the three-time James Beard nominee oversees five restaurants: Jean-Robert's Table (opened in August 2010), French Crust Café (opened in August 2013), Le Bar a Boeuf (opened in March 2015), Restaurant L (opened in August 2016 in partnership with Richard Brown, former maître d'hôtel at the Maisonette) and Frenchie Fresh (opened in September 2016). Learn more about de Cavel at [www.jrcincy.com](http://www.jrcincy.com). 055



## Findlay Market

Established in 1852 and open for business ever since, Findlay Market is the oldest continuous open-air market in Ohio. Reminiscent of European markets, the offerings are fresh, local and often unusual. The story of Findlay Market is unusual, as well.

James Findlay came to Cincinnati with his wife, Jane, in 1793 when the settlement was still called Losantiville. He was among the two dozen people who established the Cincinnati public library in 1802. Findlay served as mayor twice, fought in the War of 1812 and was even taken prisoner by the British. He was elected to Congress, along with his brothers (who represented different districts in Pennsylvania).

Findlay bought a plot of land that was referred to as the Northern Liberties. This section of land was in the wooded area north of Cincinnati. In today's terms, it is described as that area near Elder, Findlay, Elm, Republic, Green, Race and McMicken Streets. He established a market, selling goods that were brought in by horse and mule.

After the death of both Findlays, the property was given to the City of Cincinnati in 1851 to continue as a market. Over the decades, the open market was enclosed, and refrigeration and plumbing were added. It has been upgraded twice, in the 1970s and again in the 2000s.



Currently, merchants sell a variety of goods: artisan gifts, baked goods, beer and wine, catering, cheese and dairy, desserts and chocolate, flowers, seafood, meat and poultry, prepared foods, organic produce, spices and other specialty items.

### Primavista



Its name translates to “prime view,” and it certainly is. It could also be translated as “first sight,” as in “love at...,” and that would be true, too. Sitting quietly atop Price Hill on Cincinnati’s west side, the Primavista restaurant is known equally well for two things: the food and the view. Diners look out upon the Queen City and Ohio River from the west, a view not found many other places. It’s a spectacular view day or night. Speaking of night, it is also a popular site for viewing the fireworks of Riverfest, Cincinnati’s end-of-summer celebration. But those reservations must be booked months in advance.

The dining area is laid out as two tiers so that everyone has a good view of the city. Even without the view, the restaurant is worth a visit—or several—for its scrumptious Italian food. From *carpaccio* to *caffé*, the experience is first rate. A private dining area can be reserved, often popular with wedding parties.

To peruse the menu or make a reservation, go to [www.pvista.com](http://www.pvista.com).

### Green BEAN Delivery

Subscription-based home delivery of food, such as the currently popular Blue Apron and Hello Fresh, is not a new idea. One could argue that home delivery started with milkmen and their clinking bottles. Even Schwan’s Home Service started out as Schwan’s Dairy in Minnesota in 1948. Their familiar yellow trucks have brought frozen foods to happy homes for decades. Ever receive holiday packages from Swiss Colony? Hickory Farms? Harry and David? Shari’s Berries? Graze? Food delivery services nowadays range from fully prepared meals ready for reheating and ingredients to a full meal with recipe included to desserts or just random snack food.

Now, with advances in refrigeration and packaging, the food delivery service world has exploded. In Cincinnati, bright green-and-white trucks have appeared, bringing to our doorsteps locally grown, fresh foods produced on sustainable farms. Green BEAN Delivery was founded in Indiana in 2007 by spouses Beth Blessing and Matt Ewer. Their goal was to give organic farmers and food artisans a way to reach a broader consumer base. The company quickly grew to “hubs” in Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri and Tennessee. Green BEAN Delivery, Tiny Footprint Distribution, Feel Good Farm (in Indiana) and EcOhio (in Mason, Ohio) make up the BEAN family. 057

“Our network of growers and artisans is vast. Our greatest asset is our partnerships we’ve grown throughout the last decade of business,” CEO Ewer says. “Right now, we are evolving quickly and our service model is changing. You absolutely have to change to stay relevant in today’s food-meets-tech landscape. Our latest and greatest development is our smart phone app. You can now order from us on your phone, and we can connect with our customer in all kinds of cool ways through this platform. It’s really changed the way we think about our business and how we design our point of sale platforms.”

Like many modern companies, BEAN also has a philanthropic mission. “I think it’s important to understand that we are dedicated to the health of the communities we service,” says Ewer. “We provide no unnatural ingredients on our website and focus on sustainable and organic food. We believe our service has a purpose. The BEAN acronym stands for Biodynamic.Education.Agriculture.Nutrition. We have built our business from these cornerstones. In a decade of business, we were able to donate well over one million pounds of fresh produce to local food banks. We are very proud of our efforts to support people in our community that need a helping hand. We thank our customers, our employees and our partners for the opportunity to give back.”

BEAN’s mission from the start has been “to help mend broken components of our nation’s food systems.” Whether donating farm-fresh food to the needy or providing personalized food bins to subscribers, BEAN specializes in organic, natural, locally sourced food from hundreds of family farms and artisans.

Subscribers have a choice of ordering different-sized bins and then tailoring them to fit their needs. “Our main consumer is women between thirty and fifty years old with children,” says Ewer. “Several ‘organically’ based companies are driven by mothers. We are certainly no different, as moms are looking to keep their children healthy and have very busy schedules.” Ewer says that they are seeing people from a wide variety of income levels who use their service, including several millennials who connect with BEAN on their newly launched smart phone app.

Their most popular items are farm-fresh eggs and dairy. “We have great partnerships in each of the markets we service to provide these products to our customers on a local level,” says Ewer.

However, just because they specialize in working with local farms does not mean that customers are constrained to produce from the Midwest. “We recently started selling Young Thai coconuts,” Ewer says. “You have to take the top off of the coconut, and then you can enjoy the nutritious water in the core of the coconut. You can also utilize the coconut meat.”

Ewer says it goes back to their suppliers. “Just like a chef, if you are going to make a great dish, you have to have really good ingredients,” he notes. “My background has always been food. In our scenario, it was food industry professionals doing tech, not tech professionals doing food. That has always been an important aspect of our DNA and one we take pride in. Oh ya, we got some awesome tech too!”

“We’ve worked very hard to get to where we used to be. The onset of the Internet has been a great tool to get consumers closer to their local farmers and artisans. The future of food is changing and will become less brick and mortar. There will be greater selections for customers and hopefully greater transparency. No matter what the technology [is], the key is always the consumer. Farmers will provide whatever the consumer demands. The avenues to reach the consumer are growing by leaps and bounds each and every day. We are at the tip of the iceberg where food and technology meet. When people ask me what my company does, I let them know we are a tech company that likes to get dirty (we also farm 120 acres of organic vegetables). The truth is we are using technology to help mend a broken food system and provide opportunity and a sustainable pipeline for environmentally friendly producers of good old-fashioned (and sometimes new and innovative) food.”

### Former Beer Brewing Capital of the United States

Near the Ohio River at the base of Race Street, David Embree opened the first Cincinnati brewery in August 1810. One hundred years later, at the peak of its brewing prowess, Cincinnati had more than thirty breweries supplying about three hundred saloons. Cincinnati was the biggest beer producer outside Europe. The names on today’s beer cans and bottles were young men trying to earn a living in a new country back then.

In 1842, at the age of twenty-four, Bavarian Christian Moerlein opened his first business in Cincinnati: blacksmithing. Moerlein sold his blacksmithing business in 1853 and, with a little help from his friends, constructed a brewery on the same site. Less than a year later, he had sold his first beer. Within twelve years, he was able to buy out his partner for \$130,000. When Moerlein died in 1897, his assets exceeded \$1.5 million—quite an achievement for a man who had arrived in Cincinnati penniless and barely able to speak English. His fellow beer barons Gottlieb Mühlhauser and John Hauck also became millionaires.

Another fine-spirited Cincinnati of the late 1880s was John Goetz Jr. He married Elisabeth Moerlein, making Christian Moerlein his father-in-law. A lawyer, Goetz became the vice president of Christian Moerlein Brewing Company. He was also very active in the community, sitting on several boards, such as the Cincinnati Board of Fire Commissioners, and serving as the president of the Cincinnati Zoo. He was well liked nationally and locally.

Goetz died suddenly in 1899 from a stroke, just five days short of his forty-fourth birthday (and only two years after Moerlein’s death). Despite the deaths of both Moerlein and Goetz, Cincinnati was certainly not at a loss for beer. The Christian Moerlein Brewing Company was still in the capable hands of Christian’s son, William.

Louis Hudepohl and George Kotte owned a wholesale liquor business. When Hudepohl Sr. died, his son, Louis Hudepohl II, and Kotte bought the Koehler Brewery (formerly the Buckeye Brewery). Louis II began to buy out his partner. When Kotte died at the age of fifty-six, Hudepohl bought out Kotte’s widow, Katharina, but retained the name of the brewery. He changed the name to Hudepohl Brewery after Katharina died.

The United States was moving toward Prohibition, but the Eighteenth Amendment had not been ratified yet. Still, animosity was growing toward those who brewed and consumed alcohol, including beer. The breweries were predominantly owned by Germans, and the United States had just returned from the First World War.

Prohibition—the era during which the manufacture, sale and transportation of intoxicating liquors was outlawed by ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution—began in 1920. For the next thirteen years, Cincinnati was affected, as was the rest of the nation, by this amendment and by the Volstead Act. However, in a way, Cincinnati’s loss was worse: by the 1880s, Cincinnati had become the mecca of beer brewing. Virtually all, if not all, of the twenty to thirty breweries were owned by German American or German families. Many Cincinnatians felt that Prohibition took on an anti-German focus. As the axe of Prohibition fell, the last of Cincinnati’s breweries

to remain were the John Hauck Brewing Company, the Windisch-Mühlhauser Lion Brewery and Christian Moerlein.

Now, in the twenty-first century, Cincinnati is experiencing a brewery renaissance. Christian Moerlein sprang to life in the form of a brewery and restaurant in the Banks entertainment district along the riverfront. CEO Greg Hardman also took over the Hudepohl, Little Kings and Burger labels. Although Sam Adams himself was from Massachusetts and his eponymous brewery calls Boston “home,” the major brewery for Sam Adams is right here in Cincinnati. (Some bars are confused about this and list Sam Adams as an import.) Other new breweries include MadTree, Taft’s Ale House, Listermann, Bad Tom Smith, Braxton, Rhinegeist, Rivertown, 50West, Urban Artifact and Tap & Screw (in Oakley, in an arrangement with BrewRiver Gastropub). Even Wiedemann’s, which was originally founded in 1890 but ceased production in 2006, has had a comeback.

For a tour of the breweries, check out the Cincy Brew Bus (or to enjoy bourbon or wine on their “wine wagon”), ([cincybrewbus.com](http://cincybrewbus.com)) or the Craft Connection Brewery Tours at [www.craftconnectiontours.com](http://www.craftconnectiontours.com).

## Brewpubs

Given Cincinnati’s history with breweries, it is appropriate that its future seems to be linked with beer again, this time in the form of microbreweries and gastropubs. Cincinnati now boasts almost twenty microbreweries, with more popping up monthly, it seems. Accordingly, gastropubs have become the latest popular form of eatery.

What’s the difference? It’s a fuzzy line, but for the most part, microbreweries focus on the beer—specifically their own. Gastropubs and brewpubs focus on the food *and* the beer. A good brewpub will have about twenty beers on tap, which might rotate in and out according to the brewers’ whims and success. Some gastropubs are hooking up with microbreweries so their guests get the best of both worlds.

Now the difference between a brewpub and a restaurant with a bar is that the former serves mostly craft beers, often local, produced in small batches. The latter serves a variety of brews from local, national and international breweries, as well as an assortment of other liquors. A great example of a restaurant with a bar and a good beer selection in Cincinnati is Allyn’s Café, on Columbia Parkway. Allyn’s (owned by chef Allyn Raifstanger) specializes in Cajun/Creole soul food and has won many awards for both its food and drinks.

In Cincinnati, the leader of the brewpub craze was, arguably, Rock Bottom Brewery. It’s a chain, so some might question its inclusion here, but it did debut the genre of the microbrewery with food in 1991. Here’s a bit of trivia: its name comes from the fact that the first Rock Bottom was at the bottom of the building of a certain insurance company whose slogan was “Get a piece of the rock.”

The microbrewery experience was further enhanced when the Ohio state legislature passed a bill in 2016 that eliminated the limit on alcohol content in beer to 12 percent. This limit was set in 2002, when there weren’t so many microbreweries. The limit put local brewers at a disadvantage, as the surrounding states have no such limit.<sup>ix</sup>

In the last decade, brewpubs have appeared all over town. Many have “tap takeovers” when a specific brewery takes over a pub, with its brews as the main feature. It’s a good way for patrons to sample many of the brewery’s beers. To create your own microbrewery and/or brewpub tour, check out the Beer Guide to Cincinnati, available at [www.beeradocate.com/place/city/39](http://www.beeradocate.com/place/city/39).



## Tacos

Cincinnati, despite its Irish-German roots, has a rich past and future with the Latino culture. In addition to the usual plastic pico palaces, Cincinnati’s restaurants offer a variety of Tex-Mex fare. The changing demographics, along with many people relocating from Latin-American countries, have expanded Cincinnati’s palate.

Mazunte Taqueria is one example of a Mexican restaurant that offers more authentic Mexican food than is traditionally offered in the United States and in a more traditional Mexican setting. Situated in Madisonville but named for the Mexican town of Mazunte, the restaurant has the flavor and feel of a Mexican street. Its offerings, *los antojitos*, represent “little cravings” of street food. Although the menu is a little limited, it makes up for the lack of quantity with quality. While you’re there, check out the huge margarita drink mixer (but don’t help yourself). If you go, be prepared for a wait.

Before Mazunte opened, another restaurant offered Mexican tacos in Over-the-Rhine. Bakersfield, on Vine Street, is a great place to go if you have the time to spare. Like Mazunte, you're going to wait in line. But it's worth the wait when you get a seat. Bakersfield is known for three things: fantastic tacos (small, but they're mighty), an impressive bourbon collection and a flash back to our black-and-white past on the multiple flat-screen televisions around the bar. These TVs play a continuous loop of old Westerns—without the sound. If you're lucky enough to be there when my husband and I are dining, he'll recite all the dialogue for you, if you wish.

Another downtown Latino eatery is Nada, on Walnut Street. It serves Mexican food with a contemporary flair. One of its offerings, for example, is the Mexican poutine—a new take on a Canadian classic. They offer brunch, lunch and dinner, but more importantly, they offer fantastic desserts and signature drinks.

If you want the Mexican without the flash, try Avocado's in Cheviot, on the west side of town. Think of Avocado's as offering down-home Mexican cooking. Like Mazunte, it has a gigantic "slushy" machine filled with margarita. If that's what you're in the mood for, there's no wait. Avocado's offers indoor and outdoor seating, as does Mazunte.

All we need next is a goetta taco.

## Goetta

When people visit Cincinnati, they often ask to be wined and dined at the host's favorite chili parlor and ice cream shop. True Cincinnatians (by birth or at heart) also treat their guests to Cincinnati's finest fare: goetta.

Now pronounced GET-tuh, in the original German it might have been spelled "götte" and pronounced more like "GEU-tteh." Darwin scholar John van Wyhe, a Bye-Fellow of Christ's College and a member of the British Society for the History of Science, expressed the opinion that our word "goetta" sounds like the German slang word *gute*, which means "goody."<sup>x</sup> This is not his area of expertise, but he's a very smart person. Another smart person whose area of expertise is food, Rita Nader Heikenfeld, says that she thinks the name might derive from the German word for grain or cereal.<sup>xi</sup>

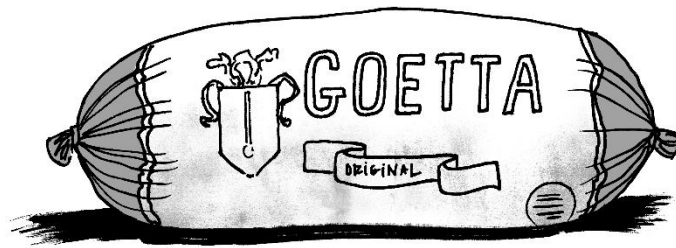
Some families have handed down their own goetta recipes for generations. The variations are endless, but the basic recipe usually calls for pork (shoulder or butt), pin oats (also called "steel cut"), onion, sometimes a bay leaf and spices. Similar to the spice variations for Cincinnati chili (which isn't really Greek) the spices differ by recipe for goetta (which isn't really German). The exact spices might depend on what part of the old country the recipe creator came from. "Food etymologist" Dann Woellert has tracked the use of specific spices in goetta recipes to different quadrants of Germany. The spices might include allspice and cloves or a more savory combination of marjoram and sage.

The meats can vary, too, but not as much as the spices. Of course, we here in Porkopolis use mostly pork, but sometimes this is augmented by beef. Some recipes include organ meat, while others avoid it. Regardless of what exactly goes in the pot, the hot concoction is simmered for a couple of hours and then packed into pans or sausage casings and chilled.

Goetta is not unique, although we'd like to think so. It is a twist on a common sausage-type food found in areas of the United States with German roots, as well as Europe. Pennsylvanians love their scrapple, which has a similar mixture of meats and spices but uses cornmeal instead of oats. In Europe, the Scots love their haggis, which has a similar mix of grains and spices but uses sheep for the meat. (Haggis has its own debate going on, as England and Scotland are thought of as the country of origin.) Grutzwurt, which hails from northern Germany, is called "kishka" in nearby Poland.<sup>xii</sup> The former uses oat groats and organ meat, whereas the latter uses buckwheat, barley or rye. Many cooks in many countries have stretched the meat by adding some grain and grinding it up.

From this description, however, one might get the impression that goetta is strictly a step up from tinned meat. Some people might agree—but not in mixed company.

One local manufacturer, Glier's, hosts Goettafest every August in Newport, Kentucky. You'll get to sample goetta pizza, calzones, Coneys, ragoon, fried rice, spring rolls, doughnuts, brownies, omelets, kabob, macaroni and cheese, burritos, lasagna, risotto balls and even bread pudding. Mainstrasse Village in Covington, Kentucky, also holds a Goettafest in June, so you can double up on your goetta quota.



Many of the traditional butcher shops, like Humbert's Meats, make their goetta right in the store. If you're feeling brave, try one of these two old recipes from my husband's family.

#### **Catherine Grathwohl's Goetta**

This recipe comes from my husband's maternal grandmother.

5 cups water  
2½ cups pinhead oatmeal (or look for steel-cut oats)  
3 teaspoons salt  
⅛ teaspoon pepper  
1 large onion, finely chopped  
1 pound ground pork  
1 pound ground beef  
1 teaspoon instant beef bouillon  
3 bay leaves  
¼ teaspoon ground allspice (optional)  
¼ teaspoon ground cloves (optional)

Put water, oats, salt and pepper in a slow cooker. Mix well, cover and cook for 1½ hours on high setting. Add onion, meat, bouillon, bay leaves and other spices (if desired). Cook 5 hours on low setting. Remove cover and cook for 30 minutes longer, stirring three or four times. Put cooked goetta in two foil-lined loaf pans and chill. Invert onto plate and chill another 30 minutes. Wrap loaves in foil and store in refrigerator. To serve, slice and fry until crisp and golden. If slow cooker is not available, put ingredients in an oven roaster and bake at 250 degrees for 1 hour with the lid on and 1 hour with the lid off, stirring every half hour.

Notes from Catherine: "Recipe calls for first end of callie [pork shoulder], which I have never been able to get, so I use back and get more than 2 pounds to allow for bone. Pork should not be lean. Do not remove fat but grind it all. The only place I have found oatmeal is at a health store. It is called steel-cut or steel-ground oatmeal. Do *not* use rolled oats."

#### **Matilda "Tilly" Beckman's Goetta**

This recipe comes from my husband's paternal great-grandmother, who was married to Leo Beckman.

Serves "lots"

2 pounds fresh pork (not too lean)  
½ pound stew beef

Boil together in 6 cups of water and 2 teaspoons salt until tender; remove and allow to cool. While liquid is cooling, grind the meats, including the fat. Strain liquid; if not 6 full cups, add enough water to make that amount. Bring liquid to boil with 2 more teaspoons salt. Add 2 cups oats (*not* rolled oats) slowly. Turn to very low light. Stir frequently until thickened, about 15–20 minutes. Add ground meat to cooked oatmeal and simmer until done, about an hour or so. Watch so it does not stick. Do not put lid on tight because steam should escape. Stir frequently. To serve, slice cold and brown in skillet.

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#### *Excerpt*

*The 8 Wonders of Cincinnati*

Wendy Hart Beckman, author

Allison Ranieri, illustrator

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## Queen City Essentials

Cincinnati is an amazing place to live and visit for so many reasons. Local author Wendy Beckman and illustrator Allison Ranieri celebrate the city's eight wonders—architecture, art, commerce, food, customs, geography, history and people. With its Venetian Gothic lancet arches and crystal chandeliers, the Cincinnati Music Hall stands as an architectural masterpiece. The Cincinnati Red Stockings made history as the first professional baseball team. Remnants of marine fossils from the Ordovician Period remind residents that the city was once under water. Limitless local varieties of goetta range from family recipes to trendy café dishes. And the city birthed trailblazers like track and field star DeHart Hubbard, the first African American to win an Olympic gold medal in an individual event. These stories and more reveal the unique character of the Queen City.

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