



Cheesesteak Renaissance: How Philly's Iconic Sandwich Shops Are Preparing for Beyoncé's Hungry Fans

Extra bread, special menus and more — after a bump in business caused by Taylor Swift's Eras Tour, these establishments are getting in formation for Beyoncé's first U.S. tour stop of the year

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Beyoncé's 'Renaissance' tour hits Philadelphia on Wednesday, and local cheesesteak shops are more than ready. Pat's King of Steaks/Instagram; Kevin Mazur/WireImage for Parkwood

For Christian Palamone, running out of bread isn't an option. The general manager and CEO of Avenue Steaks & Pizza in Philadelphia tells *The Messenger* he has ordered 300 extra bread rolls and a full extra case of cheese to make their famous Philly cheesesteaks as Beyoncé fans flood the city for her *Renaissance* tour stop tonight, the first U.S. date on the run.

"There's a bakery down the street. They start at midnight and they can bail us out if we need more," Palamone says. Frank Olivieri, owner of Pat's King of Steaks, one of the city's most iconic cheesesteak outlets, ordered 30% more ingredients than usual. He's preparing to do one and a half times the amount of business Pat's would see on an average Wednesday.

The North American leg of Beyoncé's *Renaissance* tour, which kicked off in Toronto on Saturday, continues this week with shows in Nashville and Louisville following tonight's performance in Philadelphia. And the tour, which is projected to surpass \$2 billion in revenue, isn't just bringing business to Bey. Hotels are already seeing increased demand for the star's tour dates. And ahead of the Philly show, the city's famous cheesesteak shops are pulling out all the stops.

Big business for Queen Bey's arrival

"There's definitely gonna be a huge influx of people," Palamone predicts. "Late

night is busy as it is every night, so that plus all the people that are in the city and went to the concert ... it's definitely a huge uptick in business, and it affects how I have to staff and stock."

Pat's King of Steaks is expecting more business too. And while you might expect the hungry concertgoers to provoke a battle of the cheesesteaks, Olivieri says the BeyHive is big enough for everyone to get some buzz: "I hope everybody can cash in on Beyoncé coming into town. I want everybody to be busy, because there's enough business for everybody." That said, he's still confident Pat's steaks will reign supreme: "Pat dubbed himself the king of steaks back in the '30s. We're the king of steaks, and I guess we're the king of tourist traps. So who can compete with the king?"

Special menus and intense prep

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Palamone is expecting so much demand that he's actually trimming Avenue's usual menu to speed up the flow of foot traffic. The shop will feature an assortment of their usual offerings, but he plans to brand it as a "Beyoncé fan menu" and research the star's (and her fans') gastronomic preferences to see if they can label something a "Beyoncé cheesesteak." (Might we suggest the "I got hot sauce in my bag" spicy steak?) "Everybody in the immediate area around the stadiums has to prep for something like this," Palamone says.

Famous Philadelphia cheesesteak chain Tony Luke's has a stand at Lincoln Financial Field, where Bey is performing tonight. "My stand at the Linc will be extremely busy," Vice President of Operations David Wachs says. "Gates open an hour and a half before the show, and we get there three hours prior. It's a lot of prep." Wachs always sends sandwiches backstage and "would love nothing more

than to feed Beyonce and her crew."

First Eras, now *Renaissance*

Pat's saw around 50-67% more cheesesteak sales during Taylor Swift's Eras Tour Philly stop, versus the weekend before. Meanwhile, the Eras Tour made a lasting impact on Avenue's business. They saw 20-30% more sales during Eras weekend, and after word got out that Avenue made 85 pizzas for Swift and her team, the rush didn't stop. "We definitely got a lot of new customers from that. It helped us out a lot," Palamone says. Now, people even come by to take pictures of the restaurant as a Swiftie landmark.

"My manager called me and said, 'I think Taylor Swift just ordered pizza.' I said to call back, make sure it's not a prank and try to have them pre-pay, because they hadn't paid yet and it was so much food," Palamone recalls. "And that's when they told her. Also, the area code was Nashville, so we kind of knew."

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