

# Greenwich Village Food Tour

## Introduction

**Directions: Our tour begins in Washington Square Park, under the arch. The closest subway station is the ACEBDFM at West 4th Street.**

Hi! This is Katherine with Free Tours by Foot, here to guide you on a Greenwich Village Food Tour. I will take you to some of our favorite spots in the neighborhood and make food recommendations, and we will also show you some of the histories of the area.

Our tour begins in Washington Square Park, under the arch. The closest subway station is the ACEBDFM at West 4th Street. This tour will take 1-2 hours to complete. Happy Eating!

## Washington Square Park

The park you are now standing in was originally established as farmland in the 1600s. Much of the area that is today Greenwich Village was once a farming community. This exact spot was farmland until 1797 when the city purchased this plot for use as a potter's field or free public burial ground. The area's use as a cemetery was discontinued in 1825, but today, there are still approximately 20,000 people buried beneath Washington Square Park.

The arch that you see was designed by Stanford White and was modeled after the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. It replaced a different arch made out of wood and plaster, which had been a temporary decoration for the centennial anniversary of George Washington's inauguration right here in New York City. The marble arch was dedicated in 1895.

Washington Square Park has long been considered a center for neighborhood activity for Greenwich Village. The first demonstration of the telegraph by Samuel Morse happened right here. In 1834, a protest was held in the park. People were protesting NYU's use of cheap prison labor for construction, rather than hiring New York stonemasons. That protest led to the first labor march in New York City.

Throughout the years, this place has been a gathering spot for all kinds of students, and musicians and activists. In 1888, Robert Louis Stevenson sat on a bench right here in Washington Square Park and chatted with Mark Twain.

Today in the park, you can join a chess game at the southwest corner, enjoy street performers, or just relax by the fountain, which was moved here from 59th street and 5th ave in the 1870s. The park has had many renovations in recent years, so take some time to stroll around to enjoy both the old and new features of the park.

When you are finished, walk to the south end of the park (this is the end opposite the arch). Turn right to walk to the west side of the park, and turn left down MacDougal Street. Walk until you come to Mamoun's Falafel at 119 MacDougal (it has a brown awning and will be on the right side of the street)

## Mamoun's Falafel

**Directions: When you are finished, walk to the south end of the park (this is the end opposite the arch). Turn right to walk to the west side of the park, and turn left down MacDougal Street. Walk until you come to Mamoun's Falafel at 119 MacDougal (it has a brown awning and will be on the right side of the street)**

Mamoun's falafel opened here on MacDougal Street in 1971. It was New York City's first falafel restaurant, and one of the first places to serve Middle Eastern food in the United States. Though there are multiple locations now, this original spot is a favorite. It is largely unchanged since its opening, and, though the menu is not large, it is fantastic.

Pretty obviously, from the name, they are best known for their falafel. If you have never had it before, falafel is made primarily from chickpeas. Its origins are likely in Egypt, but today it can be found in Lebanon, Syria, Israel, and all throughout the Middle East.

If you are looking to keep it sample sized, you can order just a side a falafel (3 little falafel balls). It will come with two options for a sauce. The tahini sauce is very mild and perfectly complements the falafel. Their dark red house chili sauce is not for the timid. It packs a lot of spice and a lot of flavor in just a little bit, so approach with caution if you are sensitive to spice. It is well worth a try if you love hot sauce though - they have become so known for this in-house sauce that they bottle it and sell it. A good choice is to mix the two sauces, for a medium spicy blend.

Though the falafel is the best-known item, they also offer shawarma and chicken kebabs, as well as hummus, babaganoush, grape leaves, and lentil soup. You can find more information at [www.mamouns.com](http://www.mamouns.com).

Mamoun's only accepts cash, but there is an ATM just outside the door.

If you are looking for some coffee, the place with the green sign next door is Café Reggio. Café Reggio was opened in 1927 by Domenico Parisi, the man who introduced cappuccino to New York City. His espresso machine was made in 1902 and is still on display inside. This is a great place to sit down and enjoy a coffee while you are in the neighborhood.

When you are ready, walk down MacDougal on the same side of the street until you come to Artichoke Pizza at 111 MacDougal Street

## Artichoke Pizza

**Directions: When you are ready, walk down MacDougal on the same side of the street until you come to Artichoke Pizza at 111 MacDougal Street**

Artichoke Pizza was opened by Francis Garcia and Sal Basille, cousins from Staten Island. They opened their first Artichoke Pizza on 14th street in the east village 10 years ago. This location opened on MacDougal 1 street in (2010).

While they have several great slices available here, the star of the show is the artichoke pizza. Nothing about it is traditional New York pizza, from the thick crust to the artichoke cream sauce, but it is delicious. This sauce is a family recipe, and the ingredients are a closely

guarded secret. According to the owners, there are about 25 ingredients and each batch takes about 8 hours to make.

It is all worth it though when you try the pizza. It is pretty rich, so this is a great thing to bring along a friend or two for, to share. This is a popular late night spot, staying open into the early hours of the morning on weekends.

Even though the artichoke is the draw, they have some other unusual offerings, such as the crab and the vodka Sicilian pizzas, that are worth a try. A full list of their offerings can be found at [www.artichokepizza.com](http://www.artichokepizza.com).

If you are sharing your pizza today, just ask and the staff will cut the slices accordingly.

When you are finished, walk back to the corner at Minetta and MacDougal. Facing out the front door of Artichoke, this will be to your left. Café Wha will be on the corner.

## Cafe Wha? and Minetta Tavern

**Directions: When you are finished, walk back to the corner at Minetta and MacDougal. Facing out the front door of Artichoke, this will be to your left. Café Wha will be on the corner.**

This unassuming venue is a legend in the music world. It was originally opened as a coffeehouse by Manny Roth, uncle of Van Halen frontman David Lee Roth.

Early on, Mr. Roth would hold what he called hootenanny nights, where anybody could get up and play a couple of songs. On one of these nights, January 24, 1961, a nineteen-year-old told Mr. Roth that he had hitchhiked from Minnesota and wanted to see if he could play a few songs. After he played some Woody Guthrie songs, he told Roth that he didn't have a place to sleep. Manny Roth asked the crowd if anyone had a couch the kid could crash on. Fortunately, someone did, and that night was Bob Dylan's first performance in New York City.

Café Wha was a place for new talents to hone their skills. Jimi Hendrix, Bruce Springsteen, Lenny Bruce and Richard Pryor performed here early in their careers. A basket was passed around, and many of these now legendary performers received no more than tips. Mary Travers of Peter, Paul, and Mary started here as a waitress.

Today at Café Wha, the main act is the Café Wha House Band. They play a wide range of styles, from RNB to classic rock. They can be seen here every Wednesday through Sunday.

Other great spots to check out for live entertainment are The Blue Note for jazz, Groove for funk, soul and RnB, and The Comedy Cellar for some of the best stand up in the city.

On the corner opposite Café Wha is the Minetta Tavern. This was originally opened in 1937 and was named for the Minetta Brook. The tavern was a popular hangout for literary types. Over the years, it was frequented by Eugene O'Neill, Dylan Thomas, Ernest Hemingway, Ezra Pound, and EE Cummings. Today the Minetta Tavern is a Michelin starred restaurant, known for having one of the best burgers in New York.

Now walk down Minetta Lane until you come to Minetta Street on your left. Turn left and walk until you get to 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. Cross over 6<sup>th</sup> Ave, where you will see a small plaza and a large church up ahead.

## **Our Lady of Pompeii**

**Directions: Now walk down Minetta Land until you come to Minetta Street on your left. Turn left and walk until you get to 6th Ave. Cross over 6th Ave, where you will see a small plaza and a large church up ahead.**

The church ahead is Our Lady of Pompeii. The congregation was founded in the neighborhood in 1898. The area had become an enclave for Italian immigrants and a church that offered services in their native language was needed.

Just a couple of years later, in 1900, the charismatic 30-year-old Antonio Demo took control of the parish. He became a well-known figure to Italians all over New York City. In 1923, an expansion of 6th Ave was planned, and the church was squarely in the path of it. Father Demo was told his church had to be demolished, so he began efforts to purchase a new plot of land, out of the way of 6th Ave.

The building you see today was consecrated in 1926. The expansion of 6th Ave created an empty triangle of land diagonal from the church, and in 1941, it was named for Father Demo, who had passed away in 1935. Today, the church still houses an active Catholic congregation, and they still offer one weekly mass in Italian.

Now start walking down Bleecker (in the direction of the church) while you listen to this next part. You are looking for Faiccos, at 260 Bleecker. You will see a blue and white striped awning out front.

The street you are now walking down is Bleecker Street. This is one of the best-known thoroughfares in the Village. It is named for Anthony Bleecker, a banker, and merchant. The road ran right through his family farm. He owned about 160 acres in this area, and in 1808, he deeded the land for the road to the city. Over the years, the street became one of the most popular in the neighborhood. It has been immortalized in films, TV shows, songs, and novels. Simon and Garfunkel included a track called Bleecker Street on their debut album.

## **Faicco's Italian Specialties**

Faiccos has been in the neighborhood since 1900, when Edward Faicco, who had emigrated from Sorrento Italy in 1896, opened on Thompson Street. In the 1940s, the store was moved to its present location on Bleecker by Edward's son, Joseph.

Though Faiccos is called a pork store, it is really a specialty shop that caters to home chefs making any Italian dishes. They also have a take away counter in the back, making specialty sandwiches and other treats.

Our recommendation for a quick bite is their rice balls or arancini. Arancini, from the Italian word for little orange, is said to have originated in Sicily in the 10th century and is now made all over Italy. It is a ball of risotto, cheese, and spices coated with fine breadcrumbs. Faiccos offers these with meat or without, so order whatever sounds best to you. This shop hasn't changed very much since it opened in this location, and it is currently being run by the 4th

generation of Faicco owners, Eddie Faicco. It is a great shop to look around for a while, so take your time here!

When you are finished, continue walking down Bleecker until you come to 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. Cross over to the other side of Bleecker Street to the little wooden building painted red on the corner.

## **Bleecker Street Pizza**

**Directions: When you are finished, continue walking down Bleecker until you come to 7th Ave. Cross over to the other side of Bleecker Street to the little wooden building painted red on the corner.**

This corner spot is home to one of the best slices in the city. Bleecker street pizza opened 11 years ago and quickly made a name for itself with their Nonna Maria Pizza. In Italian, Nonna means grandmother, and that is where this recipe originated.

The original owner of Bleecker street pizza, Doug Greenwood, opened up shop after 20 years with the NYPD and began serving the pizza he remembered his Tuscan grandmother serving to friends and family throughout his childhood.

The Nonna Maria slice at Bleecker is a faithful representation of her recipe. It starts in the morning with San Marzano tomatoes that go into a fresh batch of house-made sauce. Each pie has plenty of fresh basil and is finished with Parmigiana Reggiano cheese, imported from Italy. This cheese costs over 1000\$ a wheel and is on every pie in Bleecker Street. The bumps on the bottom of the crust are a mix of freshly made bread crumbs, Romano cheese, and spices, another original part of Grandma's recipe.

Grab any slice that looks good to you, but the Nonna Maria is a must-try! Bleecker Street pizza also has a restroom that customers can use, towards the back.

When you are finished, walk back down Bleecker (on the same side of the street you are now on). This will be back in the direction of Faicco's. Stop when you come to Bantam Bagels at 283 Bleecker. The sign is red.

## **Bantam Bagel**

**Directions: When you are finished, walk back down Bleecker (on the same side of the street you are now on). This will be back in the direction of Faicco's. Stop when you come to Bantam Bagels at 283 Bleecker. The sign is red.**

Bantam Bagels began in a dream. Nick Olesak, a graduate of Columbia University working in finance, dreamed about the miniature bagels one night and wrote a reminder on his phone so that he wouldn't forget by morning. He and his wife Elyse, also a Columbia grad, baked the first batch in their apartment kitchen the next day. After much testing, these filled bagel treats were ready for the public.

Eventually, they were ready to move from their own kitchen to this shop on Bleecker Street. Shortly after, they received the Oprah stamp of approval, when she put them on her "Favorite Things" list in 2014.

In 2015, they decided it was time to go national, and Nick and Elyse appeared on the reality show Shark Tank, where entrepreneurs pitch businesses to a panel of wealthy investors, hoping for financial backing in exchange for a portion of their company. Shark Lori made a deal with them and has helped to spread their idea across the country.

While they have been picked up by numerous distributors, this is still the only Bantam Bagels store in the country. They have both savory and sweet options, and they will toast them slightly when you order. There is a small hole on the side where the cream cheese gets filled in- make sure you bite into that side first, so you avoid a mess!

When you are finished, walk down Bleecker, back towards 6th Ave. When you reach Carmine Street, cross over to go to Moly's cupcakes, across the street from Father Demo Square. Molly's is painted yellow and is at 228 Bleecker Street.

## Molly's Cupcakes

**Directions: When you are finished, walk down Bleecker, back towards 6th Ave. When you reach Carmine Street, cross over to go to Moly's cupcakes, across the street from Father Demo Square. Molly's is painted yellow and is at 228 Bleecker Street.**

When you walk into Molly's Cupcakes, it is supposed to feel like going back to school. The tables and chairs are reminiscent of school desks, there are textbooks, board games and lunchboxes as decor, and playground swings to sit in. The front of the store is painted to look like a yellow school bus. This all points to the origin of this bakery. Molly was the name of the owner's 3rd-grade teacher. For every student's birthday, she baked cupcakes and brought them into school. This bakery is named in her honor, and a portion of their profits go to support educational organizations here in New York. So eat up- it's for a good cause.

If you are looking for something small, they have cake pops, and mini Molly's - little mini cupcakes. You can customize your own cupcake, choosing from a list of cake flavors, frosting flavors, and toppings (including vegan flavors). They also have some cupcakes that they have created, with various toppings and fillings. Some favorites are the chocolate sea salt caramel and the peach cobbler.

Molly's has been named Best Cupcake in New York by numerous sources and won the competition show Cupcake Wars. This is also a great spot to sit and relax for a while with a coffee and your cupcake and also has restrooms available for customers. If it is a nice day, grab your cupcake and enjoy the sunshine in Father Demo square!

## Closing

That's the end of our tour - hope you enjoyed trying some of the great food that Greenwich Village has to offer!

The closest subway is the ACEBDFM trains at the West 4th Street Station.

To see more of Greenwich Village, consider trying our neighborhood audio tour, or check out some different areas! We offer audio tours of Lower Manhattan, Midtown, The Brooklyn Bridge, and more. Or consider signing up for one of our pay-what-you-wish walking tours.

Check out [www.freetoursbyfoot.com](http://www.freetoursbyfoot.com) for more information. See you next time!