

# Attitudes

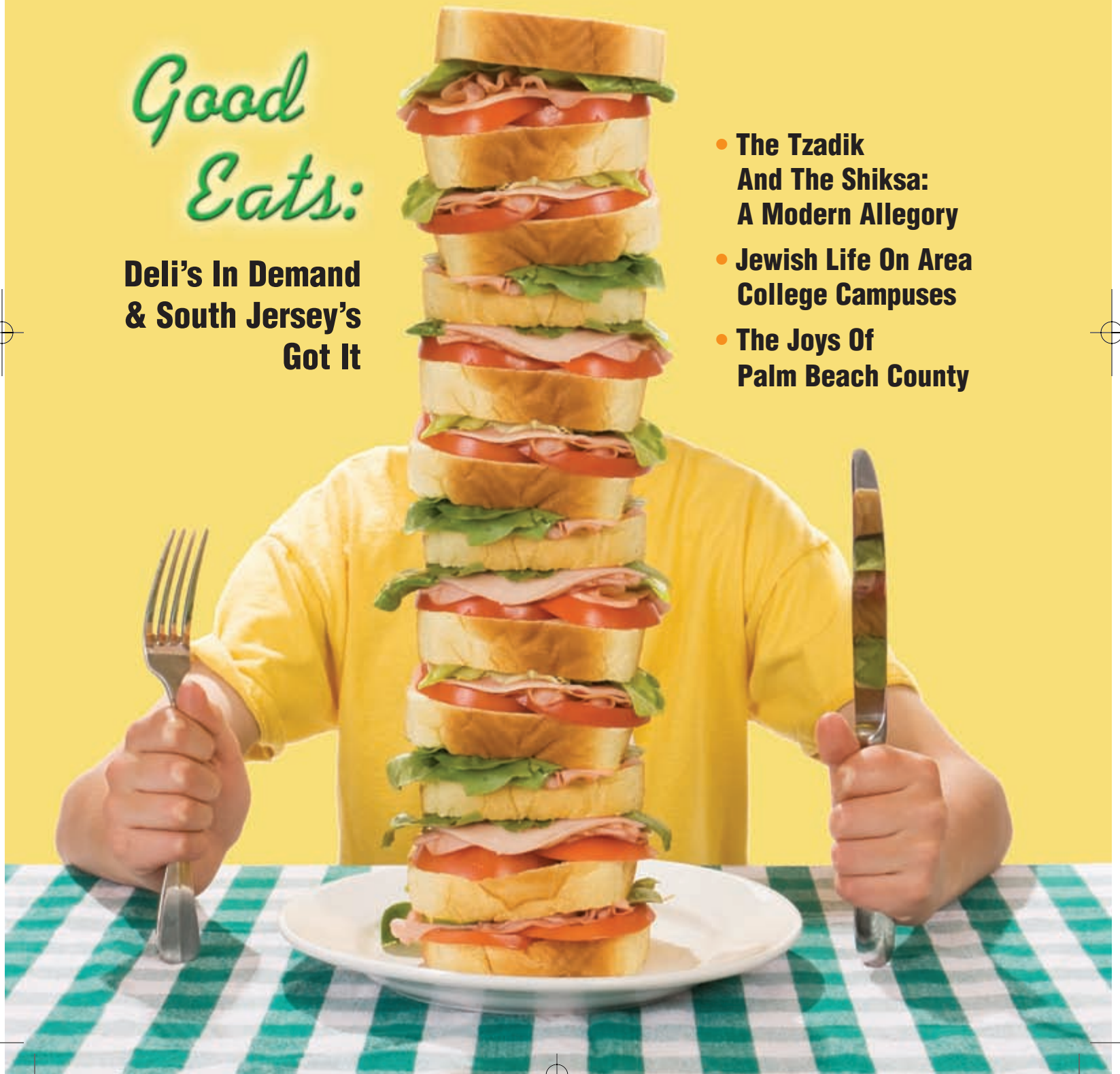
A Journal of Jewish Life and Style

FALL/WINTER 2009

## Good Eats:

**Deli's In Demand  
& South Jersey's  
Got It**

- **The Tzadik  
And The Shiksa:  
A Modern Allegory**
- **Jewish Life On Area  
College Campuses**
- **The Joys Of  
Palm Beach County**



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A Journal of Jewish Life and Style

VOLUME 12 NUMBER 1

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# Sneak Preview...

## The National Museum Of American Jewish History

*Technology will play a major role* In a little more than a year, thousands of visitors to the cradle of American Independence in the historic

Independence Park area of Philadelphia will be exploring a new museum about America's immigrant experience. The National Museum of American Jewish History is building a lavish six-story complex on the former site of KYW's television studios at the corner of Fifth and Market Streets.

The new museum replaces the cramped existing space the museum has shared with Congregation Mikveh Israel on Fifth Street, just north of the new site, since 1976.

This 100,000 square-foot facility will spread exhibits and interactive displays about American Jewish history over three permanent exhibit floors.

"This museum is about Jews, but by no means exclusively for Jews. The story of the American Jewish Experience is in many ways a very particular and unique story," says Michael Rosenzweig, the museum's president and CEO. "On the other hand, it is quintessentially the American immigrant experience that we're describing in this museum, and in that respect, the lessons to be derived are truly universal."

The museum's exterior terra cotta and glass design, by Polshek Partnership Architects, attempts to symbolize the fact that "the American Jewish community is fully part of American society and there is a transparency between the two," says Rosenzweig.

According to architect James S. Polshek "There have been few design challenges over the past 45 years of practice that equal those posed by the NMAJH.

"Two aspects of the commission account for

this. The first is the incomparably important public location on Independence Mall. The other is the central theme of the Museum: that although freedom must be incontrovertible, its guarantees are fragile. We believe we have met this dual challenge by express-

ing both place and mission in a way that honors American Judaism and the City of Brotherly Love."

The museum has an open, 85-foot high atrium with skylights illuminating the entrance, and open staircases from the ground floor to upper floors. The fifth floor of the museum will be used for special events and temporary exhibits.

Visitors will begin their main tour on the museum's fourth floor, where the story of American Jewish life begins with the arrival of the first Sephardic Jews in Nieuw Amsterdam (New York) in 1654. The permanent exhibits will take up 25,000 square feet of space on three floors, with examples from the museum's collection of more than 20,000 objects ranging from Colonial times to the present.

The museum will also include a Center for Jewish Education to serve school children, a 200-seat theater space, an event space overlooking Independence Mall (bar/bat mitzvah planners, start your engines!) and a gift shop.

The fourth floor exhibits will explore Jewish history through the beginning of the great surge of Eastern European immigration in the 1880s.

From there, the tour winds downward to the third floor's artifacts from the period 1880

*(Continued on page 36)*

BY  
STEVEN L.  
LUBETKIN



*Clockwise from top:*

- *Rendering of the atrium in the new National Museum of American Jewish History. Images © Polsbek Partnership Architects.*
- *Rendering of third-floor view of the atrium in the new National Museum of American Jewish History.*
- *Rendering of the entrance on Market Street of the new National Museum of American Jewish History. The façade facing Market Street is clad in terra cotta with warm tones that complement the brick structures of Philadelphia's historic center.*
- *Rendering of an "Only In America" gallery in the new National Museum of American Jewish History.*



## Museum

(Continued from page 34)

through World War II, and to the second floor through the present.

Technology will play a major role in the new museum, according to Josh Perelman, the museum's historian and deputy director for programming.

"Unlike other institutions that have to conform to the physical and narrative constraints of what exists at present, we're inventing something new," Perelman said. "It's an exciting opportunity to bring the telling of history of the American Jewish experience together with the most advanced technologies available to us at this time."

According to Perelman, the museum will use audio, video, and interactive technology to engage visitors in three main ways: Audio technology will provide subtle background cues such as sounds of children singing Hebrew songs and clearing tables in the mess hall at Jewish camps. And oral history recordings will present real accounts of

individual lives. Also, many of the exhibits will employ creative video installations. The museum is working with David Grubin, the producer of the *Jewish Americans* documentary (<http://www.pbs.org/jewishamericans/>) on PBS, to produce 12 films—some in the familiar documentary style, and others to be installed using unique filmic

### The museum will use audio, video, and interactive technology to engage visitors.

solutions, in complex installations.

Interactivity is, perhaps, the most sophisticated technology being used. Museum visitors will use touch-screens to learn more about some exhibits. Other interactive exhibits will permit "experiential role-playing," to allow visitors to get a feeling of what the immigrant experience was like — "immersive interactivity," in Perelman's words.

Another interactive approach will

allow visitors to enter and explore spaces that can't easily be contained in the museum, such as the architecture of post-World War II synagogues in the US.

Perelman envisions technology creating a dialogue between visitors and the museum, allowing them to "invest their own stories and ideas in the exhibition," and providing constant feedback between visitors and the museum. He cites determining "where history ends" for the museum's interpretive exhibits as a significant challenge the design team confronted.

"You have to pick a moment where history ends for the museum—a place we felt we could interpret up to this date or era—not to far in the past so that we won't alienate younger visitors," he explained.

An interactive system to pose questions to visitors, who then provide feedback that becomes content for the museum in the conversation about history and our understanding of it, will bridge that gap.

The conversations will be extended



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to the larger community via Internet, and Net participants will be able to inject their observations back into the museum conversation.

The museum already has an online community of followers via Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter, and a museum blog. The museum also posts photos to a Flickr.com photo site.

“It’s important that we maintain the standards and practices of a history museum,” using real artifacts and real photos, says Perelman. But we also need “to expand or extend story-telling possibilities with technology components.”

A component modeled after the popular National Public Radio feature “Story Corps,” is expected to be popular with visitors.

Called “It’s Your Story,” an oral history recording facility will allow visitors to record their own recollections, family stories, or other observations. Serving as part of a rich oral history project, the recordings will also be fed back into the museum as real-voice content for exhibits, and for audio-visual content on the museum’s website.

The “Only in America” Hall of Fame,

a permanent exhibit on the ground floor is guaranteed to stir debate. Here, 18 American Jews will be honored for their contributions in the areas of arts and entertainment; business and philanthropy; literature; performance; politics, law and activism; religion and thought; science and medicine; and sports.

The public was invited to vote on its choices for inclusion in the Hall of Fame, and more than 130,000 votes were cast before the poll was closed in August, according to museum president Rosenzweig. You can see the results on the museum’s “microsite” at <http://survey.nmajh.org/>. You can also see the inference that the vote may not be binding. (“The results will be reviewed by the Museum’s historians and the curatorial department and help guide the development of one of the centerpiece galleries,” the site explains.)

A large-scale film exhibition projected onto two large curved glass surfaces will illustrate this exhibit, bringing together genealogy, geography, original documents and artifacts, stories, and “love letters,” with contemporary people talking about the impact of history’s

greats on their own lives.

“In four years of working on the project, very often we’ve found technologies that we thought were cutting edge were surpassed by others,” said Perelman. “We’re using technology in new ways, but not in ways that override the core story of the museum and the original artifacts in exhibition.”

Fundraising for the new museum seems to be on target, according to museum officials.

“We face many logistical challenges, and financial challenges, and we are doing this during a period of great financial and economic stress in our country,” said Rosenzweig. “A building of this magnitude requires significant funding.”

The museum’s capital and endowment campaign is attempting to raise \$150 million, and had garnered more than \$120 million (including a \$1 million capital donation from Steven Spielberg’s Righteous Persons Foundation in 2008). The Museum’s web page dedicated to the new facility (<http://www.nmajh.org/buildourfuture.aspx>) boasts an icon of the building

*(Continued on page 51)*

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himself, who represents the “F” in this popular deli’s name. The “M” stands for his mother Maria who passed away in 2006 at the age of 84.

Maria owned and operated Tony’s, a neighborhood grocery on Rte. 70 in Cherry Hill, which morphed into a delicatessen featuring fresh meats and cold cuts. Felix was a high school student on the west side of Cherry Hill, learning secret recipes while working in “H & M deli,” honing his craft in the produce, deli and meat departments of the late Stanley Ravitz’s “Shop n Bag” on Chapel Rd., and helping his mom on the side.

In 1968, when an opportunity to open a store in Roberts Mill Plaza in Mt. Laurel arose, the Fezzouglios, including siblings Joanne and Dan, jumped at it.

“Bang! It was a smash the day it opened,” said Felix. Now, his customer bank of loyal families requires 10 trucks to provide catering for life cycles such as brits, baby namings, and b’nai mitzvah, not to mention corporate functions.

“Anybody can use garlic and salt and pepper. Our secret ingredient is in loving what we do,” said Paul Rayfield, who calls himself the assistant to the main man. One of Rayfield’s specialties is the spinach and mushroom stuffed meat loaf that, prominently displayed on top of the counter, was such a tease I had to order it for lunch. First, though, I enjoyed F&M’s matzah ball soup. With chunks of white chicken and noodles floating around the huge, airy matzah ball, the soup was so tasty that I decided to skip making my holiday soup from scratch, in favor of buying it from F & M’s stock pot, where 120 gallons of broth and a batch of 150 balls were brewing.

The best selling deli meat here is corned beef, said Felix, who is in his 60s and says that he doesn’t really have a favorite dish. “Look at my size,” joked the robust owner. “Obviously, I like everything.”

He also likes the blend of vivid colors that decorate his restaurant, displaying an American flag in the rear along with an old juke box and a purple ceiling. And he enjoys the camaraderie of the repeat customers who come in and hang over the case, shooting the breeze about sports and politics while ordering hand-sliced lox or homemade thick whitefish salad.

For the health oriented, the far-ranging

menu has a fat-free sandwich board, reduced fat hoagies, and light salad platters.

**F & M RESTAURANT/DELICATESSEN.** Roberts Mill Plaza, Church Road, Mt. Laurel Twp. (856) 235-7245. Open 7 days for delivery and catering, private parties. Another location in Ocean City, N.J. 🐾

\* The South Jersey restaurants are not kosher.

## Museum

(Continued from page 37)

used as a gauge of the campaign status. As of press time, it showed the cam-

paign at 78% of its target.

“The core principle around which the museum’s mission revolves is the importance of freedom,” says Rosenzweig. “There’s no better place, there’s no more appropriate place to locate a museum dedicated to telling the story of freedom than historic Philadelphia.” 🐾

*Steve Lubetkin writes frequently for Attitudes and regularly for the Jewish Community Voice. Watch his video podcast about the new museum at [www.compuschmooze.com](http://www.compuschmooze.com).*

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