

## Main Dish



WITH  
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### The Jackson House: The best little burger joint on this side of the Susquehanna

By [Erica Streisfeld](#) – published September 5, 2014

For years, my underground foodie sources have been talking up the burgers at one particular hole-in-the-wall in downtown Harrisburg. And, for years, I've somehow never made it there — until now.

Near North Sixth and Boas streets, [The Jackson House](#) is everything that [Five Guys](#), [Sonic](#) and [McDonald's](#) aren't. To be clear, this place is not fast, cheap, spacious or pretty. But it does serve what I would be so bold as to say is the best burger for miles.

After all the buildup — particularly from my fiancé, who is known by name at The Jackson House — I'm not sure what I was expecting. I try to prepare myself for disappointment in these foodie scenarios. But, boy, was I wrong.

We made the pilgrimage on a random Monday, which I hear is a good time to go, as there's typically a line out the door on payday Fridays. The sign outside says it's been open since 1982, and I bet not much has changed about The Jackson House since then.

We sauntered inside and hopped in line. I was soon faced with a sea of signs handwritten on bits of poster board and paper plates: "Our burgers take time to cook," "Large takeout? If you did not call it in, fuhgeddaboutit" and "Cash only." The best way to describe this place is old-school — like a cross between a traditional Italian deli and a local diner — but that's part of its charm.



The Jackson burger with melted American cheese, bacon, lettuce, tomato and special sauce at The Jackson House, Harrisburg. - (Photo / Erica Streisfeld)

After all those messages hitting me on the way in, I was a wee bit nervous to place my order. But my apprehension was unseated as soon as Cory greeted us. Cory runs the register while his brother, Chris, makes the cold subs. Their father and Jackson House owner, Dave, works the grill. Connie, who may or may not be a family relation, serves the food. That's how it always is here, and never do their roles interchange. In fact, I've heard that on days when Dave is not around, the grill is simply not in operation, meaning no burgers. Instead, they might offer a special menu item such as Italian roast pork, which is made up ahead of time. It's a quirky business model, yet somehow it works.

But let's start talking about the food. I figured for my inaugural visit it was most appropriate for me to order the Jackson burger — melted American cheese, smoked bacon, lettuce, tomato and special sauce — with a side of fresh-cut fries, of course. Seriously, there's a reason Jackson House plasters "award-winning burgers" all over the place. The burger was the perfect thickness — not like those wimpy fast-food ones — and expertly cooked on the grill — juicy but with a nice char on the outside. The bacon was crispy, and the lettuce and tomato were ultra fresh. The fries were boardwalk-style-esque, which is perfection in my book.

Next time, I'm trying a sub, as I hear the cheesesteaks and Italian subs are out of this world.

**If you go to The Jackson House, remember that it's only open 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday. Bring cash, and be prepared to wait in line!**