

TOP FIVE / Delis

BY ERICA MARCUS

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The word “deli” has come to characterize a store that prepares a vast array of sandwiches that are quickly assembled, wrapped and dispatched to on-the-go customers. Once upon a time, though, “deli” was short for “kosher delicatessen,” a restaurant that specialized in the cured meats and hearty fare of a Jewish immigrant community that adapted its Eastern European cuisine to life in the American city. Long Island is lucky to have a number of great kosher and kosher-style delis. Ben’s chain of seven delis (bensdeli.net) is always dependable; here are five more fine establishments.

Kensington Deli, 27A Middle Neck Rd., Great Neck, 516-487-2410. A fixture in Great Neck for more than 30 years, there’s not much more to Kensington Deli than a long counter and a row of booths opposite it. Kensington doesn’t deviate very far from the traditional: Kosher franks, corned beef, pastrami, tongue, brisket, roast beef, turkey, salami, bologna, chopped liver, chicken salad and tuna-fish salad can be had as regular sandwiches or “extra-heavy combination sandwiches.” Service is exceedingly friendly.

Andel’s Delicatessen, 350 Roslyn Rd., Roslyn Heights, 516-621-9858. Andel’s motto is “We ain’t just lox,” an allusion to this venerable shop’s first incarnation as an “appetizing” store specializing in smoked fish. Now, under the direction of Jonathan Geschwind, Andel’s handles all kosher-food needs — not only sable, carp, sturgeon, whitefish, chubs, pickled lox, herring (matjes or schmaltz in wine sauce) and almost a dozen incarnations of salmon, but also Hebrew National meats, savory sides, soups and salads. Many customers have been coming for decades, others drive far out of their way to kibbitz with whomever is behind the counter.

Pastrami King, 196 Merrick Rd., Merrick, 516-377-1100. Pastrami King has strayed quite a distance from its kosher roots — dairy products abound; the Southern-fried chicken and Cobb salad are both quite respectable. But the chicken soup, knishes and flanken are unimpeachable, and the big three of deli meats — corned beef, pastrami and tongue — are first-rate. (Ask them to heat up the tongue.)

Lido Kosher Deli, 641 Park Ave., Long Beach, 516-431-4411. It’s not for nothing that Lido Deli proclaims that it has been “serving America’s most demanding kosher deli customers for three generations.” Nassau’s Five Towns and surrounding environs provide fertile

ground for delis (King David in Cedarhurst and Woodro in Hewlett are two other good choices). More than Lido’s fried kreplach and stuffed breast of veal (on Friday and Saturday), we like the place’s spirit, embodied in such menu items as the heartburn wrap: sliced franks, sauerkraut, hot onions, relish and mustard. “Try it with sliced hot peppers for an additional 75 cents.”



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Zan’s Kosher Delicatessen Restaurant & Caterer, 135 Alexander Ave., Lake Grove, 631-979-8770. With a seating capacity of 300, Zan’s is one of Long Island’s largest kosher establishments and its colorful murals depicting Brooklyn’s Golden Age make it one of the Island’s most attractive. Zan’s cures its own meats, makes its own fries from scratch, and the food is uniformly good. Try the darkly savory egg-barley with mushroom.