

Hungry Enough to Eat a Horseshoe? Illinois Road Food Attractions

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Cheese Sauce Is an Important Ingredient - *xandert*

It's what to eat in Illinois. The horseshoe is a famously cheesy, meaty, saucy and indulgent sandwich served at some of the best restaurants in Springfield.

Springfield, Illinois, restaurant fans love to weigh in about who has the best horseshoe sandwich. It's Springfield's local and road food legend. A typical horseshoe is so layered, ladled and laden with rich, high-calorie fare that when waiters deliver the piping-hot platter, diners may just say, "Whoa!"

Springfield's Horseshoe History

The original horseshoe was assembled in 1928 at Springfield's [Leland Hotel](#) by Executive Chef Joe Schweska. Springfield's Red Coach Inn and other restaurants later served the horseshoe sandwich or variations of it. There were some reports that Leland staff who had moved on to other restaurants invented the horseshoe. They may have contributed to later variations. However, Tony Leone, Springfield's resident "horseshoe historian," says it's "indisputable" that Chef Schweska was the original 'Shoe Chef.

Leone, who owns Springfield's historic [Pasfield House Inn](#) and serves on the Illinois Historic Preservation Board, says it is well documented that Schweska created the original horseshoe sandwich.

The Pasfield House Inn won "Best Breakfast Horseshoe" honors for an adaptation of its popular Egg Strata, 'shoe-style, in the World Horseshoe Cookoff. The event coincided with the 100th anniversary World Horseshoe Pitching Tournament, hosted by Springfield in 2009. Leone earned the "horseshoe historian" title when the [Wall Street Journal](#) did a feature story on the competitive Horseshoe sandwich tradition.

The Leland Hotel and Red Coach Inn are no longer in operation, but the progressively bigger 'shoe and its endless variations still appear on menus in many of the best restaurants in Springfield, Illinois.

A Springfield, Illinois, Road Food Original – How the Horseshoe Sandwich Earned its Name

Springfield's first horseshoe sandwich recipe was placed on a hot metal steak platter, which resembled an anvil. Two thick slices of toasted bread represented hooves, which were topped with sizzling, horseshoe-shaped ham and fried eggs. Crisp potato wedges encircled the platter, representing nails. The crowning touch was a flavorful Welsh rarebit cheese sauce drizzled over the top.

Classic variations of the sauce may contain dry mustard, cayenne pepper, an egg mixture, roux, Worcestershire or A-1 sauce, or other proprietary ingredients, melted and often sprinkled with paprika for flavor and contrast. There are beer- and wine-based sauces and other recipes that have literally and figuratively mushroomed. (You can add Portabella mushrooms to your "Snowshoes" at [Westwoods Lodge](#) and to horseshoes at other establishments.)

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- [Springfield's Mane Event: A World Horseshoe Cook-Off Horse Race](#)

For years, a basic white-bread toast, hamburger and Cheddar cheese version was a Springfield restaurant favorite. The ponyshoe – a scaled down, but still substantial version - eventually emerged for lighter appetites. Horseshoes continue to evolve and are on most restaurant menus in town, including national affiliates, such as Steak and Shake.

Some of the Best Springfield, Illinois, Restaurant 'Shoe Chefs Hit the Sauce

Springfield, Illinois restaurants' horseshoe sandwich tradition is as competitive as it is creative. Patrons vote for their favorites in formal and informal polls. There are almost as many opinions as there are options. The typically cheese-based sauce is especially important. It may include Worcestershire sauce, Tabasco, paprika, butter, aged Cheddar, white sauce, mozzarella or even sausage gravy.

Others, such as Buffalo-wing 'shoes may come with a side of hot sauce or blue-cheese dressing. The fried pork tenderloin horseshoe is a fan favorite, and there are also pizza, Mexican, Italian, Irish and Cajun horseshoes, to name just a few.

Springfield Restaurants Serve Horseshoe Sandwiches for Every Taste and Time of Day

Springfield Illinois, restaurants serve savory horseshoes from morning to night. Breakfast horseshoes typically include the classic toast base plus hash browns, bacon, ham, sausage and eggs, or vegetables and other ingredients. [D'Arcy's Pint](#), the [Dublin Pub](#), [Ritz's](#) and [Charlie Parker's](#) Springfield diner are among many popular 'shoe stops.

Charlie Parker's breakfast horseshoe includes toast, eggs and ham, bacon or sausage, with gravy, cheese sauce or both. Diners can choose their tater - hash browns or seasoned fries. The Dublin Pub offers a ponyshoe bar featuring everything from burgers to bacon, choice of cheeses, and even walleye on Friday.

From classic recipes and build-a-shoe bars to a la carte menus, discriminating but patient patrons can, ultimately, find their own idea of the perfect 'shoe. Options range from no-nonsense canned nacho sauce to gourmet culinary delights.

Springfield restaurants serve horseshoes with varied potato ingredients, too. They may be seasoned potato wedges, tater tots, crinkle-cut, waffle-cut or wedge-cut fries, and crisp hash browns. Meat options include hamburger patties, Italian beef, Cajun chicken, Mexican tortillas, BBQ beef, roast beef, Italian sausage and Buffalo chicken wings, or even walleye, shrimp, rib-eye steak, corned beef or breaded chicken breasts.

Springfield Foodies Count Comfort Food, Not Calories

Horseshoe sandwiches are not for the calorie-conscious or those who rarely deviate from a healthful diet. But many fans think the occasional indulgence is worth every rich and flavorful calorie. Some people diet for days or even weeks prior to savoring a 'shoe. Others have a "chow down today and diet later" philosophy. Still others consider it a "once in awhile" treat or a well-earned reward for accomplishing a big goal.

Sampling Springfield's long list of horseshoe options is a long-term endeavor. To fully appreciate the full range of meaty, saucy, cheesy options, restaurant patrons will want to come hungry and come back often.

Other Springfield, Illinois, Attractions

Springfield Restaurants' Many Horseshoes Varieties - A Closer Look at What's on the Menu

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[A Route 66 History - the Road Trip Starts Here](#)

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