

# Paris Baguette Revisited: The Betrayal Continues

By Joshua Powell | The Powell House Press

*I went back. I shouldn't have.*



*Photo by The Powell House Press*

I wanted to be wrong.

That's the thing about being a critic (even an armchair one like me) - you *want* to be proven wrong sometimes. You want to walk back into a place six months later, order something, and think, *Well, I'll be damned. They figured it out.* You want the redemption arc. The comeback story. The Rocky moment where the underdog rises from the mat and earns your slow clap.

Paris Baguette in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania gave me no such satisfaction.

I walked in today with something I rarely extend twice: an open mind. Maybe my earlier visits - four of them, each more depressing than the last - were anomalies. Maybe the soggy tuna sandwich, the single-slice-of-avocado turkey wrap, and the rubber-egg croissant were just bad days. Every restaurant has bad days.

Paris Baguette, it turns out, doesn't have bad days. It has a business model.

The scene was familiar. Display cases that should be showcasing the crown jewels of French-inspired baking sat nearly empty, like a museum after a heist. The few remaining items looked like they were

counting down the hours until someone mercifully threw them away. Staff members - present in body if not in spirit - huddled in conversation with each other while customers waited with the quiet resignation of people at the DMV.

I ordered the Turkey and Cheddar Twist Roll and a San Pellegrino. Nine dollars and forty-nine cents. Not a budget-busting price for lunch, but still way too much for what I got.



*The selection, around 12:45pm. Photo by The Powell House Press*

What arrived from the steel box (not sure if it is a microwave or a convection oven) on the counter was an insult dressed up in pastry dough. Between the folds of what generously could be called a croissant lay a single slice of processed turkey - the kind that comes in those vacuum-sealed packs your college roommate kept in the mini-fridge - and a slice of orange cheese that, once heated, took on the appearance and texture of plastic left on a dashboard in August. The dominant flavor profile? Grease and salt. Not in the satisfying, guilty-pleasure way of good diner food, but in the industrial, mass-produced way of something that was never meant to be enjoyed - only consumed.

This was a high school cafeteria lunch. And not from one of those progressive districts with farm-to-table programs. I'm talking Reagan-era USDA surplus food - the kind that arrived on pallets and came with government paperwork. The kind where "cheese" was a classification, not a description.

And the atmosphere matched the menu. Snow outside means wet floors - that's forgivable, expected even. But filthy tables? Empty display cases gathering dust? This isn't weather. This is neglect. This is either an absentee owner checking deposits from a beach somewhere, or someone who knows nothing about food service and cares even less about learning. Either way, the customer is the one who pays - literally and figuratively.



*The actual picture of my sandwich. Taken with my RayBan Meta glasses. Photo by The Powell House Press*

I want to support the local food service industry. I genuinely do. Restaurants are hard. Margins are thin. Staffing is a nightmare. I know all of this, and I write about it with empathy whenever I can. But there's a difference between a place that's struggling and a place that's surrendered. Paris Baguette hasn't just waved the white flag - it's most likely dirty too.

It would be immoral - and I don't use that word lightly - to recommend this place to anyone. To send a friend, a colleague, a stranger - *Hell an enemy* here would be an act of cruelty disguised as a lunch suggestion.



*For those old enough to remember "where's the beef," the Paris Baguette conjures the phrase but with turkey.*

*Photo by The Powell House Press*

So here's my updated advice, revised from my original review and somehow even more emphatic: **don't go!** Save your \$9.49. Buy yourself a decent sandwich from literally anywhere else. Make one at home with grocery store deli meat and a slice of actual cheese and you'll have already outperformed Paris Baguette's entire culinary operation.

I'd sooner recommend a vacation in the Congo than a return trip to this place.

At least there, you'd get an adventure for your money.

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