

Take a Break

Caffeine—and calories—galore

ANYONE taking a late-day stroll in search of coffee or tea and something sweet would notice that Harvard Square has moved happily beyond the multiple Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts outlets—but almost to a ludicrous point.

Most lavish are newcomers Tatte Bakery & Café and Flour. Both offer European-style baked goods in brightly lit, airy spaces, and loads of counter staff.

Tatte (www.tattebakery.com), near the Harvard Book Store, has tiled floors and glass cases brimming with a lifetime's supply of sugary treats: brownies, glossy fruit tarts, nut tarts, cups of cheesecake and tiramisu, along with “chocolate coconut cloud” meringues the size of salad plates (\$3.25-\$6). Define decadence by the “Halva Bomb,” a chocolate-mousse cake wrapped around a core of halva, and covered with

dark-chocolate ganache (\$7 a slice/\$50 for the whole, eight-inch shebang). Coffee drinks are perfectly percolated. That partly explains the buzzing vibe that pervades

Tatte's two floors. Swing by for fresh-baked bread after 4:30 p.m.

On the other end of the Square, on Mount Auburn Street, the latest branch of Flour (www.flourbakery.com), founded and run by chef Joanne Chang '91, also serves terrific coffee, but in a less hectic setting. The cakes are divine—a lemon-raspberry option is layered with lemon curd (\$6/slice)—and the *kouign-amann* (that's *kween ah-mon*) is a butter-rich Breton pastry with caramelized sugar (\$4). The *brioche au chocolat* (\$3.50) lifts any sour mood, as does the dreamy coconut-cream pie (\$5 a slice/\$30 a pie).

More casual and bubbly is Crema (www.cremacambridge.com), on Brattle Street. It's a



Flour's light-filled interior (right) and baked treats, like lemon-raspberry cake (above); breads at Tatte Bakery (left); Jenny's Café, a minimalist's dream (far left), serves hot drinks and pastry (top left).

prized meeting spot, despite the shared farmhouse table and backless stools in the front. (The rear mezzanine is more private.) Artisanal George Howell coffee comes in all permutations, and the baked goods feel more home-grown than the art forms at Flour and Tatte. Especially good are the cookies: try chocolate walnut mudslide (\$2.25), or the giant oatmeal (\$3.25).

Akin to Crema, but more of a neighborhood haunt, is Petsi Pies (www.petsipies.com) on Putnam Avenue, just outside the Square. Walls feature local artwork and customers—students, parents with children, and a host of laptopers—tend to settle in. Amazing pies *do* predominate: pecan, mixed berry, and apple crumble are reliably

on hand (\$5 a slice/\$26 whole). But there's other delectable stuff, too: the blueberry-almond tea bread (\$3) and the “magic” bars jammed with chocolate and peanut-butter chips, pecans, and shredded coconut (\$3). Petsi's big airy scones, notably the buttermilk currant (\$2.25) are the best around.

Hidden away, but a perfect place to read, write, or meet a friend, is Jenny's Café, at the Harvard Art Museums (www.harvardartmuseums.org). Open to the public without an admission fee, the café serves drinks like cinnamon French toast latte and bergamot iced tea, and patrons can sit at tables in the adjacent Calderwood Courtyard. Take a break before or after moseying through the galleries: they offer unusually close views of works by Van Gogh, Munch, Matisse, and others. On loan from the Musée d'Orsay through July is Winslow Homer's lyrical painting *Summer Night* (1890).

On Bow Street, Café Pamplona (www.



FROM TOP: COURTESY OF CREMA (1) AND PETSIS/PIES (2)

Crema has a cozy mezzanine (top). At Petsi Pies, the caffeine pairs well with homemade “pop tarts” and muffins.

cafeamplona.weebly.com) is still a soft place to land in the afternoon. Try artfully prepared espresso, cappuccino, or a pot of tea. Light fare is available, too, and the place is open until midnight, a respite from the thumping bar scene.

Algiers Coffeehouse (www.harvard-square.com/algiers), another beloved icon, is in front of the Brattle Theatre. Its interior red-painted walls, many mirrors, octagonal café tables, and a soaring wood-paneled domed ceiling resemble a jewelry box. The baked goods are generic, but go instead for the ambient warmth, breakfast and Middle Eastern food served all day, and its drinks. The Arabic coffee with cardamom (\$3.25) packs a wallop; the smoky lapsung souchong tea (\$3.25) soothes. (The café is now run by the owner of Central Square’s Andala Coffee House—another relaxing, Middle Eastern-styled haunt with strong brews.)

A last word, on teas. Dado (www.dadotea.com), with locales on Church Street and Mass. Ave., takes equal care with coffee concoctions and with loose teas steeped in a mug or pot—and the place is relatively quiet. But Tealuxe (www.tealuxe.com) takes the (tea) cake. More than a hundred high-quality teas are on hand in tins behind the counter, and brews rotate daily. Staffers patiently and aptly describe any of them, and sniffs from the tins are encouraged. The shortage of seats is less of a problem in warm weather: customers can take their cups of royal coconut pouchong or turmeric ginger, sweetened with organic honey, to a bench by the Charles River. ~N.P.B.

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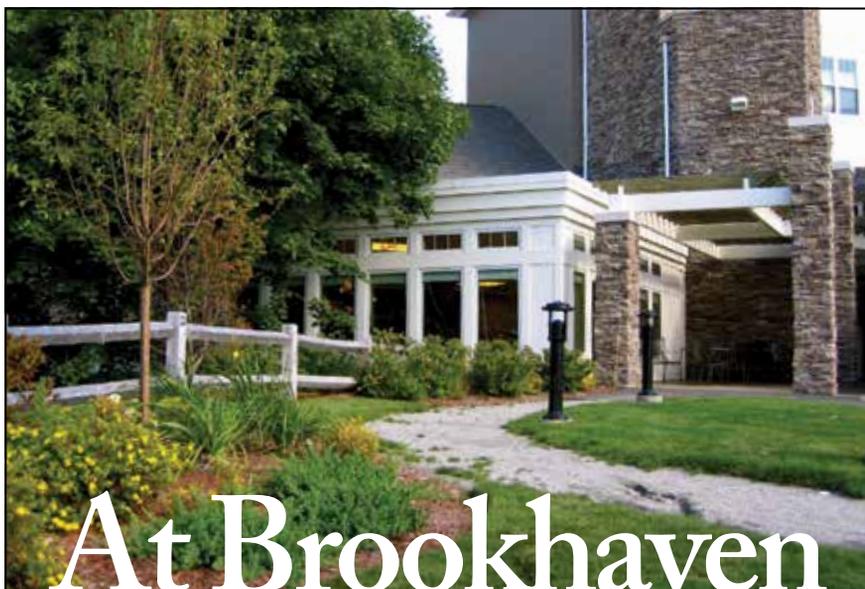
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