

Good Bread, At Last

of her contact with the sentient world.

outlines



Seth Baum

by Seth Baum

I grew up here in America, but visited family in France several times throughout the years. While this has not made me hate America, freedom, or even french fries (so-named because they were introduced to American soldiers during WWI who thought they were in France when they were actually in Belgium), it has made me wonder why we lack the little bakeries France has on so many of its street corners, and their style of unassuming yet thoroughly wonderful bread. Such establishments are a longstanding institution over there; over here, we just don't seem to get it.

Or do we? Two recent experiences have made me optimistic that the day of better loaves may be not only coming, but barreling down upon us.

It all started the morning after a hard day's night at Boston Beer Works. Still hung over, I decided to swing by Harvest Co-op in Jamaica Plain for a loaf of day-

old bread, the staple of my existence. As I was crossing South Street, I noticed from the balloons and big signs that a new bakery, Fiore's, was opening next door, and I decided to check it out.

Not only did they have no chairs, tables, or wall decorations, they only had one kind of bread, but they assured me that more were on the way. At least they had bread; I went to a bakery in Inman Square and all they had were pastries. What a waste of space.

The bread they did have was delightful; thick braids, light and chewy on the inside, crispy on the outside, perfect for tearing off pieces and eating while waiting in line at the Post Office. The sesame seed-topped crust had a distinct earthy flavor, as if baked in an ancient wood-burning oven in the kitchen of a musky castle deep in the heart of Transylvania on a dark night by a raggedy old hunched-over woman, cackling to herself as she put another lump of fresh dough in, removed another masterpiece, and fed it to the 35 cats who are the extent

A week later, my Ugandan friend Clay and I had both just finished finals and wanted to get out. He, a first-year, hadn't explored Boston much, so I took him to the North End. Floating through its splendidly cozy little streets, I explained that much of Europe is built like this, and that, unfortunately, this is perhaps the only such neighborhood in America.

After a dinner of gnocchi, pasta, and, of course, table bread, dipped in seasoned olive oil, we hit the streets for dessert. It was already late, and both Mike's and Modern Pastry were already closed. We drifted a bit more, landing at Bova's Bakery, which, rare for this early-bird town, is open 24 hours. We satiated our sweet teeth, and I picked up a loaf of whole wheat Tuscan bread for home—unsliced, so it would stay fresher.

Whole wheat is often heavy and dense, but, when slicing this loaf the next morning, the bread knife sunk into it as if diving through a sea of pillows. Bova's magicians somehow snuck the hearty flavor of whole wheat into an airy delight.

Though not even Boston, the most Euro town in America, can yet match Paris's corner bakeries, it does deserve more credit than I previously gave it. And the more we enjoy those most worthy bakeries that we already have, the more we'll pave the way for even more. **WU**

Though not even Boston, the most Euro town in America, can yet match Paris's corner bakeries, it does deserve more credit than I previously gave it.

Fiore's Bakery is at 55 South St. in Jamaica Plain, and is open weekdays from 7am-7pm, Saturdays from 8am-6pm, and Sundays from 9am-5pm. Bova's is at 74 Prince St. in the North End, near the corner of Salem Street. Like Seth said, they're open all day, every day.

Seth is on his way to Transylvania right now for the holidays. Oh wait, that's Pittsburgh. He wrote about urban planning and successful communities in our September 2004 issue.

The bread at Fiore's (above) on South Street in Jamaica Plain is chewy, earthy, and generally beautiful.