Jenny Shinsky

A Sense of Place

As I walked in, I immediately felt relief from the frigid temperature outside. Smells of bagels and breads danced in the air. There was a small round table with a tray of bread to sample. Just ahead of that was a huge display of cookies, pastries, scones, bread and bagels that were all made fresh that day. Four large coffee urns lined a small counter. Two were regular and the others were decaffeinated. This made it easy for customers to pour their own coffee and also made the ordering line move faster.

I walked to the counter and ordered my lunch and a half dozen of cinnamon bagels. The menu has a variety of sandwiches, soups and salads. This day, I chose the soup and sandwich combo with the cream of broccoli soup and one half of a chicken salad sandwich on sourdough bread. As a bonus, I received a small baguette on the side. After receiving the bag of bagels I headed to the soda fountain area and filled my cup with freshly brewed iced tea.

I knew it would be a few minutes before my lunch would be ready so I turned to the dining area to find a seat. Sounds of jazz music played softly in the background. Several rustic, orange walls divided the restaurant into several small cozy rooms. One room had two wingback chairs with a small round coffee table in between them. It was a perfect spot for two to chat and drink coffee. The second room had an intimate feel with lights hung low from the ceiling and paintings on the walls. A small fireplace radiated warmth with a table next to it. I decided not to sit at this particular table as it would eventually get too warm so I moved on.

One window framed the outside wall and overlooked several stores such as Target, Marshalls and Kohls. I sat at a table next to the window and waited for my lunch. I looked at the paintings in more detail and noticed a portrait of a woman holding a large loaf of bread. The other paintings were of different types of breads.

Several of the customers were eating alone just like me. Two women were sitting at the table next to me. They were discussing work related issues with a bit of office gossip. A young woman was working on her laptop as she ate. She had a textbook lying next to her so I assumed she was in college.

A few tables were placed together to accommodate 12 women. They were celebrating a birthday. One of them had brought a big round cake that sat in the middle of the table while they ate their lunch. My eyes went to the fireplace and I noticed that a couple had decided to sit by it and enjoy their meal. I could hear pagers going off telling customers their orders were ready. I watched the couple by the fireplace walk up to the counter, deposit their buzzer and pick up their food.

I glanced outside the window to see hungry customers walking into the building all bundled in coats, hats and gloves to protect them from the cold. As they entered the restaurant, I could see relief in their faces as the warm air and the smell of baked goods hit them.

The bag with cinnamon bagels I purchased sat on the table. I glanced into the bag. The bagels had crunchy cinnamon on the outside and smelled like heaven. I pictured myself eating one the next morning with jelly or cream cheese.

My buzzer went off and I collected my lunch, sat down and began to eat. The chicken salad sandwich contained big slices of chicken mixed with mayonnaise, celery, chopped almonds and sliced grapes. One may think twice about grapes being in their chicken salad but they add a sweet taste and compliment the salad. The cream of broccoli soup had nice sized pieces of broccoli with cheese. The baguette was not warm but fresh. The outside was crusty and hard and the inside was soft. It was perfect for pulling apart and dipping into the soup.

In the middle of eating, a woman sat down at the table next to me. She ordered the same soup and sandwich combo as me but instead of the cream of broccoli soup she had the French onion. A woman who walked into the restaurant recognized the two women sitting at the table next to me. She walked over to them and they discussed sales going on at the stores that day.

I finished my meal and headed back to the soft drink area to refill my iced tea. One of my favorite items in this restaurant is the iced tea. I love to refill my cup before I leave so I can have it with me for the rest of the day. I walked out of the restaurant full, relaxed and ready to finish my day.