

LA BAGEL DELIGHT'S JOURNEY ALONG SEVENTH AVENUE

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ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

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By Zach Schiffman

There has been a La Bagel Delight on Seventh Avenue since 1986—just not always at the same address, and not always the same one. The original location of the local bagel chain opened that year at 252 Seventh Ave., in a space that had been a family-run Italian deli and is now a Just Salad, across from the old John Jay campus. Among the people working there was Mohamed Najar, who had immigrated to the United States a few years earlier and started out as the baker. Before that, his son Husain says, he was selling T-shirts off his back on Flatbush Avenue.

The store at 252 Seventh Ave. eventually lost its lease and moved south to 284 Seventh Ave., across from what is now New York-Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist. Najar went the other direction, opening his own franchise of La Bagel Delight at 122 Seventh Ave. in 2003, when Husain was eleven, next to a Neergaard Pharmacy.

That store lasted 22 years—through the financial crisis, through the pandemic, through several different landlords, all the while becoming a regular stop for Coop members on their way to shifts.

Then the building sold in July 2025, the month-to-month tenancy was terminated that October, and, in March, a Brooklyn housing court judge ruled for the new owner in the eviction case that followed. The *Park Slope Times*, which has covered the story from the beginning, reported that the new owner, Oren Lund (who happens to be a Coop member), plans to open a family-run sandwich shop in the space.

Which is how La Bagel Delight serendipitously ended up one block north. The Bagel Market at 106 Seventh Ave. served its last day on May 23, and Husain Najar—who now runs the day-to-day business—negotiated the lease himself. He brought the ket-

tle, the grill, the deli case and the bagel rollers his father has worked with since the '80s. He also brought the debt it took to get in the door. We caught up with Husain Nagar around the corner from the Coop to see how business has been since the reopening.

Your family has been on Seventh Avenue since 1986. What does that look like from behind the counter?

We have four generations coming to us: grandparents, parents, the kids, the kids' kids. Kids that went to college, they come back. There are people I've known since I was six years old. Miss O'Brien, who lives on President—I'm 34 years old, and the first delivery I sent to her, I was fourteen. There's history, there's memories there.

How did you end up at 106?

I ended up knowing the landlord, and I worked out a deal so we didn't have to leave the neighborhood completely and my dad could keep his legacy. God bless Mr. Arnie, the owner of 106. He took us in.

Have the regulars come back?

The same customers we had came back. They were like, *thank God you're open*. They didn't know where to get bagels from. The other Bagel Market customers are slowly getting used to it. We have a little bit of problems here and there, but it's going through, man. The headache now is taking on the debt we had to take on to open up this new spot.

How has the neighborhood responded?

The neighborhood stood by us. We're grateful for the loyal customers, because without them we'd never be able to pay this high rent. It's not about profit—you could barely make a profit there. For the people who grew up here and have had business-

es for years, it's more about the emotional connection. These people immigrated over here and they built this off their backs.

What came with you to the new store, and what's new?

I brought in the top roller that we had back in the day, and now he's rolling the bagels. The guys that roll the bagels, they're from back in the day, since I was a baby. They've been the best. They've been running the show in New York City. They're the best rollers of bagels you could find in the world.

And we hooked up the deli. We got a different kettle, a different grill, different fridges. We got the hot deli box for the muffins. Everything in the front I tried to put out brand new, so I hope people like it.

How's your dad doing?

He's doing good. He's a little upset, because 122 was full of memories. When he immigrated over here, he was selling T-shirts off his back on Flatbush, before he had the chance—he got taken in at La Bagel Delight, back when it was still an Italian deli. So he had this emotional connection to 122. My dad still comes in here and there, but he's older. I dropped out of college to help him out with the store. I had to put everything on the sideline, because I just can't have that happen to him. I'd rather die than have that happen to him.

What's your favorite thing on the menu?

To be completely honest, I can't eat pork, so I'd go with a Godfather, but I mix it up with turkey instead of the ham, salami and pepperoni, and more in a breakfast direction. I'm a big turkey sausage and turkey bacon fan. I like to switch it up between eggs, cream cheeses. I grew up in it, so I like to switch it up.

What are your most definitive memories of Seventh Avenue?

Oh man, everything. I went to PS 10 on Seventh Avenue. My middle school was on Seventh Avenue. I was born in Methodist Hospital. It's everything over there. When I was a kid we weren't allowed to go outside, from how bad it was. And then, as I was growing up, the neighborhood flourished. That's all you could remember, playing man-hunt in the neighborhood. Just a million memories.

Do you see a lot of Coop members in the store?

A lot of people from the Coop always lose keys or something in the store, and we always bring it back over there.

What's your message to Coop members who want to support the business?

I love them no matter what, even if they come in and buy a dollar bottle of water. It does not matter if they spend fifty cents in there—just them coming to support our business means the world. They could go pick anywhere else to buy a drink or food from. But to come and keep us there for another 40 years—without them, we wouldn't be able to do that. And I'm trying to stay there for another 40 to a 100 years. So they're the ones that are going to keep us open, the community. That's who's kept us open this long, since 1986.

Anything else coming?

There's more to come—I'm trying to bring in smoothie machines and everything. It's a lot.