FINDING A HOME IN PARK SLOPE’S DINERS

October 20, 2026


RESERVED

October 20, 2026

By Emmett Lindner

Photographs by Caroline Mardok

There aren’t a lot of social options when you grow up in the woods. You wait for the summer sun to go down and the cicadas to quiet before throwing a few logs together for a bonfire, idly staring at the flames among friends until parents are mad you’re not yet home.

Winters are even duller. Basements, aimless drives, sitting in cars in parking lots, rolling down the windows to let out puffs of smoke. Mostly it was deciding where to go and where to camp out and who was already at the Wendy’s two towns over.

But even in a town of 8,000 people with no sidewalks or traffic lights, only 15 minutes away was a 24-hour haven: the local diner.

The booths were often patched together with duct tape. The food was not particularly good or thoughtful. But it always tasted the same—and that was never the point, anyway.

Waitresses knew you since you were too shy to order eggs. The owner had kids in your grade and chatted with your parents. Years later, back from college, you and your friend studied a bullet hole in the diner’s window that seemed to aim at the husk of a former Blockbuster across the street. Seated across from each other in a diner booth, you both plotted how to reach a friend who hadn’t answered a text in a year. And when the waiter noticed you staring at the cracked window, he just looked away and forced a laugh.

That place degraded as you also aged. But it always smelled the same, and the doors were never locked. The diner never looked beyond its walls to judge.

One day, after deciding to skip school, the Athenian Diner was the only logical place to go.

Already late. Always late. Too many detentions to count as you and your friends pulled into the last spot in the lot, a half mile from the school. You didn't walk long before the hesitation bubbled into pointless debate.

"It's far," Greg said.

"Too far," Jerry said.

"Wait," Greg said. "Why are we even going to school today?"

The five of us, almost in unison: "Yeah, why *are* we going to school today?"

Back to the car we went. And straight to the diner we drove.

The waitress heard us laughing about the endeavor. We were honest when she asked.

"Give me a phone," she said. She proceeded to call the school five separate times pretending to be five entirely different mothers, and gave us a month's worth of conversation amongst ourselves.

Being spontaneous required stasis. There wasn't a schedule to meet; there was a door to open. At the diner, the room stayed the same while the people passed through in winter coats or sandals.

Maybe it's a product of where you grow up. The Athenian has closed, and the Wendy's, a lesser place of worship, lost its solarium and the chili there tastes worse.

But I’m still searching for places where everyone walks through those same doors.


HOSPITAL
PHARMACY
Purity Diner
289 7th Ave.
718-840-0881
Established
1929
7 St
ONE WAY

Purity Diner at the corner of the hospital on 7th Avenue

PURITY

The diner is across the street from Brooklyn Presbyterian. It’s a favorite of mine. There are no frills or catering to a certain kind of crowd. How could Purity deign to, when it serves many at their most exhausted hour?

It places plates of breakfast, lunch and dinner in front of patrons sitting in chairs and booths at what one must imagine is their most tired, most vulnerable, or between the worst moments they can remember.

I can sympathize. A girlfriend was sitting in a hospital bed when the doctors cleared her after a medical scare. I left to buy her spicy Cheez-Its and magazines from the Rite Aid down the block. But she was asleep, and I had been slouching in a chair for 12 hours since 4 a.m. I hadn’t eaten in almost a day.

Purity beckoned as I passed, offering a semblance of stability. And there was a booth I knew the texture of before I even sat down. (I ate quickly and she got her Cheez-Its posthaste.)

Diners had been stuck in my idea of childhood and high school, when the vinyl sank in the same way every time. Then, while the entire world spun outside at its own pace, the sound of the laminated menu smacking the table became an anchor.



The Grand Canyon Diner on 7th avenue, across from PS 321.

GRAND CANYON

A diner I respect and frequent, but it doesn't quite fit my suburban particularities. (That's a negative? Against myself.) The menu is big. That's good. It offers more Mexican cuisine than any other diner I've come across in the area. (Yes, please.) Having lived in Los Angeles for a number of years, the tacos and breakfast burritos at Grand Canyon keep pulling me back on hazy Sunday mornings.



The welcome team at the Grand Canyon diner.

Grand Canyon is probably the diner I should like best. But, aesthetically, it's too different to imagine my grandmother's blonde beehive bobbing up the front steps, or my family's silence as the food came—not because they prayed but because a mouthful was more sacred than idle conversation.

It is a place that can offer fun, with tables for big parties, and which serves cuisine that is sorely lacking in the neighborhood.


2nd
Floor
Dalsey's
DINER
NO STANDING
Destination
Bay Ridge
Minutes
Route
B63
5 Ave &
9 St

Daisy’s Diner on 5th avenue.

DAISY’S

I’ll be the first to say it: It doesn’t have the best food. There are cracks in the walls, and I’ve waited quite a few minutes for a coffee refill. And yet, I wouldn’t change a thing.

There are few places, first and foremost, where I can sit at a booth any time of day or night. The 24-hour schedule gives the diner nostalgia and points for practicality.



The counter at Daisy’s.


Daisy's
DINER
A BROOKLYN LANDMARK
Where friends and family gather!
Welcome
Daisy's
DINER
Daisy's Diner
Park Slope, Brooklyn NYC
UNIVERSAL

Jude Howl serving at Daisy’s Diner

But, perhaps because of the photos of famous people on the walls—like Muhammad Ali, who has absolutely never eaten the Daisy tuna melt and probably never walked inside—or the I-don’t-need-to-ask-for-them condiments that have been on the table all day, my heart sings.

I sit in a booth and I’m suddenly six. An apparition of my father sits across from me, pulling a half-and-half creamer from the bowl. He lays it on the counter and flicks it toward me, trying to land it half on, half off on my edge of the table. We rotate until someone wins or our food arrives. It’s what we did before phones.

I can imagine the days, like at the Athenian, when waiters would ask: “Smoking or non-smoking?” Like it mattered. The specter of flicked ash and smoke that didn’t abide by sections still lingers in Daisy’s.

I don’t go to diners much with my father anymore. I rarely ever go with friends. We built lives there, which is why I hold them dear. And perhaps they haven’t changed—or maybe they have, a bit—but it’s not leaving me empty. The booths and varnished counters are still there, however faded and patched.

Emmett Lindner works on the breaking and trending news desk at The New York Times*.*

LA BAGEL DELIGHT’S JOURNEY ALONG SEVENTH AVENUE

October 20, 2026

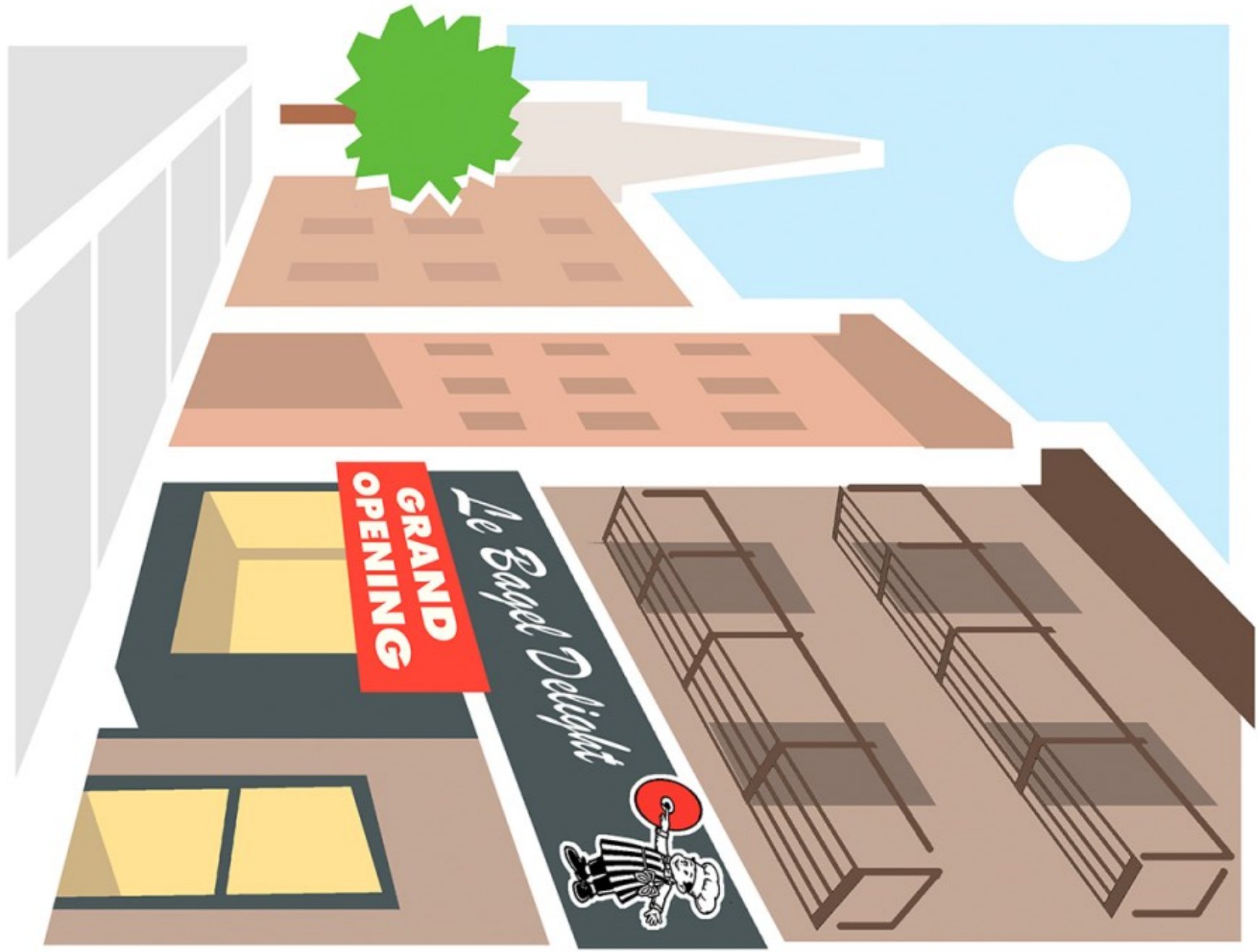


ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

September 8, 2026

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 Najar 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.

THE NEW MEMBER WHO JUST OPENED A STANDOUT NEIGHBORHOOD PIZZERIA

October 20, 2026

PHOTO BY AZIKIWE ABOAGYE

June 16, 2026

By Zach Schiffman

Ben Wexler didn't grow up in Park Slope, but he might as well have. A born-and-raised New Yorker, he spent the pandemic years running a seasonal pizza business on Peaks Island, off the coast of Maine—all while his girlfriend held down an apartment here and a Coop membership going on 10 years.

But the city kept pulling him back. So this past November, after a long hunt for the right space, he opened Il Leone just around the corner from the Coop on Seventh Avenue: a sit-down wine bar built around long-fermented sourdough Neapolitan pizza, with the produce treated as the main event.

That obsession traces back to a stint on a small organic vegetable farm, where picking what he'd cook each morning rewired how Wexler thinks about food. It's a philosophy that lines up neatly with the Coop's, which makes his timing perfect: after years of circling, he's finally an official member. We caught up with him just as his first New York tomato season comes into view, to talk Maine, Naples, the heirloom seeds in his backyard and how to shop the Coop like a chef.

How did Il Leone come to be on Seventh Avenue?


PHOTO BY AZIKIWE ABOAGYE

Ben standing in front of Il leone.

I started the business on Peaks Island, off Portland, Maine, during the pandemic. I'm a born-and-raised New Yorker but went to college in Maine, then moved back and was mostly working on political campaigns. In between campaigns, I did various things in the food business, including working on a small organic vegetable farm.

Right before the pandemic, in about 2019, I was burnt out from living in the city and wanted to move to Maine and start this business. At first I was looking to start it on a farm up there, partnering with a farm, and then when the pandemic hit, that fell through. So I started it on the island instead and lived up there for a few years, running it as a seasonal business, and I just really started to miss the city. The native New Yorker in me was pulling me back.

My girlfriend was living here in Park Slope, so I'd spend some of my off-season time down here in the winter, exploring what the business might look like in the city. After a few years of looking at spaces, I found the one we're in now. Having spent that off-season time in Park Slope, it just felt like a really great fit. There was a dearth of restaurants in the neighborhood, and not a lot of people doing conceptually what I was trying to do. So that's how this all came about.

How much of your business is local repeat neighbors versus people from all over the city?

I'd say we're about 75 percent Park Slope right now. I started this to first and foremost be a place for the neighborhood, and the reception's been really positive. People are just looking for another restaurant to go to, whether it's with their kids or without. They love that we emphasize sourcing as locally and organically as possible, and that we offer a sit-down wine bar experience alongside the pizza and the food. They love that we're doing the sourdough with a really long fermentation, putting a lot of love, care, and intention into the food. It's been a really positive first six months.

Have you been aware of customers who are Coop members?

I haven’t asked, so that’s hard to say. But a lot of the Park Slope community are members. My girlfriend has been a Coop member for 10 years, so I’m very familiar with it, and there have definitely been customers who’ve mentioned they work there. I’m sure many members have come through our doors.

Living in Maine, with your girlfriend being a member—what was your awareness of the Coop as you were going back and forth?

I’ve known about the Coop for years, just from being a New Yorker. Right out of college I had a sublet in Park Slope and I was on the verge of joining about 10 years ago, but didn’t, because I ended up moving out of the neighborhood. Growing up here, I’ve always respected what it does—both as a community model for increasing access to affordable, quality fresh produce, and just as a great grocery store. The foodie in me loves a grocery store that has a lot to offer, and the Coop clearly stands out as one of the better ones in the city.

How does your experience working on farms change you as a restaurant owner?

The most fulfilling part of working on that small organic vegetable farm was getting to pick what I’m cooking with that day. It really drew me back to the roots of not just Italian cuisine, but Neapolitan-style pizza making—because in Naples, where pizza was invented, there’s such a profound emphasis on simplicity, the quality of ingredients, and sourcing everything as locally as possible.


PHOTO BY AZIKIWE ABOAGYE


PHOTO BY AZIKIWE ABOAGYE

PHOTO BY AZIKIWE ABOAGYE



Ben in his restaurant backyard planting basil, which he uses for his dishes.

I came to realize more and more that what makes the best food, particularly the best Italian food, is not overdoing it—using just a few really great ingredients. That's how you make the best tomato sauce: just tomatoes, olive oil, and sea salt. You don't need oregano, you don't need garlic, you don't need all these add-ons. The best pasta in the world, arguably, is just a simple spaghetti pomodoro with in-season tomatoes and some fresh basil. That's what Neapolitan pizza has always been about.

So as a pizza maker, I was really excited to bring that philosophy to my pizza. There are some people doing Neapolitan-style pizza, and some doing sourdough Neapolitan specifically, like Anthony Mangieri of Una Pizza Napoletana, who I've always looked up to. But I feel like there aren't that many people in the city really offering a "farm--to-pizza" experience, focused on the quality of the produce. That's an area I've focused on since working on that farm.

How are you feeling about your first tomato season in the city?

We opened in November, so we haven't had a tomato season yet. This'll be my first one open in New York. I'm so excited. For the last five years in Maine, I've done a pizza I call the "l'estate," which means summer in Italian. It's literally just peak in-season heirloom cherry tomatoes from a small organic farm, ripened right on the vine. When you harvest cherry tomatoes at peak ripeness, there's just nothing like it—they carry so much flavor, unlike any tomato you'd find in a grocery store. I'm so excited to get that pizza back on the menu.

There's another we do in summer called the "Fiore," with squash blossoms and local organic zucchini—also really special. And there's one we'll be doing shortly with in--season garlic scapes from the farmers market.

In Maine I got all my produce from one or two small organic farms, and those partnerships let me develop a lot of these pizzas. They rest on traditional Italian ingredient combinations, but they also work because we're able to get such great produce. We're just getting into farmers market season here, and I'm so excited to start putting some of these seasonal pizzas on the menu—that's part of the challenge of launching in late fall and early winter, not being able to do quite as much with in-season produce as we traditionally have.

Is there anything you're considering trying here that you never did in Maine?

Of course. We love to try new things. We've got a few things in the works with some really special heirloom tomato seeds that I'm actually growing in my backyard at the restaurant right now. I won't announce it just yet, until the tomatoes are ready, but there's some fun stuff coming.

I'm a big believer in walking through the farmers market, talking to farmers, and seeing what looks exciting and what's going to work on a pizza. One we're doing right

now that’s been a big hit is organic asparagus with fresh lemon spritzed on top, fresh mozzarella, pecorino, and black pepper. As we transition out of asparagus season, we’ll start doing the garlic scape pie I mentioned, and some others as the summer heats up.

As we head into summer-produce season, do you have any advice for people shopping at the Coop?

I always like to shop as much as possible day-of when I’m cooking. You generally get the freshest stuff that way. I keep an eye out for what looks really perky and fresh, what was truly just harvested that day or the day before. That always makes for the best meals in my experience. So use your eyes and follow your heart, and see what’s truly poppin’ on those shelves. That’s going to lead to a lovely dining experience.

Zach Schiffman is a social editor and writer at New York *magazine, comedian, and Park Slope local.*

MEMBER-SUBMITTED ARTICLE: A NEW PARK SLOPE CAFE WITH FAMILIAR OWNERS

October 20, 2026



March 24, 2026

By Roman Vandercruyssen

(Editors' note: Roman submitted this article with the following explanation:

"I'm 15 and I just joined the Coop. I'm not totally new to the Coop—I used to help my parents in the childcare room and recycling shifts when those shifts still existed.

I'm a food lover, explorer and aspiring critic.

This is my first article ever, and I especially wish to have it published in the Gazette, the Coop being my neighborhood anchor since I was born.

Anyway, this is my article, and I hope you'll like it.)

There’s a new popular foodie spot in the neighborhood: Lincoln Station! If the name sounds familiar, you might think of the original one, which opened 13 years ago in Crown Heights.

The second location sits at 7th Ave and 1st Street, replacing the family-favorite spot Bareburger (RIP). Even though it’s a big open room, it still feels cozy—a brick wall, lots of small tables, filled with colorful teapots—giving the friendly vibe we need in this freezing winter. Just a warning though: weekends from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., the place can get crowded.

The menu is classic café stuff, but let’s be real: for a teenager like me, price matters. That’s why I immediately spotted the $6.75 egg sandwich. Basic? Yes. But wow—-worth it. “A must-have,” said Anna Klinger, the owner and chef of the place, whom I interviewed for this article. “For the first time, definitely take the egg sandwich. It’s my personal favorite. It’s made with two fried eggs, so when you bite into it, it’s runny. The sandwich is topped off with salsa rosa and melted cheddar.”

To say it’s great would be an understatement. The yolk spills out and adds to the sweet sauce, complementing the richness of the fried eggs and cheddar, all between a soft brioche bun. I added bacon for $2, giving the sandwich the crispness and meaty flavor I always enjoy. Exactly what a specialty item should be. Don’t get scared of getting messy savoring it!

If Klinger’s name rings a bell, that’s because she and her husband, Emiliano Coppa, are Park Slope residents who also own Al Di La, an iconic Northern Italian cuisine restaurant, which opened 28 years ago in our neighborhood. Al Di La is more of a fancy celebration spot, while Lincoln Station is casual and everyday. And if you’re wondering, we’re not related; this article isn’t some disguised ad. Just my way of exploring and supporting our local food scene.



Lincoln Station

Other popular picks? “The avocado egg and the chicken sandwich,” Klinger said. “Those are the real crowd pleasers.” The avocado egg comes on a multigrain roll with jalapeño salsa, giving it a nice kick smoothed by the avocado. The chicken sandwich is next-level: real rotisserie chicken (generous pulled bites) on crunchy ciabatta, packed with fresh parsley and topped with caper mayo. It’s fresh, flavorful and quite filling. Bonus, you can actually take out the whole rotisserie chicken with sides for dinner at home.

For veggie lovers, the kale salad is another of my favorites—very garlicky, so maybe don’t eat it before a date. The tart dressing pairs well with the crispy croutons and flavorful Parmigiano. I personally balanced it with added avocado. There’s also the soup of the day that changes daily, plus baked goods at the counter that I *will* be trying

next time.

Overall, Lincoln Station already feels like it belongs in Park Slope, and it’s exciting to see our local food community growing strong. Good food, fair prices, cozy vibes—what more do you want? Okay, maybe one thing: please add the famous Al Di La’s “torta di pere” (pear cake) to the dessert menu.

I could eat that anytime.

MEMBER-SUBMITTED ARTICLE: WHAT THE LIDL REVIEW LEFT OUT—CONTEXT, CONFLICT AND COMMUNITY

October 20, 2026



March 3, 2026

By Luca Telesca

Anita Bushell's review of Lidl omits crucial context that Coop members deserve to know.

After Key Food closed in 2021, a coalition including the Fifth Avenue Committee, Park Slope Neighbors, Warren Houses Tenant Association and then-Council Member Brad Lander worked with developers to ensure an affordable grocery store would replace it. According to the *Brooklyn Paper*, they specifically banned "high-end" chains like Whole Foods and Eataly. The community asked for Lidl.

What the review doesn't mention: Bushell herself led a seven-year campaign to save Key Food, founding the "Save the Fifth Avenue Key Food" group (News12, 2021). This undisclosed conflict of interest matters when evaluating her criticism of Key Food's replacement.

> LIDL'S LOW-OVERHEAD MODEL ENABLES THOSE 49-CENT CROISSANTS. EVERY DOLLAR SPENT ON DECORATIVE POSTERS IS A DOLLAR NOT PASSED TO CUSTOMERS AS SAVINGS.

On opening day, community leader Karen McCreary, who fought for affordable grocery access, was among the first customers. Park Slope resident Aretha Jones told the *Brooklyn Paper*: "I used to go to Whole Foods, but Lidl is my favorite. I have actually cut my grocery bills in half."

The croissant comparison reveals deeper issues: Bushell compares Lidl's 49-cent croissants with the Coop's $2.11 version, declaring the affordable option "technically edible." That $1.62 (331%) difference reflects different market segments, and for many shoppers that matters enormously. Calling affordable food "technically edible" is not food criticism—it reflects troubling class bias.

Bushell's aesthetic complaints about "gray tones" and "utilitarian" design miss the point: Lidl's low-overhead model enables those 49-cent croissants. Every dollar spent on decorative posters is a dollar not passed to customers as savings. Dismissing anti-theft infrastructure as creating "entrapment" ignores the reality of urban retail.

The "lack of community" criticism is particularly tone-deaf. The Coop's model works wonderfully for people with schedule flexibility to donate almost three hours every six weeks. It works less well for home health aides, restaurant workers and parents juggling childcare and multiple jobs. They also deserve affordable groceries without judgment about whether they're building "community" the right way.

When Jones rides her e-bike to Lidl and loads her basket with groceries that cost half what she paid before, that is community support. It's just not the kind visible to someone comparing croissant heights.

> THE PARK SLOPE COMMUNITY INCLUDES PEOPLE ACROSS ALL INCOME LEVELS. THIS COMMUNITY FOUGHT FOR AFFORDABILITY—AND SUCCEEDED.

The review also questions and omits Lidl's considerable success: voted number one grocery chain in *Newsweek*'s 2025 Reader's Choice Awards and fastest-growing brick-and-mortar grocer in the UK for over two years. These aren't random achievements—they reflect a business model that serves real customer needs.

A fair review might have explored how Lidl serves different needs than the Coop, interviewed diverse customers, or examined which products Lidl excels at versus where it falls short. Instead, we got an article that mistakes personal preference for objective analysis.

The Park Slope community includes people across all income levels. This community fought for affordability—and succeeded. When we dismiss stores serving budget-cons-

cious shoppers as inferior, when we characterize affordable food as barely edible, we’re saying some community members matter less than others.

That’s not the cooperative spirit I think we value.

Luca Telesca is a Prospect Heights resident and the Director of the Materials Characterization Laboratory at Columbia University. He has been a Coop member for just a year; he likes running and working the receiving shifts (lifter).

CHEAP CROISSANTS BUT LIDL CHARM

October 20, 2026



ILLUSTRATION BY FRAN MENESES

GERMANY’S BARGAIN-BASEMENT GROCERY CHAIN LIDL COMES TO PARK SLOPE

January 20, 2026

By Anita Bushell

An outpost of the German discount grocery chain Lidl opened to great fanfare on 5th Avenue on December 10. Shoppers lined up at dawn, and raced home to post their reviews on Reddit: “I was surprised at how big the store was, and also how much space they dedicated to anti-theft at the entrance/exit, since that means less space for things to sell,” shared one early visitor. Another Redditor posted a nostalgic lament for the grocery store that had once occupied Lidl’s location: “That Key Food had the best music,” they recalled. “Well-curated, 50s and 60s classics and deeper cuts played just a little louder than it needed to be.”

In addition to basic goods at affordable prices (most famously, a $.49 freshly-baked croissant) and hard to find European products, Lidl is known for its rotating stock of specialty goods that won’t break the bank—think of it as a Teutonic Trader Joe’s. Or, given its small footprint and sterile aesthetic, think of it as a downgrade from the beloved and spacious Key Food that was demolished in 2021 to make way for the 184-unit housing development that encompasses Lidl.

Lidl was born in 1973 in Ludwigshafen, Germany. The original store had three employees and some 500 products. By the 1990s, the shop had grown into an international brand, with outposts in France and the UK. 2015 saw the establishment of its U.S. headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. The chain now operates 190 stores on the east coast of the U.S.

Its arrival in Park Slope comes at a time when households are getting more budget-conscious, and on the lookout for deals such as “seasonal apples” (no name mentioned) at $1.39/lb. or a package of Lidl Preferred Selection cooked shrimp for the low price of $6.99. But the Park Slope newcomer is going to have to work harder if it wants to lure shoppers away from the Coop or fill the shoes of Key Food, whose vast parking lot attracted shoppers from other neighborhoods.

LIDL IS KNOWN FOR ITS ROTATING STOCK OF SPECIALTY GOODS THAT WON’T BREAK THE BANK—THINK OF IT AS A TEUTONIC TRADER JOE’S.

In addition to being accessible to car owners across the borough, Key Food was known for the classic soft rock that pumped through the loudspeakers and a marvelous management team. In the era before Fresh Direct, this reporter remembers entering the store after days home with a sick child. “Where’ve you been?” one of the managers asked. When he learned the answer, he responded, “What’s wrong with you? You could’ve picked up the phone and called. We deliver!”

Lidl, on the other hand, is comparatively small and utilitarian. With its gray tones, the street-level entrance has all the charm of a parking garage. The foyer is not warm or inviting, and there are no decorations or classic supermarket advertising posters. An escalator delivers a shopper from the lobby to the lower level, where she is greeted by a glass wall, adding to a sense of entrapment (one presumes the purpose of this barrier is to prevent shoplifting). After cashing out at a self-checkout station—no fun Coop conversations to be had here—said shopper exits through an opening in the aforementioned glass wall.

The store itself feels like a glorified mini-mart, with country music playing and offerings relying on marketing features such as “Monday Must-Haves,” “Wednesday Weekly Deals,” and “Weekend Super Sales.” A myLidl app offers even more exclusive deals.

Should the Coop be nervous about the new kid on the block? Not a bit. To begin with, Lidl has a narrow selection of basic products. It’s the kind of place where you might run in to get a carton of eggs or a container or milk, not whole cloves, which I tried and failed to find last week in the limited spice section. The Coop, of course, has an excellent spice section, with everything from Adobo to Zatar, and, all told, lower prices than I’ve seen anywhere in Brooklyn.

AN ESCALATOR DELIVERS A SHOPPER TO THE LOWER LEVEL, WHERE SHE IS GREETED BY A GLASS WALL, ADDING TO A SENSE OF ENTRAPMENT.

But there are bargains to be found at Lidl: a bag of mandarins costs $2.78, less than half of the $6.44 a similar bunch costs at the Coop. A loaf of Lidl multi-grain bread is priced at $2.59, whereas a sliced loaf of Arnold's Multi-Grain bread costs $5.03 at the Coop. Croissants are priced at $.49. "Our famous 49-cent butter croissants are flown in from Europe and baked fresh daily in our stores," trumpets a company press release. "We dare you to find a flakier French pastry this side of the Atlantic!"

My family and I took them up on their challenge and embarked on a taste test, comparing the Coop's Colson bakery croissants available for $2.11 with the version from Lidl. The Coop's treat won hands down, with a taller, flakier, and more subtle croissant. Lidl's iteration was smaller, heavier, and left a slightly fatty aftertaste.


PHOTO BY ANITA BUSHELL

A Colson Bakery croissant from the Coop, compared with Lidl’s.
Depending on where you live, the newcomer is an okay option for last-minute dashes to grab basics. But if you’re looking for a sense of community—or croissants that are better than technically edible—don’t say I didn’t warn you.

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