



October 11, 2004

Billy the Kid (in a Candy Store)

Abandon Magnolia? The heavenly cupcakes, the banana pudding, the hummingbird cake? Not for all the tea in China.

Still, if it's not going-out-of-business rumors or a-dozen-per-customer limits, it's the line that winds around the block. (Really. A bakery with a doorman?)

Time to head a few blocks uptown to visit the sugar daddy who's been keeping his sweets on the d.l. Billy's Bakery is the brainchild of Billy Reece, a former Magnolia manager. His recipe for success? Take a layer of home-style sweetness (a childhood spent in Kansas), smooth it over with stylish, sophisticated icing (a stint in Paris before graduating from Parsons), and top it off with the right sprinkles (charming tables and chairs, scored on an Ohio antiquing trip).

The actual menu is filled with banana cream, pineapple upside-down, and seasonal-fruit pies; plain, autumn, and chocolate cheesecakes; and cupcakes in basic (yellow and chocolate) and special (German chocolate, devil's food) flavors. Billy's signature is the banana cake with cream-cheese frosting, but try telling that to fans of the brownies, muffins, and cookies.

The homey shop has all the same smells, tastes, and ambience you've come to love from that other bakery, but with none of the crowds (yet).

And none of the rocky road bumps, either.

Billy's Bakery, 184 Ninth Avenue, between 21st and 22nd Streets (212-647-9956). To see the goods online, go to billysbakerynyc.com.

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