Take a Break
Caffeine—and calories—galore

Anyone taking a late-day stroll in search of coffee or tea and something sweet would notice that Harvard Square has moved happily beyond the multiple Starbucks and Dunkin’ Donuts outlets—but almost to a ludicrous point.

Most lavish are newcomers Tatte Bakery & Café and Flour. Both offer European-style baked goods in brightly lit, airy spaces, and loads of counter staff.

Tatte (www.tattebakery.com), near the Harvard Book Store, has tiled floors and glass cases brimming with a lifetime’s supply of sugary treats: brownies, glossy fruit tarts, nut tarts, cups of cheesecake and tiramisu, along with “chocolate coconut cloud” meringues the size of salad plates ($3.25-$6). Define decadence by the “Halva Bomb,” a chocolate-mousse cake wrapped around a core of halva, and covered with dark-chocolate ganache ($7 a slice/$50 for the whole, eight-inch shebang). Coffee drinks are perfectly percolated.

That partly explains the buzzing vibe that pervades Tatte’s two floors. Swing by for fresh-baked bread after 4:30 P.M.

On the other end of the Square, on Mount Auburn Street, the latest branch of Flour (www.flourbakery.com), founded and run by chef Joanne Chang ’91, also serves terrific coffee, but in a less hectic setting. The cakes are divine—a lemon-raspberry option is layered with lemon curd ($6/slice)—and the kouign-amann (that’s kween ah-mon) is a butter-rich Breton pastry with caramelized sugar ($4). The brioché au chocolat ($3.50) lifts any sour mood, as does the dreamy coconut-cream pie ($5 a slice/$30 a pie).

Akin to Crema, but more of a neighborhood haunt, is Petsi Pies (www.petsipies.com) on Putnam Avenue, just outside the Square. Walls feature local artwork and customers—students, parents with children, and a host of laptoppers—tend to settle in. Amazing pies do predominate: pecan, mixed berry, and apple crumble are reliably on hand ($5 a slice/$26 whole). But there’s other delectable stuff, too: the blueberry-almond tea bread ($5) and the “magic” bars jammed with chocolate and peanut-butter chips, pecans, and shredded coconut ($5). Petsi’s big airy scones, notably the butter-milk currant ($2.25) are the best around.

Hidden away, but a perfect place to read, write, or meet a friend, is Jenny’s Café, at the Harvard Art Museums (www.harvardartmuseums.org). Open to the public without an admission fee, the café serves drinks like cinnamon French toast latte and bergamot iced tea, and patrons can sit at tables in the adjacent Calderwood Courtyard. Take a break before or after moseying through the galleries: they offer unusually close views of works by Van Gogh, Munch, Matisse, and others. On loan from the Musée d’Orsay through July is Winslow Homer’s lyrical painting Summer Night (1890).

On Bow Street, Café Pamplona (www.
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