

What I Miss the Most

By Nancy Mann

It is enjoyable to go to a clean, well-lit restaurant, preferably to one that offers a breakfast menu replete with many, tasty choices – all reasonably priced. (It is a plus if they serve good coffee.) For this enjoyment, you will eagerly carve out adequate time from busy schedules to sit, and converse with a friend, in your favorite, or soon-to-be favorite booth.

Regrettably, it's often the case that a basic breakfast, that of two eggs, hash browns and toast, has increased in price to nearly ten or twelve dollars. Ten or twelve dollars, even at your disappearing "Mom and Pop" establishments.

One is forced to shell out another \$3.00 for juice, or to "upgrade" for higher quality foods, such as a whole-wheat roll (not Wonder bread) or a fiber-packed muffin. Your doctor may have mandated substitution of cottage cheese for "ubiquitous" hash-browns, for your expanding waistline or high cholesterol. Are you gluten-intolerant? How much for gluten-free items? "If you have to ask, you can't afford it!" – the saying goes.

In an eye-blink, the cost of your morning repast approaches ... \$20.00, before tips. And a tip anywhere in the U.S. should be 10% of the meal cost. Heard of the "15 now!" nation-wide, epic struggle? Hence, \$5.00 or more ... seems... appropriate.

Additionally, some coffee refills aren't free - they're \$1.00. The \$20.00 cost, tax not included, has risen to nearly \$25.00. An egg breakfast, not even ... lobster.

If you want to treat a friend, you must bring \$55.00 with you; \$60.00 is ... safer. \$60.00 is prohibitive, bi-weekly – mightily prohibited for seniors and "fixed-incomers."

Surely, high breakfast costs limit the number of social visits one commits to, and thus limits pleasant exchanges of opinions about current events and limits "*quasi- parlance*," political discussions, and the like. It decreases the number of engagements for seniors who might learn of the changes in their community, which changes are often revealed during breakfast meetings. It decreases the needed time for socialization in communities...

Some historians write that a number of brutal wars were actually prevented in the Seventeenth Century, in the Ottoman Empire when coffee was drunk in the morning, by ambassadors. (Coffee and pastries were later served in the afternoon). Breakfasts, omelets, and coffee, became the catalyst for many diplomatic talks. Kings and governmental leaders regulated and controlled coffee and breakfast-fare or bread prices, and even restaurant hours.

And, who could have foretold how many literary, scientific, or philosophical works were shaped or influenced by thinkers – at *dejeuner* – in Parisian salons – on a morning, during the Enlightenment?

The average years worked, before retirement? Forty-eight. Therefore, cannot retirees drive to

(oops, here we add in the cost of gasoline), and congregate in cafes, to enjoy those well-earned, free-time mornings, and be welcomed with choices of reasonably-priced, simple repasts?

What I miss most is affordable breakfasts, and thus going out often to "see what's happening" with wonderful friends. Restaurateurs, proprietors, heed my plea – keeping in mind that "time (especially for 'oldsters') is fleeting."