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Panera Bread rising among Lincoln's premier bakeries

J.J. Harder
Staff Writer

It's part Garden Café, part street-corner deli, and part Starbucks. Panera Bread Co. has come to town. And what more appropriate place than South Pointe Pavilion?

Panera is a chain of bakery/cafes that was founded in St. Louis and has spread to 26 states. Omaha has two locations, making it one step ahead of its kid sister Lincoln.

At first glance, Panera seems like an expanded Barnes & Noble coffee bar, but you won't find plastic-wrapped sandwiches in a refrigerated display here. Freshness is obviously what Panera has relied upon to become successful. So Panera's bread and butter is its bread and butter, so to speak. But that's just where the menu begins.

There aren't any extravagant dishes with words like flambé or Marsala; Panera just serves solid soups, salads and sandwiches. But these aren't the types of sandwiches you'd get at the Sandwich Factory or the Sawmill Deli.

I always feel like I'm getting ripped off there because I could make the sandwich myself for a third of the cost.

But at Panera, the unique breads take away that notion. There are 11 sandwiches, including everything from Tuscan Chicken to Peanut Butter & Jelly. These are big sandwiches, like Schlotzsky's, but better-tasting and more fun.

The Bacon Turkey Bravo is a perfect example of a sandwich that could have been boring — bacon

PANERA BREAD CO.
WHERE: 2940 Pine Lake Road
WHAT: Bakery/Café, \$5-8 per meal average
BOTTOM LINE: High-class bakery second only to Molan

and turkey are not exactly exciting.

But Panera's addition of Gouda cheese and the flavorful Tomato Basil Bread made it excellent. Same story with the Smoked Ham and Cheese. A few bean sprouts and rye bread made it out of the ordinary.

Panera offers four soups a day, including Cream of Chicken and Wild Rice and Vegetarian Gumbo. The Potato Cream Cheese was hearty, but at the same time not very filling. The Chicken Chili tasted more like a liquid burrito than it did chicken or chili (I still don't know if that's good or bad). Panera also has five choice salads.

I hate coffee, so I didn't try any, but they seemed to have everything you could ever want with the words latte or hazelnut in the name (What's a Caffe Borgia?). What really caught my eye was the smorgasbord of pastries Panera displayed behind glass.

If Willy Wonka ever opened a bakery, it would probably look like this. Chocolate cookies, huge muffins, glowing Danish pastries, bear claws the size of your head — I couldn't decide, so I tried a little of everything. It tasted as good as it looked.

Behind the mouth-watering glass counter of treats is the wall of bread. Panera has pretty much every bread you could want — I hope. Swirl rye. French loaf. sour-dough strip. asiago cheese. fiesta and many more. The bread is baked fresh daily at least, and probably more often. The Panera staff will cut it right in front of you so you don't have to search for that elusive bread knife when you get home.

For the aura of elitism that Panera emits, its prices are surprisingly modest. You can get half of a big sandwich, soup, chips and a pickle (definitely very key to the meal) for less than five-and-a-half bucks. The most expensive sandwich is \$5.95. So while it might not be the Hy-Vee Deli, it's not out of the price range of most college students.

The biggest negatives of Panera are location (who wants to drive to Pine Lake for coffee?) and the chips. I know, it seems like a small thing, but the Krunchers they serve are the worst chips I've ever eaten.

It would be a wise decision for the Panera management to look at Nebraska's own Weaver's Potato Chips for some quality chips. Another minus is the snobbiness that can't help but be in the air at a place like this. The location, menu and everything else screams high class.

But the food may very well be worth a trip into a restaurant of high noses. I think I'll stick with the Molan bakery at 13th and South. It's a lot like Panera, but with a little more hometown character and a little less Starbuck's feel.

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Ladely to assist with Telluride selection

■ **The Ross director will participate in Filmmakers of Tomorrow selection.**

By Samuel McKewon
Senior editor

It's an odd locale for a film festival, Telluride, Colo. There's no question in that. A turn of the century mining town high in the Rockies — it's a wonder movie mogul types can even find time to breathe.

But Telluride, through some sort of strange civic pride, plus

some landmark movie premieres, not only has survived in the middle of nowhere, but established itself as one of the world's best gathering of previously unseen movies. Unlike a few Sundance movies, or films shown at the Toronto Film Festival, everything at Telluride, held over every Labor Day weekend, is a first time run.

And this year, UNL plays a large part in the festival playlist.

Dan Ladely, director of the Mary Rimepa Ross Theater, has frequented the festival for several years, establishing contacts with fellow film lovers. So when Telluride officials came to Ladely for assistance in choosing films for

its Filmmakers of Tomorrow presentation, which selects short films from student auteurs.

"Telluride has a reputation of being able to uncover amazing talent," Ladely said.

Ladely has been charged to help with selecting the first round of candidates in the Filmmakers of Tomorrow series, which is open to students that make films under 30 minutes. The total of films to screen is more than 500, Ladely said, and that list has to whittled down to around 30, as Telluride officials will decide the final entries from there.

"It's not an easy task," Ladely said.