



## Hankies Out

By Bonnie Wach

If you haven't already guessed, beneath this thin, acerbic veneer lies ... another thin, snarkier veneer. But right below that lies the doughy white belly of a sentimental slob – one as likely to tear up at cheap, manufactured sentiment (did anyone else bawl when that girl on *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* said her dad was the greatest guy on Earth?) as at genuine emotion.

Sentiment and nostalgia, the twin-hanky partners, are a curse for food-loving Friscans. Get all worked up about a place and you can almost guarantee it's going to revamp its menu, or reroute its chef to Las Vegas, or just up and close while you stand brokenhearted and empty-stomached, all your boo-hooing about how you can't live without its spit-roasted chicken falling on deaf ears (or more pathetic still, on the ears of some no-life shlub on *Chowhound.com*, who asks if you've tried the wood-fired chicken at some other place, and maybe you could go there sometime, and by the way, what are you wearing? But I digress...).

Sometimes I just can't help myself, though. Sometimes a place just gets under my skin. Imagine, if you will, how many boxes of Kleenex I went through upon discovering the Crossroads Café (699 Delancey, 836-5624).

First off, it's run by Delancey Street, the home-grown nonprofit residential center that has helped thousands of people start new, drug-free lives – many by getting training at this very café. Secondly, it's located across from the bay and Herb Caen Way, the mere mention of which gets me a little verklempt in that native S.F.'er kind of way. Add to that an in-house bookstore and magazine rack that lets you peruse while you nosh; the coziest, sunniest secret gated garden in all the city, where you can enjoy a lavish high tea (finger sandwiches, scones, and all); a breakfast pantry stocked with H&H bagels flown in daily from New York; a soda fountain that dispenses Mitchell's ice cream; and regular visits from (former) Giants shortstop Rich Aurelia – and you have the makings of a full-on sobfest.

I managed to hold it together, however, until I tasted my first bite of chocolate-fudge Snickers pie, which is made next door at Delancey Street but can only be fully experienced curled up on one of the café's sofas with a perfectly swirled cappuccino and the Arts section of the *New York Times*. This is a dessert that transcends its ingredients: Like turtles, melt-in-your-mouth cookies, and my mother-in-law's wacky cake, Snickers pie comes with a heaping cup of nostalgia, evoking memories of long-ago holidays and shopping downtown with your grandmother and the original Judy's Mud Pie at the late *Coffee Cantata*.

"This pie came about while we were trying to get our building done," explains pie creator and Delancey Street founder Mimi Silbert. "We had three steady donors: Sara Lee cheesecake, Snickers candy bars, and Just Desserts chocolate cake. These three things sustained me and kept me alive during those nights. I was a little chubby, but better chubby than dead!"

As a tribute to her donors, Silbert created the pie, which begins with a graham cracker crust, followed by a dense chocolate-fudge filing. On top of that goes a layer of crumbled Snickers bars and then a slightly lightened version of *New York Cheesecake*. It's finished with a drizzle of fudge syrup.

"It makes me feel comforted and safe and loved," says Silbert, who has seen more than her share of life's ugly side. "It goes to show you, if you keep the process right, life is as sweet as a Snickers Pie."