

Observation Story

Word Count: 492

Caffè Driade is a local shop serving Chapel Hill with espresso, tea, and wine for almost 30 years. Located behind their partner Carrboro Coffee Roasters, Caffè Driade situates itself as a whimsical oasis just off of East Franklin Street, hidden by the roastery and surrounded by trees.

The cafe itself is quaint.

The majority of their seating options are immersed in the beautiful woods around the property. Scattered cafe tables are united by a stone path, interrupted by small exhibits of benches, plants and a bison statue. Despite my familiarity with Chapel Hill, Caffè Driade's inconspicuity has made me a stranger. That is, until one of my classmates recommended it to me.

When I arrived on Sunday afternoon, I was met with a bustling gravel parking lot. Feeling my car rumble on this uneven, yet worn surface, I waited for a spot to open so I could indulge in the beautiful scenery ahead. I then meandered through the lot onto the network of paths, leading me to the espresso bar.

Once I found the entrance to the shed-like coffee shop, I began to envelop myself in my surroundings. The cafe is erected in concrete walls with brown metal-paneled roofing, and a glass-enclosed patio. The quaint atmosphere, packed full with the earthly-sweet smell of cinnamon, steam, and fresh-baked blueberry muffins emphasizes Caffè Driade's affinity for nature, persuading its visitors to sit outside with their treats.

In line, I stood behind a trio of Duke University students, ambitiously giving each other advice and offering emotional support. Once I stepped outside, waiting for my order to be placed under the yellow pick-up tent, I heard whispers of hometown gossip and a young family making friends with local, older people.

After receiving my order from the bright eyed barista with a pink bob, I found a cold metal table to sit at. A slight chill in the air and the cold nature of outdoor metal furniture began to balance with the sun's warm rays on my skin – making for the perfect environment to drink a hot beverage.

The warm spices in my “harvest latte” coalesced with the reverberated laughter, bird calls, and slight wind rustling the trees all within the woods of the cafe.

Notably, a woman in a pink, calf-length coat sauntered toward the bison statue. As our gaze met, she acknowledged me with a smile. This simple interaction exposes the deep value in human interaction and communication, as facilitated by the cafe environment as a third space.

Thus, observing a place robust with conversation yields many newsworthy events. Especially a place separate from the burdens of one's work or home life. Being able to listen in on the spread of local news from varying perspectives, and their intersections, allows for great storytelling.

Whether it's college students studying, old friends reconnecting, or a young couple taking their new dog on an out-of-the-house adventure, Caffè Driade's welcoming atmosphere provides the space for the spread of stories.