



MONMOUTH *Mix* continued

with prices ranging from \$17-\$21, is served Monday through Thursday from 5:15-6:30 p.m. Reservations are required. The bakery is open Monday through Friday, 9-10 a.m. and 11:15 a.m.-1:15 p.m.

Windows Dining Room at The Culinary Education Center of Monmouth County, 101 Drury Lane, Asbury Park; 732-988-3299

BEST bet

Divine deals

Jennifer Patrick says there's money in your old handbags. Not loose change, but serious cash if you bring your Dior to **The Couture Exchange**, a high-fashion hide-away with big deals on new and used designer handbags, shoes and accessories.

Couture maven
Jennifer Patrick
models her wares.

Patrick calls on an established network of trusted couture insiders to snag brand-new, top-quality goods from names like Gucci, Fendi and Prada for her showroom. The choicest of choice is then discounted anywhere from 20 percent to 60 percent off prices you'd pay in New York showrooms. "I'm a deal hunter," she says. "My sources range from New York to Paris to Beverly Hills, and it's all authentic and first quality."

Patrick shares a recent find, a classic Chanel purse in blue caviar leather with its original "sleeper" storage bag and box from Chanel's Paris boutique. Originally retailing for \$1,900, she has it priced to move at \$899.

Since opening a Shrewsbury showroom in September, Patrick has attracted a devoted following, including many who first shopped through her website. In addition to Patrick's fabulous new finds, she also sells a good deal of merchandise on consignment. She says that people get just as bored with Gucci as they do with The Gap, and are always looking for something new.

As if on cue, Susanne McDonnell of Middletown enters the shop. She simply couldn't resist a visit on her day off. "I have a Louis Vuitton shoulder bag and garment bag in the attic," she says. "I've hardly used them." Within minutes McDonnell has made arrangements to return with her treasures, which Patrick will sell and make a fifty-fifty split of the proceeds.

Patrick is an expert in high fashion, and can authenticate any piece of designer merchandise before you can say Burberry. She notes that couture handbags can go from fashion obsession to fashion investment. "A basic Louis Vuitton tote went for approximately \$420 in 2000," she said. "That same exact handbag is now \$790. That's an 88 percent appreciation in just six years."

The Couture Exchange expects to move from 55 East White Road to 511 Broad Street in Shrewsbury by May. Once ensconced in the new location, Patrick plans to expand into couture clothing as well.

The Couture Exchange, 511 Broad Street, Shrewsbury; 732-933-1123; www.thecoutureexchange.com

ESCAPADES

Frame and fortune
While Monmouth County serves up a smorgasbord of cultural pursuits, the appetites of contemporary-art lovers

