Here’s an idea for a little outing that is guaranteed to cheer you up on these icy, dreary days. Take a ride to the Short and Stout Tea Company at 1736 Western Avenue. Behold the colorful décor and wonderful aroma as you approach the counter, where you will be greeted by a friendly tea associate.

I went there last week to view our Barbara Via’s solo show. I didn’t plan on having lunch, but the Grilled Cheese Sandwich with Applewood Smoked Bacon and Tomatoes item on the menu sounded rather tempting. I gave in, convincing myself that this *could* be on my diet if I only ate half. I ordered the sandwich "to go".

While waiting for my sandwich, I entered the room displaying Barbara’s paintings. With its overstuffed chairs and comfortable sofa, the room was the ideal setting for Barbara’s dreamy, bucolic watercolors. There are 18 pieces in all, mostly priced from $45-$75. In a humble “Artist’s Statement” posted in the room, Barbara pays homage to her instructor, Kris Woodward. Touch of class, Barbara! (Sooner or later we all go back to Kris W.!)

Before leaving the shop, I browsed around the main room where all the knick-knacks and teas are displayed. There was another artist showcased, with several pieces shown. The co-owner Joyce Zacharewicz introduced me to Joe Johnson, a photographer and faux painter, who was on the premises painting a mural on the wall leading up the stairs. Lovely work, Joe!

Well, my sandwich was ready, so I had no excuse to stay any longer. As a parting gesture, I purchased a couple of spring rolls for Ed. I headed back to the office, thinking about my half- grilled cheese sandwich the entire time driving.

Do you think I only ate half?