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Restaurant Guide | Toronto's essential eateries

Ultimate Brunch Guide



NOW MAGAZINE | [JUNE 1-7, 2006](#), VOL. 25 NO. 30

ULTIMATE BRUNCH GUIDE

By STEVEN DAVEY

[Also in the Ultimate Brunch Guide](#)

NOW names T.O.'s top 50 brunch joints, from cheap to chic, plus the five best dim sum spots, our fave all-day breakfasts and four more great places to satisfy your mid-morning to late-afternoon cravings.

Caf ☐

Art Square

334 Dundas W at McCaul M5T 1G5
416-364-9611

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.artsquare.ca/>

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$20 per person, including all taxes, tip and a strong Turkish coffee

Average cost: \$10

Part gallery, part creperie, this casually elegant space across from the AGO offers a short card of expertly executed crepes both savoury and sweet. Bonus: a cozy, romantic walled-in terrace that has to be the most clandestine rendezvous around come summer.

Best: the Blue & Sea crepe, a thin folded and quartered flapjack tiered with shrimp and gently roasted garlic in mild blue cheese cream; others topped with grilled chicken and Mayan organic chocolate, melted mozzarella and assertive garlicky tomato pepper purée or breaded veal parmigiana, both impressively sided with grilled zucchini and eggplant lavishly dressed with quality olive oil; another with smoked salmon and creamy chvre tossed with raw red onion rings and briny caper berries, accompanied by organic greens in balsamic vinaigrette

Coffee Shop @ If Lounge

1212 Dundas W at Lakeview M6J 1X5
416-588-4900

Rating: NNNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$18 per person, including all taxes, tip and a domestic lager

Average cost: \$8

All shiny chrome, exposed brick and curvy banquettes, this remarkably welcoming bo☐te delivers a considerably skilled early-morning menu to a

[Brunch Guide](#)

[Reservations about brunch](#)

[Planet Brunch](#)

[Don't miss Piggy's](#)

[Checking out Czechoski](#)

[Packed Pierce](#)

[Top 5 dim sum](#)

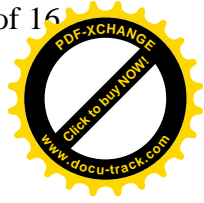
[Top 5 all-day breakfast](#)

[Veg Out](#) - Vegetarian life
Toronto-style

[Patio Guide](#) - Toronto's 50
Best Patios

[Eat Cheap](#) - Toronto's Top 25
Cheap Restos

[Bar and Pub Guide](#) -
Toronto's 150 best bars



neighbourhood where the primary dining destination up till now has been the local KFC.

Best: to start, warm cinnamon and cardamom biscuits with ripe strawberries and mint; continue with the house's spectacular mini-burgers, a beefy trio of 3-ounce medium-rare black Angus patties served on miniature pada, the first topped with Roma tomato, fresh buffalo bocconcini, garlicky mayo and a basil leaf, the second with crumbled feta and sliced English cucumber, the third dolloped with wasabi aioli and crunchy tempura batter, all sided with roasted baby red potatoes and/or sesame-dressed mesclun; banana-stuffed 'n' toasted pecan-tossed French toast or vanilla-bean waffles sloshed with blueberry maple syrup

Gayley's

1424 Dundas W at Gladstone M6J 1Y5

416-538-3443

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$10 per person, including all taxes, tip and a coffee

Average cost: \$6

This brick-lined casual cafe fitted out with moulded plywood Eames-style chairs, a few pews and bare-topped tables is a west-side secret. Rarely too crowded, the relaxed room - if it were any more laid-back, it'd be horizontal - always has stacks of newspapers to read, and its competent kitchen whips up a respectable all-day breakfast for only \$5.95. Bonus: kid-friendly. Warning: kid-friendly.

Best: basic eggs Benedict with ham or smoked salmon, sided with perfunctory home fries; blueberry or chocolate pancakes sided with fresh fruit or bacon; fruit crepes with whipped cream; from the kiddie card, Pigs In Blanket and mini-pancakes; to drink, house-made iced tea or lemonade

Grapefruit Moon

968 Bathurst at Follis M5R 3G6

416-534-9056

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.grapefruitmoon.ca/>

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$20 per person, including all taxes, tip and an organic lager

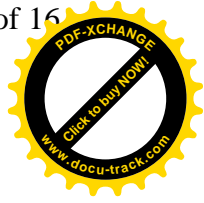
Average cost: \$10

Although some of this funky, mostly vegetarian storefront cafe's original charm was demolished on a recent episode of a local restaurant makeover show whose name escapes us, much of its socially conscious card based on locally sourced products remains. Bonus: sweet, unobtrusive servers.

Best: amply packed flour tortillas grilled with egg and optional avocado, black beans, sun-dried tomato and five varieties of cheese; Brie and roasted red pepper sided with oven-roasted sweet potato frites; Rarebit Breakfast, free-range poached eggs with pea meal or tempeh veggie bacon on multigrain with cheddar sauce and home fries; Sunny's grilled cheese sandwich with avocado, tomato and onion

Le Cafe Vert

946 Queen E at Morse



416-939-3118

Rating: NNNNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$18 per person, including all taxes, tip and a green organic coffee

Average cost: \$10

This tiny Leslieville storefront luncheonette serves a tasty all-day card that's not only mostly organic, but cooked with heart as well as social conviction. Warning: start lining up now for weekend brunch.

Best: Vert's massive gluten-free baked breakfast, a thick, eggy pseudo-quiche loaded with cheese and bacon in a crust made of home fries plated with baked sweet potato strips augmented with chipotle cr me fra che but completely free of wheat; fabulous house-baked chocolate croissant bread pudding splashed with organic maple syrup, sided with blackberry fruit salad; free-range eggs Benny with creamy organic hollandaise; to finish, organic cinnamon buns

Mitzi's

100 Sorauren at Pearson M6R 2E2

416-588-1234

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$22 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of plonk

Average cost: \$10

So popular it's opened a sibling spot - Mitzi's Sister on west Queen West - this quirky kid-friendly storefront luncheonette on a tree-lined street in Parkdale has been serving formidable weekday breakfasts and weekend brunches for over a decade. Warning: lineups Saturday and Sunday.

Best: constantly rotating card of eggy things like thick challah French toast dolloped with ripe strawberries and whipping cream, sided with herbed home fries and brunch garnish; perfectly poached eggs over wilted spinach chiffonade; maple-syruped lemon poppyseed pancakes tossed with pecans; for the rug rats, plain scrambled eggs

Poor John's Caf 

1610 Queen W at Callender M6R 1A8

647-435-2688

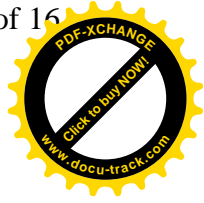
Rating: NNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$15 per person, including all taxes, tip and an organic fair trade coffee

Average cost: \$8

Cool and casual lunch 'n' brunch spot decked out in retro castaways: 30s velvet settees, 40s formica dinette sets and 50s Danish modern coffee tables. Though the lineup's limited, the flavours are big.

Best: superbly poached eggs over toasted Portuguese cornbread topped with sweet tomato sauce and sharp Pico cheese, a grilled rasher of spicy chorizo on the side; Masala Frittata, a lightly curried scramble wrapped in chapati and dolloped with raita, sugary chutney and fab chunky oven-baked home fries made from both waxy white and sweet yellow potato; to finish, dense carrot cake topped with whipped cream-cheese frosting or double-fudge brownies; to drink, shade-grown Sumatran espresso



· Saving Grace

907 Dundas W at Bellwoods M6J 1V9
416-703-7368

Rating: NNNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$15 per person, including all taxes, tip and a latte

Average cost: \$8

When owner/chef Monica Miller's deceptively anonymous space - white-on-white walls, minimalist decor, 20 seats tops - opened six years ago, friends thought she was mad to open on this dreary inner-city strip. Now that Dundas West is the snazziest address around, they join the queue with the rest of us at her charming caf  for straightforward brekkies priced to go easy on the pocketbook. Warning: from the menu, "There are no substitutions, be pleasant to your server, Saving Grace girls are always right; and you may be asked to change seats."

Best: devilishly textured corn cakes accompanied by chili-fired mango chutney and greens dressed with sun-dried tomato vinaigrette; waffle du jour with real maple syrup, or very plain scrambled eggs with pumpernickle toast and oven-roasted home fries; French toast with caramelized bananas in maple syrup

· Vienna Home Bakery

626 Queen W at Markham M6J 1E4
416-703-7278

Rating: NNNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$18 per person, including all taxes, tip and a coffee

Average cost: \$10

Though not as well known as her superstar-chef sibling Greg, Gay Couillard has an equally stellar pedigree. A consummate baker and true Queen West original, she's been turning out posh breakfasts from this retro spot for more than 20 years. Most weekends, you'll find a group out front waiting for the authentic 40s luncheonette to open.

Best: to commence, sour cream currant scones with house-made preserves, or ginger muffins with lemon curd; larger dishes like the legendary poached Eggs Bombay on house-baked whole wheat toast sauced with curried lime-coconut milk hollandaise and home fries or mesclun; three-egg vegetarian omelette with spinach and feta, with toast and home fries or salad

Contemporary

· Edward Levesque's Kitchen

1290 Queen E at Hastings M4L 1C4
416-465-3600

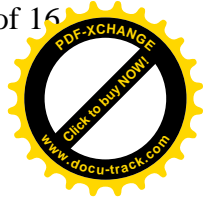
<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.edwardlevesque.ca/>

Rating: NNNNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$20 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of plonk

Average cost: \$9

Leslieville's best-kept secret ain't so covert now that it's finally been discovered by the mainstream. Looking small from the street, this converted greasy spoon opens to a larger but equally low-key space that recalls a Sudbury church basement circa 1956. Warning: weekend lineups!



Best: toasted cumin- and chili-rubbed steak with two sunny-side-up eggs or organic greens; blueberry waffles with whipped honey and mascarpone; Montasio Frico, fried cheese pancake coupled with asparagus, poached egg and salad; latkes topped with Kristappson's smoked salmon, sour cream and chives; poached eggs over herbed polenta in rosemary tomato sauce topped with Pecorino

· Gallery Grill

Hart House, 7 Hart House Circle at Wellesley M5S 3H3

416-978-2445

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.gallerygrill.com/>

Rating: NNNNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$35 per person, including all taxes, tip and a sweet sherry

Average cost: \$15

The former private club room for U of T staff and faculty, the restaurant located in Hart House's Great Hall still feels exclusive, all Gothic revival stonework, severe wooden furniture and coat-of-arms china. However, the grub - from the highly capable kitchen of chef Suzanne Baby - and welcoming professional service bring the former old boys club into the 21st century

Best: start with, warm cilantro-freckled biscuits with pear butter; chicken liver parfait with herbed toasts and grenache gelée; follow with innovative mains like souffled Stilton and chevre flan with house-cured duck prosciutto, thyme-poached pear, roasted beets, plum drizzle, and toasted almond salad; spicy pulled pork with white bean crostini, baby arugula, and celeriac remoulade; soft-poached egg on shiitake, oyster & porcini mushroom galette with melted Oka:

Joy Bistro

884 Queen E at Booth

416-465-8855

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$25 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of wine

Average cost: \$12

Popular MOR east-side café raises its profile with the introduction of big-name chef David Chrystian. The culinary trademarks that made him famous at Café Societa, Patriot and the original Drake are still here, if in somewhat muted form.

Best: Chrystian's eponymous burger with house frites; wrapped in a house-made flatbread, lamb and chickpea roti with seedlings 'n' greens in creamy coriander dressing; Eggs Teddy, hollandaised poached eggs on toasted English muffin layered with peameal bacon, spinach and roasted red onion

Niagara Street Café

169 Niagara at Wellington M5V 1C9

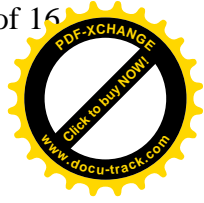
416-703-4222

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.niagarastreetcafe.com/>

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$20 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of plonk

Average cost: \$9



With the arrival of chef Michael Caballo, this casually cozy west-side eatery continues its evolution from funky home cooking to bistro-style basics. Bonus: all meats naturally raised or certified organic.

Best: begin with irresistible potato rosti dolloped with sour cream and roasted-apple compote, or house-baked banana bread; follow with Huevos A La Mancha, a pair of poached eggs coupled with pork belly, Manchego pistou and home fries; hot oatmeal porridge with stewed organic fruit; Ancient Grain French Toast with fresh strawberries and raisin-kissed mascarpone cream

Pop Bistro

686 Queen E at Broadview M4M 1G9
416-461-9663

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.popbistro.ca/>

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$22 per person, including all taxes, tip, and a glass of wine

Average cost: \$10

Goodbye jukeboxes, hello supper-club chic. This former greasy spoon gets recast as an intimate 24-seat Riverside resto complete with a card that combines French bistro fare with comfort food favourites

Best: to start, beet and chive salad with port shallot reduction; mains like Eggs Norwegian, salmon gravlax topped with runny poached eggs over Ace Bakery brioche; Croque Legume, grilled zucchini, eggplant and bell pepper on baguette; Spanish omelette with chorizo, feta, tomato and black olives; steak frites with eggs

Toast

993 Queen E at Pape M4M 1K2
416-469-8222

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$25 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of wine

Average cost: \$12

Tony Barnaby's long-running kitchen of kitsch, formerly Hello Toast, offers weekend brunch in a room full of tchotchkes and bric-a-brac: antique toasters, 40s dining room furniture and a chandelier made from 50s fibreglass lamps. Warning: lineups!

Best: deluxe eggs Benedict with smoked salmon smothered in creamy dill hollandaise atop two toasted English muffins alongside crunchy potato hash; two perfectly poached eggs Florentine covered in house hollandaise and more hash; challah French toast stuffed with tart cranberry and Philly cream cheese, sided with farmer's sausage; house-made granola with yogurt parfait and fresh fruit

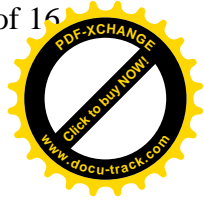
Toba

243 King E at Sherbourne M5A 1J9
416-367-8622

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.toba.ca/>

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$25 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of wine



Average cost: \$12

After stints at Ellipsis, Mildred Pierce and Zucca, Tony Barone's laid-back east-side eatery comes by its pedigree legitimately. Pair chic decor - Chinese red walls, black panelling, Hockneyesque paintings of shimmering pastel pools - with a mainsteam Cal-Ital card and it's obvious why this hot spot endures while others fade away.

Best: the Hangover Helper, scrambled eggs with chorizo, scallion and peppers served with wilted organic greens and whole wheat toast; Peking duck crepes slathered with hoisin; corned beef hash thick with shredded potato and sweet onions, layered with a pair of expertly poached eggs sauced with hollandaise and chipotle purée

Universal Grill

1071 Shaw at Dupont M6G 3N4

416-588-5928

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.universalgrill.ca/>

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$22 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of wine

Average cost: \$10

Emily Shaw's and Jenny Andreoli's long-running luncheonette dishes out contemporary grub in nostalgic digs. Sit on swivelable barstools at a refurbished 20s soda fountain or in comfy wooden booths shielded by film noir venetian blinds - a retro futuristic yet timeless look, universal even. The grub's global, too - Pacific Rim with spicy stopovers in the Caribbean.

Best: to start, half a pink grapefruit; follow with potato latkes with salmon gravlax, capers and designer greens; Tex-Mex-esque huevos rancheros with a side of grilled chorizo; Black Angus steak and eggs with house home fries; buttermilk pancakes with raspberry compote and fruit salad; cheezy scrambled eggs with whole wheat toast

Verveine

1097 Queen E at Pape M4M 1K7

416-405-9906

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.verveine.ca/>

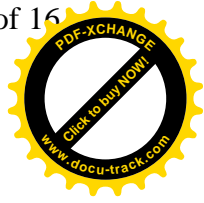
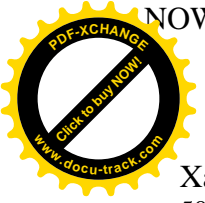
Rating: NNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$25 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of wine

Average cost: \$12

Downtown comes to Leslieville in this mid-size bistro serving contemporary takes on classic European cuisine. A smart beige-on-beige room, smooth service and a proven kitchen make this local secret a deserved hit.

Best: freshly squeezed juice du jour; baskets of house-baked rolls and house-made jam; Santa Fe-style toad-in-the-hole eggs in hollowed-out then grilled cornbread alongside sliced avocado and mild salsa; scrambled eggs with Kristapsons smoked salmon on a bed of baby spinach, buttermilk biscuit on the side; Brunch Burrito stuffed with chorizo, bell peppers, Jack and scrambled eggs, sided with with bean salad, sour cream and salsa; bottomless cups of house brew



Xacutti

503 College at Palmerston M6G 1A5
416-323-3957

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.xacutti.com/>

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$25 per person, including all taxes, tip and a Masala Mary

Average cost: \$12

Here's a place for those who enjoy clubby music, loud chatter and lineups with their espresso and eggs. A beautiful room, with people to match.

Best: to begin, warm cardamum biscuits; to follow, spicy overstuffed scrambled eggs with smoked salmon on a delightfully fresh croissant, served with excellent Indian-style home fries and spring mix; Bengal chicken coconut curry on fresh, slightly crispy cracked-pepper tea biscuits; banana macadamia flapjacks with brown sugar butter

Diner

Boom Breakfast

808 College at Ossington M6G 1C8
416-534-3447

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.boombreakfast.com/>

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$15 per person, including all taxes, tip and a smoothie

Average cost: \$9

With its all-day breakfast lineup and modern diner decor, this busy storefront resto has the buzz of a frantic Fran's, equal parts animated conversation, steaming espresso machine and the clink of china and cutlery. Regulars know to show up early for assured variations on bacon 'n' eggs and comfort-food-style lunch classics.

Best: three types of Benedict including the Boom topped with smoked salmon and lemony hollandaise, with frites and chef's "garnish"; huevos-rancheros-style whole wheat wrap stuffed with salsa-fied scrambled egg, refried beans, guacamole and sour cream; chocolate chip pancakes; lassi-like smoothies like the Honey Bee - yogurt, honey, banana and blueberries

Freshwood Grill

293 Roncesvalles at Westminster M6R 2M3
416-537-1882

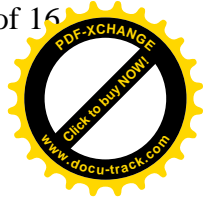
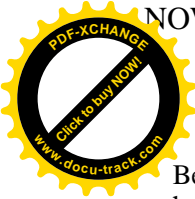
<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.freshwoodgrill.com/>

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches \$18 per person, including all taxes, tip and a domestic beer

Average cost: \$9

Fresh wood grill, more like, as this diner cooks nearly all of its comfort-food card on a Canadian-hardwood-burning stove. Sometimes it's a bit overpowering - smoky grilled salad? - but when it's under control there's no question why locals have made this retro resto a hit straight out of the box. Bonus: a large, tree-lined enclosed patio out back away from the avenue.



Best: all-day-till close three-egg breakfasts with home fries, refried beans and house-baked bagel with optional grilled tomato, sausage, peamel or steak; thin-crust breakfast pizza topped with ricotta, cheddar, tomato, bacon 'n' eggs; sourdough pancakes with grilled banana and maple syrup; breakfast BLT with additional fried over-easy egg

Okay Okay

1128 Queen E at Bertmount M4M 1K8
416-461-2988

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$15 per person, including all taxes and tip

Average cost: \$9

Once the lowest of low-rent dives, this lovingly restored east-side eatery captures the rock 'n' roll diner aesthetic to a T. Add cool 60s tunes on the radio, smooth professional staff plus an upscale all-day breakfast card and Okay Okay proves more than okay, okay?

Best: Eggs Brunhilde, two expertly poached eggs over deep-fried potato fritters layered with grilled asparagus and smoked Kristapsons salmon in a somewhat wimpy horseradish hollandaise; scrambles of the day - sloppy omelettes more like - like caramelized leek with fancy French Brie; splendid blueberry or banana buttermilk pancakes with real maple syrup and whipped butter

Swan

892 Queen W at Crawford M6J 1G3
416-532-0452

Rating: NNNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$20 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of wine

Average cost: \$10

This ugly-duckling luncheonette has shed its greasy-spoon past and emerged as a swanky joint du jour. Warm service and cool tunes - Louis Prima, 60s Hammond organ jazz - match the low-key restoration of the diner's original furnishings, right down to the period vinyl booths, mother-in-law's tongue and venetian blinds.

Best: to wake up, half a grapefruit with brown suger; continue with Hangtown Fry, a smoked Oyster Boy oyster frittata coupled with crisp home fries and homemade seven-grain toast; the inevitable eggs Benedict unusually topped with spinach and mildly smoked trout or spicy capicola; mussels du jour

French

Bonjour Brioche

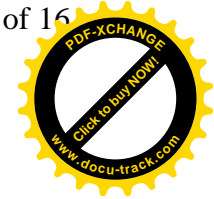
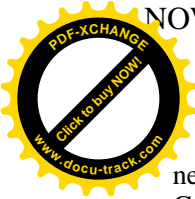
812 Queen E at Degrassi M4M 1H7
416-406-1250

Rating: NNNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$20 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of wine

Average cost: \$9

Master baker Henri Feasson and partner Lori Feasson helm this long-running



neighbourhood caf  famed for its all-day continental breakfasts and definitive Gallic charm. Bonus: every Saturday and Sunday Feasson bakes his signature giant brioche. Warning: weekend lineups!

Best: from the ever-changing chalkboard lineup, prosciutto, Gorgonzola and arugula pesto quiche; specials like Torta Rustica paired with designer greens in basil vinaigrette and a house-baked baguette; savoury flans like tomato, basil and ch vre or classic onion 'n' Gruy re; smoked salmon and scrambled eggs with rosti, creamed horseradish and caviar; Croque Madame on brioche layered with ham, Gruy re and a fried egg

Clafouti

915 Queen W at Strachan M6J 1G5
416-603-1935

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.clafouti.ca/>

Rating: NNNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$10 per person, including all taxes and an Illy coffee

Average cost: \$5

Before sun-up each morning, ex-Parisian patissier Olivier Jensen-Reynaud starts a fresh batch of what are arguably Toronto's best croissants. No wonder there's a lineup out front before the too-chic caf  has even opened. Cramped quarters and a few tiny tables guarantee a near-perpetual mob scene when there's a total of three people in the joint.

Best: the now-legendary house croissant, oversized and warm from the oven, available plain, almond-cruste  or filled with chocolate or figs, as well as stuffed and baked with asparagus and Swiss cheese or mushrooms and Asiago; cookbook-correct quiche laced with smoked salmon, spinach and tarragon; egg salad on croissant

La Palette

256 Augusta at College M5T 2L9
416-929-4900

Rating: NNNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$22 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of wine

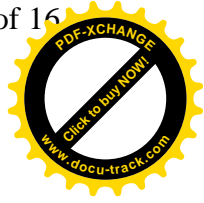
Average cost: \$10

Forget the hype and hubbub of other bistros. Here's a much-loved low-key bo te serving no-nonsense caf  standards that just happen to be French. Add suave service and a classic card with a deft touch with grilled meats and the sum is an unpretentious spot that defies food fads. Bonus: one of the largest imported beer selections in town!

Best: to start, Fromage Tiede, almond-cruste  Camembert with arugula shoots and black grape coulis; mains like the Croque Madame, Black Forest ham and Provolone on grilled challah topped with a fried egg; Omelette Espagnole, spicy Market chorizo stewed in stout and sauteed with marinated onion, roasted spuds and Dutch Chimay Gouda; tender duck-leg confit with stellar frites

Le Petit Dejeuner

191 King E at George M5A 1J5
416-703-1560



lepetitdejeuner.ca

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$18 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of wine

Average cost: \$8

Although it's had many handles (anyone remember Triple X?), this funky laid-back east-side storefront with the sparkly naugahyde booths features a first-rate all-day breakfast card created by Belgian-born owner/chef Johan Maes (Innocenti, Rosewood, Windsor Arms). Warning: it's so busy on the weekend, Belgian waffles are limited to two per table!

Best: super Croque Monsieur, buttery grilled challah with layered ham and melted Gruyère, sauced with subtle Dijon-nipped béchamel and broiled till bubbly; Toast Champignon, a halved and toasted bagel tiered with grilled 'shrooms, bacon, onion and a runny poached egg, sided with rosti timbale and slightly pickled veggies over apple julienne; to drink, hot house-made apple cider

· Thuet

609 King W at Portland M5V 1M5

416-603-2777

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.thuet.ca/>

Rating: NNNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$45 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of wine

Average cost: \$20

Alsation chef Marc Thuet's and partner Biana Zorich's upscale brasserie moves slightly down-market with an accessible card of classic comfort food that often dazzles. Warning: since this is one of the hottest brunches around and they don't take reservations, show up early or stand in line. For what seems like days.

Best: start with onion soup gratin Les Halles, or thin rounds of roasted organic beets topped with melting Quebecois chèvre and frisée dressed with hazelnut vinaigrette; follow with steak frites slathered with parsley butter and sided with sea-salted skinny spuds; Kobe steak haché, a bunless cheeseburger 'n' fries topped with goat cheese and house-cured bacon; exemplary quiche Lorraine; seared smoked pork loin over house-baked brioche French toast drizzled with Quebec maple syrup

Italian

· Bar One

924 Queen W at Shaw M6J 1G6

416-535-1655

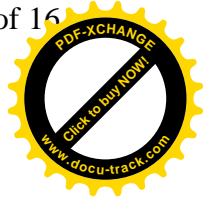
<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.bar-one.com/>

Rating: NNNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$25 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of wine

Average cost: \$12

With its stylish Ralph Giannone design and a family connection to two of College Street's most fabled haunts (Bar Italia and Ellipsis), this streamlined satellite brings cachet to Queen West's condo frontier. Hip decor and mid-range prices make the long, narrow room dominated by a long, communal table one of the strip's most happening spots.



Best: perfectly executed Ovo Bucu, baked egg in focaccia with wilted spinach and smoked salmon in chipotle hollandaise; Roast Beef Benito over mustard-slathered English muffin topped with poached eggs, arugula, caramelized onion and spicy hollandaise; breakfast pizzas topped with chopped hard-boiled egg, peameal bacon 'n' chives; chocolate chip pancakes

· Big Ragu

1338 Lansdowne at St. Clair W M6H 3Z8
416-654-7248

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.thebigragu.com/>

Rating: NNNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$20 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of wine

Average cost: \$10

Ever seen the movie Big Night? This smallish, old-school trattoria is a veritable shrine to the flick, right down to movie posters on the wall, the soundtrack playing on the CD player and a retro card of what owner/chef Carmine "The Big Ragu" Accogli refers to as grandma dishes, central and southern Italian favourites cooked with Old World skill. All that's missing are dripping candles in Chianti bottles.

Best: baskets of just-baked mini-croissants; Buongiorno Marco, a trio of perfectly poached eggs bathed in pulpy house tomato sauce, bacon and caramelized onion; Dammi Tutto, a heap of parsley-fied scrambled eggs paired with roasted rosemary-flecked home fries and meatball-style Italian sausage; the Spaghetti Western, a large egg frittata thick with pasta, peameal and Parmesan sided with house-baked baguette; Cappa Tosta, house-baked raisin-bread French toast with maple syrup

· L'Espresso Bar Mercurio

321 Bloor W at St. George M5S 1S5
416-596-2233

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.barmercurio.com/>

Rating: NNNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$18 per person, including all taxes, tip and a coffee

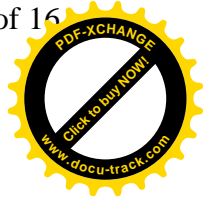
Average cost: \$10

The streamlined sibling of Bar Mercurio kitty-corner across the street, this budget-minded bistro on the ground floor of U of T's Woodsworth College specializes in a short all-day card of panini, salads and traditional egg breakfasts. Swellegant digs, a great view of the passing street scene and friendly service make L'Espresso a hit straight outta the box.

Best: free-range egg omelettes such as the Calabrese with artichoke, sopressata and Asiago, or multiple mushrooms coupled with roasted red pepper and creamy mascarpone, both sided with salad, grilled baguette and fries; over flaky house-baked brioche, eggs Benedict, properly poached eggs with buttery hollandaise and Black Forest ham, served with fruit salad and house-baked scones and strawberry preserves

Japanese

Soba Sunday @ Hiro Sushi



171 King E at Jarvis M5A 1J4
416-304-0550

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$35 per person, including all taxes, tip and a sake

Average cost: \$20

Ted and Eiko Iizuka bring the traditional Japanese noodle ritual to one of downtown's favourite sushi spots. Call it the ascetic aesthetic - a series of macrobiotic dishes based on handmade buckwheat pasta that's not only a treat for the taste buds but health-conscious, too.

Best: over mugs of nutty roasted soybean tea, the ritual begins with dry-fried sprouted soybeans and buckwheat crackers with a sweet miso jam; it continues with Okonomi Soba, a sampling of the kitchen's three most popular dishes - chilled hand-cut noodles in soy and bonito tsuyu topped with snow crab, pudding-like puree of Japanese yam, and creamy house-made organic tofu garnished with slivered scallion; the ceremony concludes with a steaming teapot of soba-yu, the nutrient-rich liquid left over from boiling the soba

Jewish

Bella's Bistro at Free Times Cafe

320 College at Major M5T 1S3

416-967-1078

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.freetimescafe.com/>

Rating: NNNN

Complete cost: buffet for \$18.95 per person (under 12 half-price, infants free), not including taxes, tip or additional beverage

Average cost: n/a

Despite its hippie digs, this cozy, casual eatery offers a first-rate Jewish-grandmother-style all-you-can-eat - and eat and eat and eat - Sunday brunch that will make even you feel like a mensch no matter what your ethnic identity.

Bonus: live soulful klezmer soundtrack.

Best: blissful blintzes stuffed with lemony ricotta, sided with cinnamon-spiked apple sauce and smooth sour cream; cookbook-correct latkes and house-made gefilte fish; fluffy scrambled eggs loaded with sweet lox; authentic pickled beet and herring salads; St. Urbain bagels; dreamy chocolate poppy seed cake; recently squeezed orange juice and OK coffee, too

Mediterranean

Musa

847 Dundas W at Euclid M6J 1V6

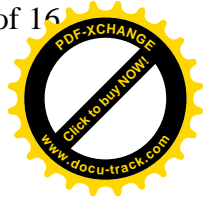
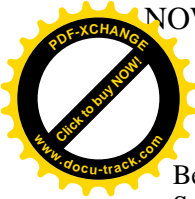
416-368-8484

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$20 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of wine

Average cost: \$9

A low-key hipster haunt on the too-cool stretch of Dundas, this eastern-Mediterranean-style resto offers contemporary takes on casual Greek and Turkish mezes and mains in a sunny, al fresco setting. Bonus: low-markup house plonk by the glass.



Best: rotating roster of omelette specials like mushroom, onion and bacon with Swiss, or rapini, onion and Brie, coupled with roasted spuds or galette and toast; savoury chicken and mushroom crepes layered with Bechamel and sided with house-made salsa; Tropicana scrambled eggs on avocado topped with grilled fruit and sided with toast and sausage or bacon

Pub Grub

Local 4

4 Dundonald at Yonge M4Y 1K2

416-915-0113

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$18 per person, including all taxes, tip and a Caesar

Average cost: \$9

Although it's been the home of several restos - all failed, including our beloved Youki - this casual spot with its first-rate people-watching patio may be the first to get the neighbourhood mix right.

Best: The Prince Charles, Tex-Mex-goes-vindaloo baked beans topped with gooey cheddar and a pair of hard-poached eggs served with toast "soldiers"; challah French toast slathered with cinnamon whipped cream, fresh berries and locally sourced organic maple syrup; veggie burrito with chipotle, jalapeño-kicked havarti, house-made salsa and sour cream

Vegetarian

Fressen

478 Queen W at Denison M5V 2B2

416-504-5127

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.herbivore.to/>

Rating: NNNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$20 per person, including all taxes, tip and a glass of organic wine

Average cost: \$9

Named one of the 14 hippest vegetarian eateries in North America by VegNews, this verging-on-luxurious lounge uses haute chinoiserie to dramatic effect. But owner/chef Stephen Gardner's card of self-described "herbivorous cuisine" steals the spotlight. Changing daily due to market availability, the dishes are always at least one-third organic and often more innovative than at restos that include meat in their repertoire.

Best: sensible sandwich of barbecued organic tofu with marinated tomato, lettuce and alfalfa sprouts on a grilled Portuguese pada bun, sided with house mesclun; wheat-free spelt, barley and berry-infused waffle topped with stewed seasonal fruit and organic maple syrup; scrambled Tofu Rancheros with halved 'n' grilled new potato home fries, squash-stuffed roasted tomato, mild salsa and guacamole and super house-baked toast

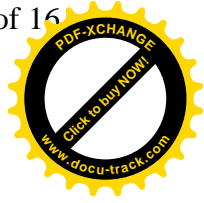
Get Real

135 Ossington at Argyle M6J 2Z6

416-532-4564

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$20 per person, including all taxes, tip and an



organic espresso
Average cost: \$9

In a small converted row house in downtown's newest gentrified nabe, this veggie vittle venue encompasses a bright front room decked out with blond moulded chairs and glass-topped café tables and a private patio out back complete with acid-flashback mural and rocking horse. Bonus: where else can you hear the Velvet Underground's Heroin while munching organic granola with low-fat yogurt?

Best: proper English breakfast of free-range eggs, tofu strips marinated in vegan Worcestershire, and organic baked beans; vegan blueberry Belgian waffles made with unbleached spelt flour and topped with maple-glazed banana, peaches, strawberry and mango compote as well as shaved organic chocolate

· Live Organic Food Bar

264 Dupont at Spadina M5R 1V7
416-515-2002

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.livefoodbar.com/>

Rating: NNNN

Complete cost: brunches for \$22 per person, including all taxes, tip and a champagne Mimosa

Average cost: \$10

An offshoot of extremely tiny but widely acclaimed vegan, mostly organic, raw food eatery Live, owner/chef Jennifer Italiano's 30-seat bistro a few doors west of the original is now stylishly done up in mod lime green and saturated orange. It's so far ahead of all other veggie venues that it was declared best vegetarian restaurant in town mere days after its launch. Warning: loud juicer!

Best: for those who don't know where to start, the Raw Combo that can include a faux lasagna of uncooked zucchini noodles layered with cashew "ricotta," tomato marinara and basil pesto, or Pizza, sprouted buckwheat crust piled with red pepper hemp "cheese," diced pineapple, faux onion rings, cashew-coriander "cream"; cinnamon flax "corn flakes" with maple-glazed pecans, almonds and sunflower seeds doused with fresh almond milk and topped with blueberries; house-made peanut butter sandwich spread with pecan butter and served on a "bagel" of cinnamon sprouts topped with strawberry-fig jam

· Pulp Kitchen

898 Queen E at Logan M4M 1J3
416-461-4612

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.pulpkitchen.ca/>

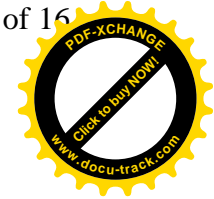
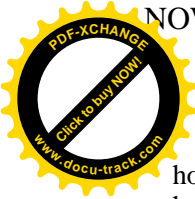
Rating: NNNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$18 per person, including all taxes, tip and a fresh-squeezed juice

Average cost: \$10

Further proof Queen East is the new Queen West, and healthy the new hip. Lounge and light funk set an upbeat tone in a calming green and birch room with tin ceiling, diner-style tables and a selection of organic fair-trade goods on offer next to a rack of browsable books.

Best: spelt and cornmeal pancakes layered with fresh berries and organic maple syrup; old-school grilled soy cheese on whole grain, sided with baked herbed



home fries, mixed greens and faux bacon; whole-grain toast with non-hydrogenated vegan margarine, house-made jam and peanut butter

Tinto

89 Roncesvalles at Marion M6R 2K6

416-530-5885

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070208195408/http://www.tinto.ca/>

Rating: NNN

Complete cost: breakfasts/brunches for \$18 per person, including all taxes, tip and a fair trade Americano

Average cost: \$8

Once a cavernous Polish restaurant, this now-airy two story caf  is part neighbourhood hang, part activist art gallery. Dawdle over fair trade lattes while browsing a selection of leftist zines, or connect the laptop to the interweb with free Wi-Fi. Bonus: though not entirely vegetarian, nearly everything's organic and/or planet-friendly, even the takeout containers.

Best: to begin, St. John's Bakery's toasted white or whole wheat organic English muffins spread with house-made raspberry jam and organic cream cheese. Tortilla De Patatas (aka Spanish omelette) with potato and eggs pan-broiled with organic canola oil sided with house-made salsa, terrific hot sauce or organic ketchup; Burrito Al Trote stuffed with mashed sweet potato, black beans and cheddar

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