

The New York Times

Travel

NYTimes: [Home](#) - [Site Index](#) - [Archive](#) - [Help](#)Go to a Section Search: All of Travel EXPLORE BRITAIN AND  
CLICK HERE TO WIN A T
[Travel Home](#) | [NYC Guide](#) | [U.S. Guides](#) | [World Guides](#) | [Activities & Interests](#) | [Escapes](#) | [I](#)

## SURFACING: TORONTO; Goodbye Gritty, Hello Trendy

By SUSAN CATTO

Published: July 31, 2005

WHEN it comes to trendy neighborhoods, Toronto's east end has traditionally lagged behind more westerly hot spots such as Queen Street West or College Street's Little Italy. Now, however, Queen Street East is the new Queen Street West, with the formerly industrial stretch known as Leslieville emerging as Toronto's hippest place to dine, drink, shop and live.

### ARTICLE TOOLS

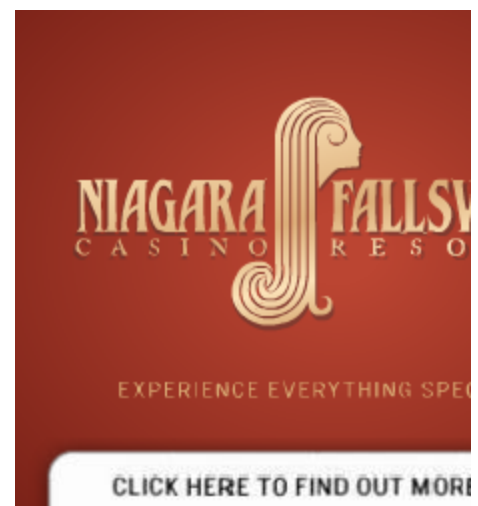
-  [Printer-Friendly Format](#)
-  [Most E-Mailed Articles](#)

East of the Don River, this neighborhood of crumbling Victorian storefronts was deemed gritty enough to stand in for Depression-era New York in the recent film "Cinderella Man." Yet even as residents speculate about which chain will arrive first -- Starbucks? Gap? -- Leslieville is the latest frontier for restaurateurs seeking cheaper rents and a hipper clientele.

"A lot of the restaurant and bar owners and the trendy people of the city, as they're growing up and getting older, they're moving into the area," said Leslie Ng, manager of the Asian pub Kubo Radio. The result has been a sharp rise not only in the price of local real estate but in dining options.

Variations on the tapas bar dominate the night life. At Kubo Radio, 894 Queen Street East, (416) 406-5826, which opened last winter, workers from nearby film studios snack on plates of grilled, wok-fried or curried seafood (\$3.35 to \$14.20, at \$1.25 Canadian to the U.S. dollar), meat and vegetables, accompanied by the city's best selection of Asian beers and sake. Monday's "chicken balls and beer" theme

Advertisement



nights feature Chinese street food and campy Asian movies.

A slightly more formal crowd grazes on small plates like polenta with roasted vegetable tapenade (\$9.25) at OverJoy, at No. 884, (416) 465-8855, a second-story chandelier-filled room with a spacious deck. Ted Koutsogiannopoulos (whose bistro Joy has operated on the main floor for six years) opened OverJoy in February to capitalize on the increase in evening revelers. "Leslieville is growing like crazy," he said. "We're becoming busier and busier by the day."

Compact portions and intense flavors, such as pulled pork with poblano salsa (\$8.35), are also on the menu at Barrio Lounge, No. 896, (416) 572-0600. This unpretentious place is fertile ground for long evenings of cocktails and conversation. Gio Rana's Really, Really Nice Restaurant, No. 1220, (416) 469-5225, is housed in a former bank. It draws a fashionable crowd with its traditional Italian dishes like roasted duck leg or gnocchi with sage (\$5 to \$10.80).

Brunch is practically a competitive sport in Toronto, and Queen Street East is one of its premier arenas. The area benefits from the overflow from Bonjour Brioche, No. 812, (416) 406-1250, a few blocks west of Leslieville, where weekend lines for French toast (\$5.85) and warm croissants (\$1.15) drive some patrons to venture farther east. At Pulp Kitchen, No. 898, (416) 461-4612, with 1950's diner décor and a vegan menu, a juice bar offers instant restoration (entrees \$8.35 to \$13.35; juices from \$4). Eggs are elegant at Verveine, No. 1097, (416) 405-9906, arriving scented with truffles and served with buttery Kristapsons smoked salmon (\$10). Edward Levesque's Kitchen, No. 1290, (416) 465-3600, puts an upscale twist on diner classics like a chicken club sandwich with oven-roasted tomatoes (\$7.75).

With the increase in local traffic, Leslieville's vintage furniture shops are no longer the secret trove of local set designers. The small and selective Ethel, No. 1091, (416) 778-6608, focuses on notable designers from the 1920's to 70's; a 20's Mies van der Rohe chair goes for \$460. Vintage teak, rosewood and 1980's pieces are popular at Machine Age Modern, No. 1000, (416) 461-3588, while Eye Spy, No. 1100, (416) 461-4061, a favorite for midcentury modern furniture, recently added contemporary jewelry and gifts.