

# Brick and Mortar

## YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD, YOUR NEIGHBOURS

BY LESLIE SINCLAIR

### 1 MABEL'S FABLES CHILDREN'S BOOKSTORE

Any bookstore inhabited by a ginger cat is bound to be a special place, and at Mabel's Fables there's no lack of whimsy or warmth. Specializing in children's books – baby to age 7 on the first floor, and age 8 to teenager on the second – you're sure to be charmed by the brightly coloured shelves, the candy-striped bench for reading, and the stuffed characters from classic children's literature hidden overhead and throughout the store. Mabel's Fables opened in 1988 and is known for its exceptional service. But which came first? The cat, Mable, or the bookstore? "It's sort of a chicken and the egg kind of thing," says General Manager, Melissa Bourdon-King with an air of mystery, not unlike the best of books. Don't forget to check out the adult "treat section" on the way up the stairs – the books are always 20% off.

662 Mount Pleasant Road, 416-322-0438, [mabelsfables.com](http://mabelsfables.com)

### 2 DOLCE & GOURMANDO

Dolce & Gourmando have mastered the art of the perfect gift. "This is what we do best," says owner Seta Danielian, "it's a blend of gifts and specialty foods." Drawing from an extensive array of fine foods and giftware onsite, Dolce & Gourmando creates customized one-of-a-kind packages for any theme or recipient – whether that theme is baby, gender-specific, or something else. You bring the idea and Dolce & Gourmando executes it. Ever bought the perfect gift for someone, such as a special book, but didn't think it was enough to give on its own? Dolce & Gourmando can help with you that dilemma, using your item as a jumping off point and packaging it perfectly with other items the recipient would appreciate. "We can do pretty much everything and if we don't have it, we have the ways and means to source it," Seta says.

1493 Bayview Avenue, 416-915-8840, [dolcegourmando.com](http://dolcegourmando.com)

### 3 OLIVE OIL EMPORIUM

Everything at Olive Oil Emporium is available for tasting, in fact, it's encouraged. Owner, Andreas Voulgaris wants you to find your perfect oil. "Everyone likes different things; everyone cooks differently," he says. "Our palates are all different. It's not about standing behind a bottle and saying, 'This is the best olive oil in the world' – we all like different things." And with nearly 70 olive oils and balsamic vinegars – all on tap – it's impossible to walk away without a new appreciation for the olive. Trying the oils and vinegars side-by-side gives customers an immediate reference point so they can identify the flavours they like best. The Olive Oil Emporium then bottles that favourite to take home. The store's bulk format ensures the utmost freshness which is critical to its flavour. Says Andreas, "An olive oil should taste alive. It should taste fresh. It should taste like the fruit that it's from."

1707 Bayview Avenue, 416-902-9060, [oliveoilemporium.com](http://oliveoilemporium.com)

**LESLIE SINCLAIR** is a freelance writer in the St. Clair West Village.

Leslie loves to write about people and subculture.

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