



# Brick and Mortar

## YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD, YOUR NEIGHBOURS

BY LESLIE SINCLAIR

### 1 LEAH'S

"It's a very one-on-one thing, Valentine's Day," says Leah Kalish. It's a busy day at her bakery on St. Clair West, but very specific. "It's a tiny something," she says. "It's not a whole cake because it's not a party for a lot of people." Leah has been baking for over 25 years, starting as a young girl baking out of her family's kitchen. When her enterprise outgrew her own home kitchen, Leah worked from commercial kitchens for many years until deciding she wanted the personal connection with the community that having a retail space provides. And so in February 2010, Leah opened her retail bakery. "You have a thousand new friends," says Leah. "That's the nice part about the retail and it's such a bonus." This Valentine's Day, Leah's will spotlight heart-shaped brownies, shortbread cookies adorned with slogans about love, and pretty much any kind of baked good made to order.

621 St. Clair Avenue West, 416-785-4711 [leahs.ca](http://leahs.ca)

### 2 EMBLEM FLOWERS

"Receiving flowers is always amazing – it's an ephemeral and luxurious gift, which usually makes the recipient feel so special," says Todd Caldwell, owner of Emblem Flowers. That said, for Valentine's Day, Todd prefers to steer clients away from buying a dozen roses because it's a day all over the world where roses are at a massive premium. Instead, he encourages people to choose mixed arrangements that include roses. That kind of arrangement looks more robust and special, he says. Emblem, which Todd took over in 2013, has a long history – more than 20 years – in the Annex. Working out of an old industrial studio space by the train tracks with lots of natural light, Emblem strives to make beautiful, full arrangements with a botanical twist. "Everything we do is custom made to order with the most spectacular products locally grown and from around the world," Todd says.

390 Dupont Street, 416-972-9878 [emblemflowers.com](http://emblemflowers.com)

### 3 LA NUIT

Three and a half years ago, Zabine Rattansi walked away from the corporate world and bought the shop she has since turned into the kind of lingerie boutique she wanted when she was in financial services: La Nuit. Zabine stocks key lines such as Hanro, La Perla and Zimmerli but she also seeks out the exquisite and rare, for example, I.D. Sarrieri, an exceptional, hard-to-get brand from Bucharest that produces lines with Swarovski crystals and the best laces in the world. "For a small store we have a pretty big variety," Zabine says. La Nuit also carries speciality products such as high-tech workout panties that are also great for travelling in warm climates, and undergarments to help women who have gone through cancer. "I think sometimes Valentine's is overrated and people feel pressured; you don't have to spend a gazillion dollars," says Zabine. Aside from lingerie, La Nuit offers a range of easy gifts like jewellery, fragrances and unique fur cuffs – all beautifully gift wrapped.

406 Spadina Road, 416-481-8383 [lanuitspadina.com](http://lanuitspadina.com)

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