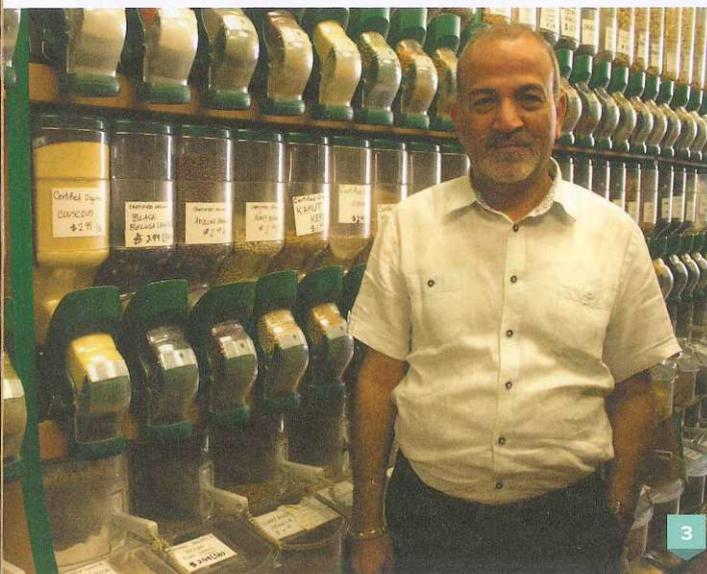


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Brick and Mortar

BY LESLIE SINCLAIR

1 THE MAD BEAN

Back in 2010, residents of The Eglinton Way weren't sure what to think of The Mad Bean, the new coffee shop with the downtown, Queen West vibe. But owner, Brian Roxborough, knew entering that neighbourhood meant his shop had to stand apart from the big chains. "We felt that we should really be different and have that true indie coffee feel, get the community involved and make it a place where local artists could hang their work and local musicians could play," he says. It worked; the Mad Bean celebrated its five-year anniversary in April. The shop proudly roasts Velvet Sunrise and Hale Coffee, but serving up exceptional fair trade, organic coffee is just part of The Mad Bean's charm. The décor is so warm and inviting – complete with exposed brick walls and a bookshelf to peruse – you'll want to stay awhile. You can even have a drink named after you.

519 Eglinton Avenue West 647-235-2456 themadbean.com

2 URBAN FARE CATERING & FOOD SHOP

Offering fresh eat-in and take-home meals, and a line of gourmet frozen foods, Urban Fare Catering and Food Shop makes it easy to eat well. "People always ask me what it is that separates us," says owner, Paul Jannetta. "It's that we really love what we do." Paul grew up in a food-loving family and then went on to study cooking. In the 90s, he started cooking for family and friends and his catering business grew rapidly. By 2001, it was time for his wife, Eva, to join the company. Eva spearheaded Urban Fare's boutique food shop, which offers a range of unique gifts as well as lovely food. "She has created such a beautiful shop in this neighbourhood. It's one of a kind," Paul says proudly. At the end of the day, Urban Fare gives back to the community by working with neighbourhood shelters to ensure no leftover food goes to waste.

1415 Bathurst Street 416-532-1010 urbanfarecatering.com

3 EVERGREEN NATURAL FOODS

Evergreen Natural Foods is your one stop shop for healthy living on St. Clair West. Although Evergreen has been a West Village staple for many years, its previously unassuming exterior might have caused newcomers to overlook it. Fortunately, it recently got a makeover and the store now looks like the shining neighbourhood star that it is. Venture inside and you'll find aisles jam-packed with everything from vitamins, to natural cleaning and beauty supplies, to a great selection of grocery items including frozen and bulk foods. Evergreen also boasts an extensive array of teas, protein bars, and fair trade and organic chocolate. With product stashed in every nook and cranny, you may need to ask for help to find what you're looking for. Don't worry, the staff are incredibly knowledgeable, friendly, and helpful. Why not indulge your inner kombucha addict? At \$3.99 per bottle or 3 for \$11, you can't go wrong.

513 St. Clair Avenue West 416-536-2932

LESLIE SINCLAIR is a freelance writer in the St. Clair West Village. Leslie loves to write about people and subculture.