

Cover Story

Where to eat

Choice goes from organic to fries

And there are drinking spots, too

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LIFE WRITER

There's no lack of yummy spots to stop for a snack on Ossington Ave.

Get Real! (135 Ossington Ave.) is one of the yummiest. With a café selling beans and brew from Kensington Market's mecca for the dark stuff, Ideal Coffee, plus a selection of organic and wheat-free baked goods, it's become the noshing spot for the many granolas who visit the neighbourhood to take classes at nearby YogaSpace (148 Ossington Ave.)

With a few small tables for lingering over coffee and a short menu of healthy salads and sandwiches, Get Real! is a great place to stop for a high-energy snack during a shopping trip to the neighbourhood.

While you're there, pick up a few items to take home from among the selection of organic groceries and take-home food, many of them made locally.

There are lots of other choices. Portuguese delis have been outposts on Ossington since long before its recent renaissance. At Venezia Bakery (114 Os-

sington Ave.), creamy custard tarts (85 cents) are the order of the day. The nearby Columbia Bakery (188 Ossington Ave.) offers tuna, chicken and egg sandwiches for \$3 each. Served on chewy Portuguese buns, they're the perfect on-the-go snack.

If a substantial meal is what you're hankering for, the **Crooked Star Lounge** (202 Ossington Ave.) is the place for a midday stop. Burgers, fries and other pub food make up the menu, and the décor is English pub crossed with urban lounge. Sunday brunch is served à la *Coronation Street* and in the evening, watch for live entertainment by the likes of local blues and country singer/songwriter Andrew Penner.

If a straight-up drink is required after maxing out the credit card, **Sweaty Betty's** (13 Ossington Ave.) will provide. A funky little hole in the wall with a friendly vibe and a cute bartender who admits he couldn't make a fancy mixed drink if his life depended on it, SB's is the hangout of choice for artists and musicians who can't afford the new Queen St. W.

For takeout, try the **Rua Vang Golden Turtle** (125 Ossington Ave.), a clean and friendly Vietnamese joint with killer pho for less than \$5. It's been given the thumbs up by the pickiest eater I know, Toronto Star food editor Jennifer Bain.



KEITH BEATY/TORONTO STAR

A bottle of Urban Zen green tea with ginger juice costs \$2 at Get Real!

Giving vintage another try

Every vintage lover has an obsession, an item he or she just can't stop collecting, no matter how many he already owns.

For José Paulino, owner of the recently opened **Vintage Mix I** (186 Ossington Ave.), the obsession is shoes.

"I like cool shoes, different shoes. Ugly is good," says Paulino. "Well, not ugly, but you know, ugly beautiful. Like, what was the designer thinking? What is this?"

While we talked, two fashionable young women browsed the footwear collection thoroughly, inspecting every pair of worked-in cowboy boots and brightly coloured '80s pumps.

"These are hot," said one as she slipped on a pair of turquoise heels. It wasn't long before she was fishing \$15 out of her purse and tucking the shoes under her arm.

"My idea is to bring the product to its original shape," says Paulino, referring to the fact that every shoe, purse, jacket and desk in his shop is in near perfect condition.

Vintage Mix I may be new to the neighbourhood, but Paulino knows the business well. He once owned a shop called **Le Gossip** in Kensington Market.



KEITH BEATY/TORONTO STAR

A gold beaded evening clutch is \$29.99 at Vintage Mix I.

But the vintage market became too competitive in Kensington and he opted out several years ago. After a hiatus, Paulino is back, this time on Ossington.

He's clearly got a nose for the hottest items of the season and a willingness to offer value. A huge selection of cowboy boots is mostly priced under \$100, while leather pumps and retro runners are all less than \$30.

His selection of purses is also

bursting with accessibly priced trends. A straw bag with leather trim was priced at \$19.99, a tooled leather cowgirl purse was going for \$24.99 and an elegant evening clutch was \$29.99.

For guys, there are retro athletic bags, leather jackets and a bizarre but fascinating collection of '80s action figures.

Paulino says he hopes to open an espresso bar soon.

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