

Eating in Toronto — A Guide for Information System Engineers

[This document was originally prepared by Michael Godfrey (University of Waterloo) for the ICSE (2001) Conference. He graciously allowed us to use it and we have (slightly) revised to fit the specifics of the CAiSE Conference. It represents his personal opinions (so the “my”s and “I”s refer to Michael) and your mileage may vary. Michael points out that no money, free food, or any other form of remuneration exchanged hands in the creation of this document, despite his best efforts.

From Michael: I wish to thank my colleagues Dave Wortman (DW) and John Mylopoulos (JM) at UToronto and Prabhakar Ragde (PR) at UWaterloo who provided many useful comments as well as some favourites of their own.]

1 “Toronto the Good”

I’m told that in the 1950s on a Sunday in Toronto, not only was it impossible to get an alcoholic drink, the police used to patrol the public parks to prevent kids from playing ball. Around this time, Toronto earned the nickname “Toronto the Good” as a kind of ironic jibe to distinguish it from, say, “Montreal the Fun”. These days, however, Torontonians wear this same nickname with pride; Toronto is a large city of incredible diversity that works, and its residents are extremely proud of it.¹

Toronto’s austere reputation began to change as it experienced a post-war immigration boom that has not abated much after more than 50 years. How diverse is Toronto? According to official statistics,

- over 47% of the current residents of the city of Toronto were born in another country,
- over 13% of the city’s population are immigrants who arrived here after 1990,
- 106 countries have each provided at least 1,000 current residents, and
- more than one third of the city’s residents speak a language other than English at home.

Those are stunning numbers. Of course, one of the many side effects of immigration is the immense variety of food that is available within the city, as you will soon discover.

2 Restaurants by neighbourhood

You’ll need to get a city map out; I’ve provided a simple one on the last page but it’s not very detailed. The two most important streets in Toronto are Yonge Street (pronounced “young”) which runs north/south, and Bloor Street (rhymes with “lure”) which runs east/west. Yonge Street is ground zero for streets that have both an East and a West side (800 Queen Street East is a long way from 802 Queen Street West); Yonge starts at the lake and then continues on north and west for 1896 km, making it the longest street in the world, according to Guinness.

I highly recommend leaving your car at the hotel and either walking or taking public transit. Most of the places I’ve listed do not have easy parking. Near the CAiSE hotel, Chinatown, Queen Street, Kensington Market, and the Gay Village are almost impossible. The Annex, Baldwin, College West, Little Korea, Little India, and the Beaches are feasible if you’re willing to spend 10–20 minutes hunting for a metered spot (you can parallel park, yes?). The Danforth is feasible if you park in a city lot. Yorkville is also feasible but parking will cost a small fortune.

Public transit means “taking the TTC” (Toronto Transit Commission). A single fare will take you anywhere in the city in one direction. You can freely transfer between subway, streetcar, and bus but get a transfer when you pay your fare. Exact change is required except at subway stations. Current adult one way fare is \$2.25 (\$1.50 for students), but it becomes cheaper if you

¹Peter Ustinov once described Toronto as “New York run by the Swiss”.

buy 5 tokens/tickets for \$9.00. An all-day pass may be purchased for \$7.50 after 9:30 a.m. at subway stations. For more information on the TTC, call (416) 393-INFO or visit <http://www.ttc.ca>.

The Bloor subway line runs east/west across the whole city, although you're unlikely to use it unless you're going east to the Danforth or west to the Annex. The Yonge/University line is a big horseshoe, running south down Yonge Street almost to the waterfront, then west over to University and back up to the northern fringe of the city. Use the subway for travelling north/south and use the streetcars ("ride the red rocket") for going east/west along the major downtown streets (King, Queen, Dundas, Carlton/College). By North American urban standards, the subways and downtown streets are very safe, even at night.

2.1 Within 15 minutes walk of the CAiSE hotel

There are a huge number of restaurants within a 15 minute walking radius of the CAiSE hotel. I've mentioned only a smattering of the ones I know well.

Young Thailand (Thai) — Chef Wandee Young is credited with having brought Thai cuisine to Toronto. There are a couple of locations in the city. It's a fantastic place, and inexpensive to moderate in price. While it's not vegetarian, a veggie friend of mine raved about her meal there. There are a couple of downtown locations: 81 Church Street (between King and Queen a couple of blocks east of Yonge), Tel.: (416) 368-1368, and 165 John Street (just north of Queen Street between University and Spadina) Tel.: (416) 593-9291.

Mövenpick Marché (varied) — Owned by the large Swiss chain Mövenpick, they've had a Toronto presence for a number of years and they've recently begun to branch out to other parts of North America. The idea of the Marché is that there are a large number of "stations" where they will prepare good quality food for you, *e.g.*, a seafood bar, a grill, a pasta bar. You put the food on your tray, they stamp your card, and you go onto the next station. The food quality is fairly good overall, but I find it can be overpriced. While the individual items seem inexpensive, beware that the bill can mount up and at the end they sock you for 15% tax and a 12% service charge. They are open from 7:00 am until very late most days and there's no minimum charge making it a good place for breakfast or a late nice coffee and dessert. At meal times, there can be a significant wait. At the northwest corner of Yonge and Front Streets, enter through the BCE Place lobby. Tel.: (416) 366-8986. The NHL Hockey Hall of Fame is also in this building in the basement; take off your hat and bow as you walk by it.

Denison's Brew Pub (brew pub) — This is another old haunt of mine. They make their own beer. There are three sub-restaurants here with different menu emphases: Crazy Louie's Brasserie (main floor restaurant), Growler's (pub food downstairs), Conchy Joes (seafood). Moderately priced. Growler's is a good place to drink beer, eat appetizers, and watch a baseball game. 75 Victoria Street (one block south and east of Yonge and Queen), Tel: (416) 360-5877.

Montreal Delicatessen (deli) — Montreal has always had better deli than Toronto. Montreal "smoked meat" and Montreal-style bagels are simply unbeatable. 160 Adelaide Street West, just east of University a couple of blocks above King Street. Tel.: (416) 365-1212. Open 24 hours. There is another location in the Annex.

Pickle Barrel (deli) — A slightly upscale deli with an expanded menu. The original Pickle Barrel is in the north end of the city, near one of the older residential (mostly Jewish) parts of Toronto. The downtown branch can be found in the Atrium, a shopping centre on the west side of Yonge Street just north of Dundas and the Eaton's Centre. The deli food is pretty good and I'm quite fond of the BBQ chicken, but I would shy away from pastas and the stirfries. Tel.: (416) 977-6677.

Shopsy's Delicatessen (deli) — I've never liked this place very much. It is reasonably popular and a legitimate local deli ('tho the location has changed). Personally, I'd head over to the Pickle Barrel or the Montreal Delicatessen instead. Shopsy's is right across the street from the Mövenpick Marché on the east side of Yonge Street just above Front Street. Tel.: (416) 365-3333.

Avalon Restaurant (fusion) — Generally considered to be one of the best restaurants in the city, but I haven't been there. DW says, "I like Boba better, but Avalon is very good." At Adelaide (halfway between King and Queen) and John Street (halfway between University and Spadina). 270 Adelaide Street West, Tel.: (416) 979-9918

Barberian's Steak House (steaks) — You want steak? This is the place. Big slabs of the best quality beef in the city. Vegetables cost extra. This is a true Toronto institution in a historic 1860 house. Darned expensive. On the south side of Elm Street just west of Yonge Street a couple of blocks north of Dundas. Tel.: (416) 597-0335.

Bangkok Garden (Thai) — Another oft-recommended establishment that I've never made it to. DW says, "it has very good Thai food and great atmosphere; it's a place we take visitors for a good time." Moderate to expensive. 18 Elm Street across from Barberian's, Tel.: (416) 977-6748.

Hernando's Hideaway (Tex-Mex) — Toronto has not been a great place for Mexican food, unless you're fond of Taco Bell and Chi Chi's (and even those are hard to find). A large wave of immigration from Central America will likely change this soon. Until then, Hernando's Hideaway is the best known Mexican/Tex-Mex restaurant in town and it's fairly good. Inexpensive. On the east side of Yonge Street just below Wellesley. 545 Yonge Street, Tel.: (416) 929-3629. PR recommends La Hacienda at 640 Queen Street West at Bathurst, Tel.: (416) 703-3377, as well as La Mexicana at 229 Carlton, (College Street becomes Carlton east of Yonge) but I haven't managed to get to either yet.

Jalapeño Restaurant (Mexican) — DW recommends it as "a *very* good Mexican restaurant; I'd rank it much higher than Hernando's". I haven't been there. 725 King Street West at Tecumseh one major block west of Bathurst, Tel.: (416) 216-6743.

Bombay Palace (Indian) — DW recommends it as a fairly good Indian restaurant; I haven't been there. 71 Jarvis just north of St. Lawrence Market (see below), Tel.: (416) 368-8048.

St. Lawrence Market (market) — When I travel, I love to visit local markets; this is the big market in Toronto. The north building houses the farmer's market (open only on Saturdays from about 5:00 am until mid-afternoon), while permanent stalls can be found in the south market (open Tuesday to Saturday). If you're hungry, get a peameal back bacon on a kaiser from the Carousel Bakery in the south market; incidentally, thickly sliced peameal back bacon is what Canadians think Canadian bacon is, not that thin tasteless stuff they sell south of the border. The building that houses the south market was Toronto's City Hall between 1850 and 1899. The market is on Front Street a few blocks east of Yonge just before Jarvis. Front Street between the market and Yonge featured several interesting shops and restaurants. Note, however, that the myriad of stores devoted to travel, hiking, and camping equipment have recently moved out to King Street West between University and Spadina. These include Mountain Equipment Co-op — the mother of all camping equipment stores — as well as Europe Bound and Trailhead.

Queen's Quay/Harbourfront (varied) — (Quay is pronounced "key"). An expensive shopping mall with restaurants right on the waterfront, south of the CAiSE hotel. This will be recommended to you by someone, but I've always found it overpriced and touristy. Still, there are a few nice places to have a beer and watch the boats go by. During the summer, there are a lot of free cultural activities (jazz concerts, art shows, *etc.*) that go on here, making it truly worth a visit on such days.

2.2 Chinatown

There are actually several Chinatowns in Toronto. The older downtown one runs down Spadina from College to Dundas, and then along Dundas east to Beverly. More recently, Toronto was the number one destination of affluent Hong Kong emigrés; it's now said that the best Asian restaurants are out in the suburbs, but alas, I haven't kept up with this development. Most of the restaurants are Cantonese, but you can easily find other Chinese cuisines too. Spadina, in particular, has become significantly more Vietnamese of late.

Lee Garden (Cantonese) — Whenever I blow into Toronto for one day, I try to eat dinner here. This is my favourite restaurant in the whole city. I have had dreams about their deep fried black cod with garlic sauce. I'm also quite fond of their (homemade) preserved vegetable and "Grandfather smoked chicken" (I always wonder what Grandmother smoked, *ba-dum-bum*). There are two problems with Lee Garden, 'tho: first, they don't open until 4:00 pm; second, they are wildly popular. If you arrive after 6:00 pm, be prepared to wait 30-45 minutes (but be sure to angle your way to the front of the line to get a number). Inexpensive to moderate. On the east side of Spadina about halfway between College and Dundas just beside the liquor store. 331 Spadina Avenue, Tel.: (416) 593-9524

Kom Jug Yuen (Cantonese) — My favourite cheap hole-in-the-wall Chinese restaurant. Check the walls for what's interesting. On the east side of Spadina north of Lee Garden and just south of Grossman's Tavern below College. I usually order the chicken and duck congee. Cheap, cheap, cheap. 371 Spadina Avenue, Tel.: (416) 977-4079. Open late.

Imperial Gourmet Restaurant (dim sum) — Good, reliable dim sum; one of my regular haunts. 421 Dundas Street West on the second floor. Cheap. Tel.: (416) 591-8787. Also see the entry for Kowloon on Baldwin for more dim sum.

Champion House (Northern Chinese) — More upscale than most of its neighbours, this was the regular place to have Peking Duck when someone graduated from our research group. Serves northern Chinese cuisine. Inexpensive to moderate. 480 Dundas Street West, Tel.: (416) 977-8282.

Chungking — West side of Spadina just below College, up a set of stairs. I've had several good meals here. Not to be confused with *Peter's Chungking* just around the corner on Spadina; Peter's Chungking is also supposed to be good, but I've never eaten there. Inexpensive. 428 Spadina Avenue, Tel.: (416) 593-0101.

Lai Wah Heen (dim sum) — PR says that this is one of the best bets for downtown Chinese cuisine and that they have inventive (and expensive) dim sum; I haven't been there. Expensive. Within the Metropolitan Hotel on Chestnut Street, a block east of University Avenue and a block below Dundas. 108 Chestnut Street, Tel.: (416) 977-9899.

Kim Moon Bakery (Chinese buns) — One of many Chinese bakeries in Chinatown. They serve the usual Chinese buns (*e.g.*, BBQ pork) plus a variety of pastries. After dining at Lee Garden, I typically get a box of pastries to take back to Waterloo. Cheap. 438 Dundas Street West, Tel.: (416) 977-1933.

Various Vietnamese restaurants, pho houses, and sandwich shops (Vietnamese) — Plentiful along both sides of Spadina. Pho is a Vietnamese beef soup. I've eaten at many of 'em. Cheap.

2.3 The Annex and environs

"The Annex" is centred along Bloor Street between Spadina and Bathurst. I used to live here, and it's still my favourite spot for wasting time in. It's similar to Queen Street but cheaper, with a real urban neighbourhood feeling to it. Lots of small shops and restaurants to choose from, plus a great repertory cinema (the Bloor Cinema just east of Bathurst). This is also my favourite place to take people when they want to see the "real" Toronto.

The neighbourhood has evolved since I lived there in the early 1990s. There are now quite a few inexpensive sushi places (which PR recommends but I haven't tried) as well as several funky establishments that serve variations on Italian (**Serra** and **Sisi Trattoria**) and "fusion" (**Goldfish**) cooking. Most of these places are inexpensive to moderate.

The building with the migraine-inducing lights on the southwest corner of Bloor and Bathurst is Honest Ed's, a kind of super-kitschy K-mart. When I was a poor student and lived in the annex, I used to do a lot of shopping here. This is the original store of Ed Mirvish who, together with his son David, are also heavily involved in the arts (they own the Old Vic theatre in London). Just west of Honest Ed's on Markham Street is what's called Mirvish Village, which has a handful of interesting stores and restaurants, including David Mirvish's bookstore that specializes in art books.

By-the-Way Café (café food) — You can linger over coffee and a manifesto here for hours with the blessing of the waiting staff. Many moons ago, this was the site of Lickin' Chicken, a take-out chicken place. When it went under, the new owners created a vegetarian cafe (the By-the-Way Yoghurt Café) but kept the gaudy signs. Because this confused some customers, they put a neon sign in the window that pulsed "Sorry, out of chicken." Later, there was a change of heart (or a change of owners) and they started serving meat dishes, so they bought a new sign: "Sorry, we have chicken." (Here's an experiment you can try at CAiSE. Find a Canadian and step on his foot. He'll apologize immediately. Oh sorry, you probably knew that already.) PR informs me that BTWC almost became a Starbucks but the neighbourhood launched a rebellion and Starbucks retreated. PR doesn't like the food here; I thought it was OK. 400 Bloor Street West, Tel.: (416) 967-4295.

Future Bakery (café food) — Newer and bigger than the By-The-Way Café across the street. Serves hot food too. Good place for people watching. Inexpensive. 483 Bloor Street West, Tel.: (416) 922-5875.

Aida's (middle Eastern fast food) — Great falafel. Aida's is a small chain in the city. On the south side of Bloor just west of Bathurst. Cheap. 553 Bloor W, Toronto Tel.: (416) 588-6900. Other locations can be found at 2 Bloor East (*i.e.*, Yonge and Bloor). Tel.: (416) 925-6444, and in the food court (!) in the basement of the Eaton's Centre (Yonge and Dundas).

Mel's Montreal Delicatessen (deli) — See the listing for restaurants near the CAiSE hotel; note that I haven't visited this branch. Inexpensive. 440 Bloor West, Tel.: (416) 966-8881. Open 24 hours.

Dooney's Café (café food)— Mostly desserts and coffee (I've never eaten anything else; PR doesn't like the main courses here). Open late. One visit stands out in my memory; we've been married eleven years. Inexpensive. 511 Bloor Street West, Tel.: (416) 536-3293

Country Style Hungarian Restaurant (Hungarian) — The annex used to be a largely Hungarian neighbourhood, with several shops and places to eat. (Some of the fruit stores still sell Kanadai Magyarasag, Toronto's Hungarian-language newspaper.) There isn't much remaining apart from one market and the Country Style. This is heavy, stick-to-the-ribs peasant food in a humble old establishment. Servings are large. Inexpensive. 450 Bloor Street West, Tel.: (416) 537-1745.

Nataraj (Indian) — A pretty good Indian restaurant on the north side of Bloor just east of Brunswick. Inexpensive. 394 Bloor Street West, Tel.: (416) 928-2925.

Kensington Kitchen (vaguely middle Eastern) — The only place in town where you can eat in a tree fort (technically, it's their back patio). Fairly veggie friendly serving quasi-middle Eastern food. The original establishment was in Kensington Market, hence the name. Elegant, informal, and inexpensive. On the north side of Harbord (one major block south of Bloor) a bit west of Spadina. 124 Harbord Street, Tel.: (416) 961-3404.

Boulevard Café (South American) — South American cuisine, elegant tasty food, moderately priced. We used to go here for a treat when I was a student. On Harbord (one major block south of Bloor) a bit east of Bathurst. 161 Harbord Street, Tel.: (416) 961-7676.

JK@ROM (eclectic, famous chef) — Located just east of the Annex within the Royal Ontario Museum (the museum itself is a must-see; great dinosaurs and fantastic Chinese artifacts); once inside, ask for directions to the correct elevator (you don't need to buy a museum admission). The museum has its own subway stop ("Museum"), and can be found at the southwest corner of Bloor Street and Queen's Park/University Avenue. Jamie Kennedy is one of the top chefs in the city. He decided to open a restaurant within the ROM (as we locals call it) for a chance to do something a bit different. They serve lunch only; I'm told dinners are arrangeable for corporate functions. Moderate to expensive, but a great deal considering the quality of the food. A good friend took me here for a celebratory lunch when I passed my Ph.D. defense. Tel.: (416) 586-5578. In a similar vein, the AGO (Art Gallery of Ontario, on Dundas a couple of blocks west of University) has a restaurant called **Agora** that is supposed to be excellent, but I've never been there.

Greg's Ice Cream (ice cream and coffee) — An institution for UofT students. Great homemade ice cream with inventive flavours. 200 Bloor Street West, Tel.: (416) 961-4734.

2.4 Baldwin Street

Baldwin is a short street near the University of Toronto, and where I have personally (and impersonally when in a rush) lunched hundreds of times. It is packed with inexpensive to moderate restaurants of varying ethnicities. Baldwin is about halfway between College and Dundas. The restaurant part of Baldwin runs between Beverly and McCaul. Most of these places have excellent lunch menus and most feature outdoor seating. There are also a few interesting shops here, including my wife's favourite clothing store, *Cotton Basics*.

Eating Garden (Chinese) — Very good Cantonese food (the dinner menu features lamb and rabbit). Good lunch specials. Inexpensive. Upstairs from Hua Sang (see below). 41 Baldwin Street, Tel.: (416) 595-5525.

John's Italian Caffè (Italian) — Good but limited Italian menu. Informal neighbourhood feeling. Great place to sit on the patio and have chinotto and a slice of pesto pizza. Why does one of the windows have a sign in Hebrew, you ask? John's expanded a few years ago when Mandel's Dairy next door moved out to the suburbs. They never bothered to change the sign. Inexpensive. 27 Baldwin Street, Tel.: (416) 596-8848.

Kowloon Dim Sum Restaurant (dim sum) — Dim sum á la carte (*i.e.*, no carts); you fill out an order form, and the dishes arrive as soon as they're ready; very good quality and fresh. Inexpensive. 5 Baldwin Street, Tel.: (416) 977-3773.

Yung Sing Pastry Shop (Chinese) — If you go at lunch, this will be the place with the long fast-moving lineup. Serve Chinese buns only. Get a BBQ pork bun, fun kak, woo kak, tempura sweet potato, and a sweet sesame ball with black bean paste (get a napkin to blot the oil from the sweet potato). Walk around the corner, sit in the park, and enjoy. Takeout only. Cheap. 22 Baldwin Street, Tel.: (416) 979 2832.

Café La Gaffe (café food) — Quite good soups, sandwiches, salads, and the like. Patio for lingering. Inexpensive. 24 Baldwin Street, Tel.: (416) 596-2397.

Mata Hari (Malaysian) — This opened a few months before I left town in 1996. I had a few tasty lunches here. Inexpensive to moderate at lunch, more expensive at dinner. 39 Baldwin Street, Tel.: (416) 596-2832.

La Bodega (French) — Good French food. Moderate to expensive. I've only eaten here on an expense account. I go to Le Select Bistro on Queen Street (see below) when I'm spending my own money. 30 Baldwin Street, Tel.: (416) 977-1287.

Wah Sing and Hua Sang (Chinese) — Wah Sing used to be where Hua Sang is now, but they moved a few storefronts over. The new owners in the old building kept the menu, some of the staff, and adopted a sound-alike name; Hua Sang is usually a bit cheaper and less crowded. I used to go here for the lobster special on those days when you feel like celebrating because it's Thursday. Two lobsters done in your choice of style (I preferred garlic and ginger) for about \$16.00. That and a noodle dish and some steamed rice feeds three. I would avoid most of the other dishes, especially the lunch buffet. Inexpensive. Hua Sang is at 41 Baldwin Street, Tel.: (416) 596-1628, and Wah Sing is at 47 Baldwin Street, Tel.: (416) 599-8822.

Margarita's (Mexican) — Mediocre to decent Mexican food. I ate there the day it opened (and several times afterwards), but I haven't been back since I left town in 1996. Inexpensive. 14 Baldwin Street, Tel.: (416) 977-5525.

2.5 The Danforth

Another great urban neighbourhood for wandering around in. While the shopping is quite varied, the restaurants are mostly Greek and extremely good. I've listed one souvlaki house and three more upscale restaurants, but there are quite a few to choose from. Take the Bloor subway across the Don Valley; get off at Broadview station and walk east (Bloor Street becomes Danforth Avenue on the other side of the Don Valley). Why this area is called "the Danforth" instead of just "Danforth" is a mystery. This is a good place to explore at night; many of the restaurants (and clubs) stay open late.

Omonia (Greek) — One of many souvlaki houses on Danforth. I had dinner there quite recently and was amazed how much better Danforth eateries are from your basic garden variety Greek restaurant. Greeks form one of the largest ethnic groups in Toronto, and the culinary standards are high on the Danforth, even for simple souvlaki houses. \$100 Canadian including taxes and tip bought a large dinner with appetizers for two adults, two teenagers, two kids and we had leftovers for lunch. Inexpensive. 426 Danforth Avenue, Tel.: (416) 465-2129.

Pan (Greek) — A more upscale Greek restaurant recommended by many although to be honest I'm not entirely certain I've eaten there (PR approves of it, 'tho). Bring along a mathematician to help find the place unless you can spell "Pan" using Greek letters. Inexpensive to moderate. 516 Danforth Avenue, Tel.: (416) 466-8158.

Avli (Greek) — Another good choice for slightly upscale Greek. Inexpensive to moderate. On the south side of Danforth just east of the Chester subway station. 401 Danforth Avenue, Tel.: (416) 461-9577.

Pantheon (Greek) — I haven't been there, but John Mylopoulos says "Pantheon has one of the best menus of Greek cuisine appetizers I've seen outside Greece, and a good selection of main dishes too. It's located on the south side of Danforth, very close to the Chester subway station and 5-6 stores to the East of Avli. Best to visit early, as Greeks go for late dinners. Prices are generally moderate. Try their selection of Greek wines; they are well-chosen." 407 Danforth Avenue, Tel.: (416) 778-1929.

The Big Carrot (veggie café) — For a long time, this was the best known vegetarian/healthfood store in town. They have a cafe also, but I've never eaten there. My crunchy granola brother-in-law was a regular when he lived in Toronto. Inexpensive. 348 Danforth Avenue, Tel.: (416) 466-2129.

2.6 Queen Street

Queen Street is another interesting walk and a fascinating place to people watch. Start at City Hall (aka the flying saucer and the two windbreaks) at Bay Street. Walk west to University Avenue (the wide street). That glorious older building on the north side is Osgoode Hall, home of the Law Society of Upper Canada (the old name for the province of Ontario). The impressive and unusual iron gates belie the fact that the outside grounds are open to the public to walk through. The gates were put up many years ago, allegedly to stop cows from grazing on the lawn.

Cross to the far side of University Avenue, and then stroll leisurely west to Bathurst and beyond. You'll pass many funky stores and restaurants, including the big CITY/MuchMusic/BravoTV building. I've listed only a few of the many, many restaurants in this neighbourhood.

Queen Street between University and Bathurst is what most Torontonians think of as "Queen Street", but the neighbourhood has become increasingly upscale squeezing out most of the used bookstores in favour of expensive clothing shops. In this area, PR recommends the **Bamboo** (where Wandee Young of **Young Thailand** cut her teeth), **Ena Tei** (helps to speak Japanese), **Tiger Lily's Noodle House**, **Sushi Bistro**, **Sushi Time** (a branch of an Annex cheapo place), **Taro** and **Red Cat** (both Asian fusion).

You can get a feeling for the old Queen Street if you continue west of Bathurst. Here, PR recommends **Cities**, **Citron**, **Gypsy Co-Op**, **La Hacienda**, **Vienna Home Bakery**, **Dufflet** [Pastries], and "the terrific pizzas at **Terroni**".

Le Select Bistro (French) — Friendly, unpretentious atmosphere. Pretty good bistro-style food. On the north side of Queen just east of Spadina. Moderate. 328 Queen Street West, Tel.: (416) 596-6405.

Young Thailand (Thai) — See description above in the "near the CAiSE hotel" section. Inexpensive to moderate. 165 John Street (just north of Queen Street between University and Spadina), Tel.: (416) 593-9291.

2.7 Kensington Market

An outdoor/indoor market in the European style. When I was a kid growing up in the suburbs, our school would schedule a field trip here most years to expose us to foods other than white bread and mayo. In those days you could buy live chickens and rabbits (or have them slaughtered while you waited). I remember coming home from one school trip where one of the girls in my class has bought a live rabbit because it was "cute".

Originally, I'm told this was a Portuguese market, but it's shifted over the years according to immigration trends. There are several Latin food stores, as well as Jamaican, Greek ('tho see the Danforth too), middle European, east Indian, east Asian, ... Well, these days it's a very mixed bag. This is a great place to wander around in and get lost. It's crowded and lively, 'tho people seem pretty patient if you're not blocking their delivery van. (Don't drive here or you will get stuck behind waves of delivery vans.) Kensington Market is one of my favourite places in the city.

Kensington Market is just west of Chinatown on the other side of Spadina between College and Dundas. Walk up Spadina to St. Andrew Street and walk west until you hit the throngs of people.

VFC (Laotian/Thai) — Vanipha's Fine Cuisine (sorry, no fried chicken) serves Laotian/Thai food. A smallish place that can be hard to find. 193 Augusta Avenue at the south end of Kensington Market just north of Dundas. Inexpensive. 193 Augusta Avenue, Tel.: (416) 340-0491.

2.8 Little Italy/College Street West

PR says of this area, "You absolutely must mention College West, the most drastic gentrification of the last fifteen years. **Bar Italia** and **Sottovoce** (antipasto and light meals), **Grappa**, **Tempo** (Asian fusion), **Dipamo's Barbecue** (the only real barbecue in the city), **Ellipsis**, and scads of places whose names I forget (**Lava**, **College Street Bar**, and even a couple of South American places)."

College Street West starts around Bathurst and continues west to about Ossington. This used to be Little Italy, although its character has diversified of late. In late April, I made one last trip to Toronto to check out a few more restaurants for this guide based on PR's recommendations. When I strolled College Street after dinner savouring *la dolce far niente*, I heard more Italian than English.

Dipamo's Barbecue (BBQ) — I had a spectacular meal here in April 2001. It's a small neighbourhood establishment, both elegant and friendly. You will likely have to wait during peak times, but it's worth it. The food was simply fabulous. The ribs, chicken, and pulled pork were of the highest calibre. I was particularly impressed that the side dishes (beans, bread, *etc.*) were also extremely good; no boring fillers here. Even the the service was great (I had my two boisterous young sons with me). Takeout is available. Inexpensive to moderate (but relatively cheap for these amazing BBQ ribs). On the north side of College just west of Ossington. 838 College Street West, Tel.: (416) 532-8161.

2.9 Yorkville

Starts one block north of Bloor between Bay Street and Avenue Road. In the 1960s, this was the counter culture hangout where you went to foment rebellion and see Joni Mitchell or Neil Young play. In the 1970s, it became a very affluent shopping and dining area. Times change, I guess.

This is a nice neighbourhood to stroll around in, and the food is varied and quite good 'tho often pricy. There are two mega-bookstores close by too: Chapters on north side of Bloor Street just west of Bay Street, and Indigo in the Manulife Centre on the east side of Bay Street just south of Bloor. The Indigo chain just bought the Chapters chain, so one of these stores will be closed soon; note that there are a lot of excellent smaller bookstores in the city too.

Le Trou Normand (French/Normandy) — (Also rec. by DW) A French provincial restaurant specializing in the cuisine of Normandy. The name refers to the spirit Calvados, which is distilled from apples; you drink a bit in between courses and it is supposed to create a hole ("trou") in your stomach so that you can go on to the next course. Moderate to expensive. 90 Yorkville, Tel.: (416) 967-5956.

Little Tibet (Tibetan) — (Also rec. by DW) Certainly out of the ordinary, a Tibetan restaurant. Interesting food in an elegant setting. Inexpensive. 81 Yorkville, Tel.: (416) 963-8221.

Pangaea Restaurant (fusion) — DW recommends Pangaea as "high end nouvelle cuisine"; I haven't been there. They serve afternoon tea too. Expensive. 1221 Bay Street just north of Bloor, Tel.: (416) 920-232.

Boba (Mediterranean/Asian fusion) — DW recommends Boba as "one of the very finest restaurants in Toronto. Expensive; reservations recommended. This is where we go for special occasions." I haven't been there. 90 Avenue Road a few blocks north of Bloor, Tel.: (416) 961-2622.

2.10 Omnipresent Eating Establishments

I decided to include this on the grounds that supermarkets, television commercials, and fast food sometimes tell you a lot about a place. I'm not really sure of the social significance of these establishments, but I do know that a student at an (otherwise reputable) Canadian university did their doctoral dissertation on the relative density of donut stores within various communities. I did not make that up.

Swiss Chalet (chicken) — They serve rotisserie chicken in huge quantities across the country. It's cheap, cheerful, fast, and child-friendly. They've expanded their menu over time, but it's still best to order the classic dinner of a quarter chicken with fries. Take out and delivery are available. There's a branch on the west side of Yonge Street just below Gerrard. I eat at various branches regularly. Why it's called Swiss Chalet, no one seems to know.

Toby's Goodcents (burgers) — A small chain within the city specializing in hamburgers. Inexpensive and pretty good. I ate there a lot as a teenager.

Tim Horton's (donuts, *etc.*) — Since people ask, I'll tell you. Tim Horton was a well-known hockey player who, as he was nearing the end of his career about 25 years ago, died in a car crash. Before he died, he had set up a small donut store franchise with his wife and a business partner; after his death, it grew into a huge multi-million dollar empire. If there's a three block radius of Kitchener-Waterloo (where I live now) that doesn't have a branch, one's no doubt being planned; there's even one in the computer science building at UWaterloo. Donut stores are a cultural phenomenon in Canada, for reasons no one seems to quite understand. While it is a donut store, they also serve chili, soup, sandwiches, and other simple meals. Americans will find the food a step up from US donut stores. A good alternative to Wendy's *etc.* when you're looking for a quick bite. Cheap, of course.

2.11 Other neighbourhoods of interest

Gay Village — Toronto has a large and vibrant "Gay Village" (aka the Gay Ghetto aka Gaytown) in the downtown core on Church between Carlton and Bloor. During the warmer months, this neighbourhood feels like it's one large outdoor café. The Gay Pride Parade in the summer is one of the largest in North America. There's also a gay-oriented free biweekly newspaper called *Xtra*.

Little Korea — Can be found on Bloor just west of Bathurst in a pleasant and fairly quiet part of the downtown. Start at Honest Ed's at the Bathurst subway station. Just east is the Annex; walk a little west and you'll find Little Korea. It's not very big.

Little India — Located around Gerrard and Carlaw (on the east side of the Don Valley). Vegetarians will find kindred spirits here. Take the Yonge Street subway north to Dundas, and take the eastbound streetcar to Carlaw and walk north. Very vibrant and lively.

The Beaches — Best appreciated in the warmer months, "the beaches" is a beautiful residential area located near the waterfront in the east end of the city. Apart from the nice old houses, there's a boardwalk along the lake, and a main drag that has lots of funky stores and eating establishments. It's easy to kill the better part of a day here slowly meandering through the relaxed quaintness of the beaches. The main restaurant and shopping area is on Queen Street West starting around Woodbine. Parking is difficult but not impossible if you're willing to hunt; alternatively, you can enjoy a leisurely streetcar ride on the Queen streetcar right from downtown. The beaches are a fair trek from downtown; during rush hour Queen Street traffic (including the streetcar) moves slowly.

The Toronto Islands — One of the nicest, cheapest, and most relaxing ways to spend a day in Toronto, and it's right outside the hotel. Buy a picnic lunch, walk over to the ferry (ask the concierge for directions), and rent a bicycle (or roller blades, or a paddle boat, or a canoe, ...) when you get to Centre Island. No cars are allowed on the Toronto islands; instead, you'll find lots of green space, good walking and biking trails, and the cleanest water for swimming in the city, 'tho it may be a little cold in May. There's a small amusement park (better for younger kids) on Centre Island. Hanlan's

Point² — the western most ferry stop — features the only completely legal nude beach in Ontario. Before you go, get a picnic lunch at at the St. Lawrence Market (see above) or at Loblaw’s Queen’s Quay Market at the foot of Jarvis Street (it’s a fancy supermarket). Note that if the police catch you picnicking in the park with beer or wine, you’re liable for a ticket and a nasty fine. The Toronto Islands were originally a sandbar that became disconnected from the mainland during a storm in 1850.

3 A short walking tour of the University of Toronto

The University of Toronto (aka UofT) features lots of green space and old (by North American standards) beautiful buildings in the heart of a large city. It’s well worth a visit.

Organizationally, UofT is fashioned along the Oxbridge model of a federation of individual colleges. There are four “old” colleges: Trinity (Anglican), St. Michael’s (Roman Catholic), Victoria (United Church of Canada, which is a mix of Presbyterian and Methodist roughly speaking), and University College (explicitly unaffiliated). There are also two newer colleges — New College and Innis College (the latter named after the noted thinker Harold Adams Innis) — as well as two suburban campuses.

Get off at the St. George subway station, walk south along St. George Street, passing by the main library (Robarts) at Harbor/Hoskin. Once you’re past the library, turn around and see how the building is structured to resemble a ... well, let’s be charitable and call it a peacock rather than a turkey.

If you want the long tour, turn to walk east along Hoskin. At the first street on the north side is Massey College, which is basically a graduate residence overseen by its “Master”. The first Master was the well known author Robertson Davies; he was succeeded by Pat Hume, a computer science professor who used to have his own TV show on physics, and who wrote many computer science textbooks with Ric Holt (creator of the Turing programming language and the general chair for IWPC 2001). You’ll note that there are no windows facing to the outside world; that was a deliberate design decision.

Further along Hoskin on the north side is Trinity College. It’s affiliated with the Anglican church; in olden days this was the religion of the power elite in Canada. If you continue along Hoskin, you’ll hit Queen’s Park, which is what University Avenue becomes when it splits at the provincial legislature building just to the south (this same street becomes Avenue Road north of Bloor). Note that the road, the provincial legislature itself, and the park behind the legislature are all called Queen’s Park. If you walk north along Queen’s Park (the road) to Bloor, you’ll find the Royal Ontario Museum. On the far side of Queen’s Park, you’ll find Victoria College (aka Vic, which for reasons I’ve never understood calls itself Victoria University, which in turn is not to be confused with the University of Victoria in British Columbia). Just south and east of Vic is St. Michael’s, the Roman Catholic college.

Wind your back toward St. George Street along Hoskin. On the south side you’ll see an archway next to the big green field. Go through it. On the left (*i.e.*, the east side) is Hart House, which for decades has served as the centre of student life. Alumni have a particularly soft spot in their hearts for Hart House, and many keep up memberships for years afterwards frequenting the reading rooms, the pool, or getting married in the chapel. DW recommends the Gallery Grill in Hart House as an excellent place to eat lunch (certainly, the decor is impressive).

Making your way out to the big open space, on your right you’ll be walking beside University College (aka UC), the largest and grandest old building in the entire university. UC has always had a strong tradition of free thinking; it’s the only one of the old colleges not to be affiliated with a church. If you look carefully, you’ll notice that its *architectural style* (sorry, I had to use that phrase somewhere or I’d be drummed out of the software engineer’s union) is a celebration of non-conformity. Look for some architectural feature where you would expect symmetry and you’ll find that the *design patterns* (sorry, see above) don’t match.

UC has its own ghost: Ivan Reznikoff, a mason who took part in the original construction of UC in the mid-1800s, was allegedly murdered by his supervisor, Paul Diablos, over an affair of the heart. According to college tradition, Reznikoff has

²Ned Hanlan was a world champion rower in the late 1800s; from 1876 to 1886 he lost only six of 300 races. His life story was the subject of the film *The Boy in Blue* starring Nicholas Cage in the title role.

been spotted by various students, faculty, and staff over the years. The weekly UC student pub is named in Ivan's honour: `<tripleEntendre>` "Reznikoff's: The Spirit of UC" `</tripleEntendre>`.

The front campus (the green field plus the surrounding buildings) is worth a leisurely stroll. At the bottom you'll see a pale yellow brick building; that's the Sanford Fleming building which, together with the neighbouring Pratt building, houses the department of computer science. Incidentally, Sanford Fleming was a railroad owner who is credited with inventing standardized timezones.

At this point, you will be on College Street. You can walk west half a block back to St. George and walk back up St. George to see more of the campus; St. George Street has recently been beautified. Alternatively, you can wander down Henry Street to Baldwin and have lunch.

4 Notes and other resources

- Tipping practices are the same as in the US. Leave about 15% on meals, *etc.* Taxes are typically not included in the cost of the meal until the final bill comes; they add up to about 15% on food, slightly more on alcohol (which at least gives you a good hint about how much to tip).
- The phrase L.L.B.O on a restaurant sign means that they can serve alcohol. The legal drinking age in Ontario is 19.
- If you want to buy a bottle of something for your hotel room, note that with a few exceptions, beer must be purchased at **The Beer Store** (yes, that's the name; they're run as a joint venture by the big breweries) and other alcohol must be purchased at the government-run liquor stores (aka LCBO outlets). PR says that the Queen's Quay liquor store has an excellent selection of wines.
- Ontario wines can be quite drinkable, especially the dry whites and the lighter reds. Ontario vintners have a special designation ("VQA") for the wines of the highest "quality" in the ISO/CMM sense of the word (*i.e.*, VQA speaks more to the quality of the ingredients and the methodology of production than that of the finished product, much like *appellation contrôlée*).
- You might consider trying an "ice wine" with dessert; they're made from grapes that are left on the vine until after the first serious frost. Eiswein/ice wine originated in Germany, which (so I'm told) remains the only other place in the world where it can be reliably produced. Ice wines are very sweet and expensive; a cheap one is about \$40 for a half bottle. This is mainly due to the risk and labour involved. If a frost doesn't happen in time, the grapes become compost. Once the first major freeze hits, the grapes are harvested by hand that very night in the cold dark. Each frozen little grape contributes a very small amount of thick sweet juice, about 1/10 of the amount of a normal grape. Ontario ice wines are supposed to be extremely good, often besting European ice wines in direct competition. After years of trade restrictions, Ontario ice wines have recently won the right to be marketed in Europe.
- <http://www.toronto.com> (a commercial website) has a restaurant section that can provide maps to most of the establishments listed here. I dunno how impartial their reviews are 'tho.
- Joel Chan, a math grad student in at UToronto, has an excellent set of links about Toronto at <http://www.math.toronto.edu/toronto>
- When I went to the bookstore to look at Toronto guidebooks, I liked the *NOW City Guide* best; its restaurant section was organized neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood. *NOW magazine* is a free weekly newspaper that lists "what's on" in the city.
- Unlike in the US, soft drink refills are almost unheard of in Canadian restaurants. Also, be warned that ice tea comes in a syrup, powder, can, or bottle. *Real* tea, on the other hand, is usually much better on this side of the border: even donut stores often give you a proper teapot and milk (not cream, which is simply revolting in tea).

5 More facts about Toronto

- The name “Toronto” is derived from Anishnawbe (Indian) word meaning “meeting place”. Apropos, eh?
- The population of Toronto is 4.6 million in the GTA (Greater Toronto Area); 2.6 million live in the city proper.
- The top ten countries of birth for Toronto residents (ignoring Canada) in order are: UK, Italy, Hong Kong, India, Jamaica, China, Portugal, Philippines, Poland, Guyana. Note the absence of the US in this list!

In terms of recent immigration, the top ten countries of birth for Toronto residents who arrived between 1991 and 1996 in order are: Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, China, India, Philippines, Poland, Jamaica, Guyana, Vietnam, Trinidad and Tobago, Iran, and Pakistan. Note the absence the UK and Italy from this list.

More information on Toronto immigration can be found at

<http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/ourcity/profile02.htm>

- Favourite anecdote Torontonians like to tell about their city:

In the early 1980s, there was a rather weak TV cop show on CBS called *Night Heat* that was set in New York but filmed in Toronto. Of course, this presented certain logistical problems every now and then. One day, the shooting was being done in an alleyway and the producers decided that it was too clean to be believable as a New York street. Therefore a call went out and some garbage was specially brought in to make the alleyway shoot a bit more “authentic”. When they came back to next day to continue shooting, they were dismayed to find that the alley had been cleaned up.

I can’t vouch for the truth of this story, but just about every Torontonian has heard it, and most of us kinda like it. So even if it’s exaggerated or simply untrue, it still tells you something about what Torontonians value.

6 About the author

Mike Godfrey lived in downtown Toronto for several years sampling its various cuisines, while telling his friends he was actually studying computer science at UofT. After managing to talk his way into a PhD around 1996, he hid out in the US for a couple of years before finally returning to Canada in 1998 to become an assistant professor in the department of computer science at the University of Waterloo.

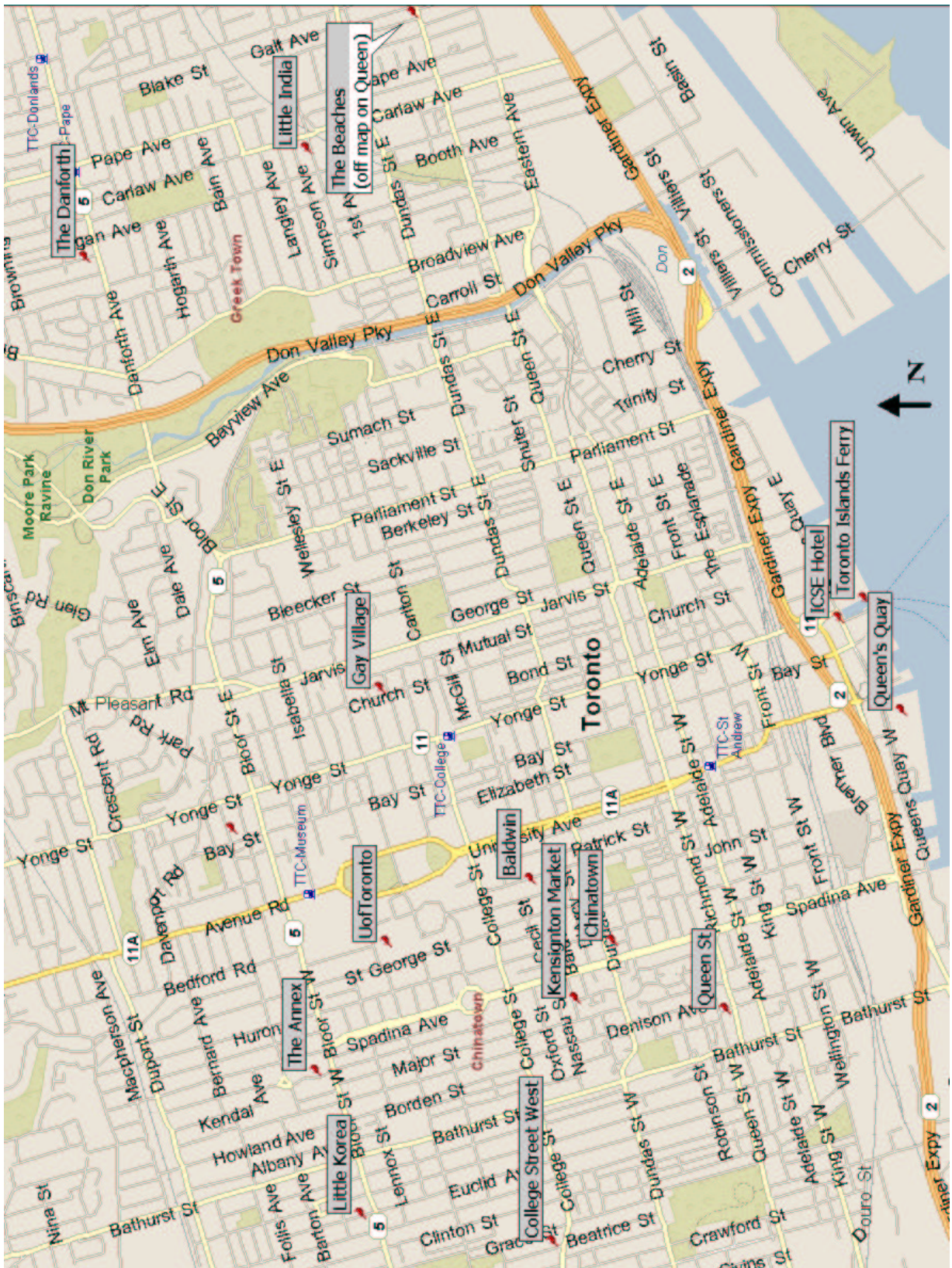


Figure 1: A simple map of Toronto.