



The World at Your

Door

LOCAL INTERNATIONAL RESTAURANTS

By Freya Lloyd and Amanda Philip

Visitors to the Danforth need only look at the area's restaurants to find evidence that the neighbourhood's evolution is constant. It's no challenge to find independent and inexpensive cuisine from countries all over the world in the heart of Toronto's historic Greektown. Almost all the continents are represented without having to travel far, or spend a lot of money. Clearly, restaurateurs are drawn to the Danforth's lively and increasingly diverse atmosphere as a venue for their global food.

Pizzeria Libretto—Italian

Pizzeria Libretto proudly serves truly authentic southern-Italian pizza. Their second location has recently opened on the Danforth as an addition to the very successful location on Ossington. According to Danforth manager Harry Wareham, the Danforth reflects many of the aspects that Pizzeria Libretto's owners appreciate about their original location. "Much like Ossington was when we opened the pizzeria there three years ago," Wareham explains, "the Danforth is now in a great state of change." Pizzeria Libretto's owners saw how the Danforth has been opening up to different styles of food, and different styles of restaurant. The interior of Pizzeria Libretto is an open and modern space, the focus of which is the large wood-burning ovens visible in the back. These 900 degree ovens are essential to Neapolitan pizza, and variations of this traditional thin-crust meal are the reason for Pizzeria Libretto's existence.



Pizza is the only entree on the menu, the most popular being the Margherita. Wareham states that the quality of a pizzeria can be measured by the Margherita, as it is "the pizza upon which all others are based". No surprise that this simple choice is the most popular at Pizzeria Libretto, a restaurant that seems to be successfully integrating its Italian tastes into the Danforth neighbourhood.



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Features

La Cabana—Mexican/Peruvian

Anyone in the mood for flavours from even further abroad is welcome at La Cabana. The food is a mixture of Mexican and Peruvian, ranging from mildly spicy to suicide hot. Although it can be tough to be an independent Latin American restaurant on the Danforth, La Cabana has been open for five years and has integrated into the community.

Over the years, more Peruvian dishes have been introduced to give people variety and it allows them to try something new. Dishes from the two countries have similarities but there are different types of spices and herbs as well as different methods of cooking used in each. Still, La Cabana is not straying far from its Mexican roots as seen in the decor.

Staff can make recommendations according to diners' individual tastes. Every dish is full of traditional Latin American flavours which appeal to a wide audience. The menu features options for a variety of dietary preferences, and La Cabana prides itself on providing excellent hospitality so that everyone feels at home.

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Lahore Tikka House—Pakistani

For years, little India’s Lahore Tikka House had been undergoing renovations— with the dining area slapped together in sari-draped, fairy-lighted trailers and tents, with plastic tables and chairs, and Styrofoam dishes. Finally, the construction has come to an end, and now this little Gerrard Street gem has just about everything going for it.

Serving traditional halal Pakistani fare, Lahore Tikka is an excellent choice for large groups looking to share flavourful dishes that won’t dent their pocketbooks. Dinner can range from about \$18–\$22 per person, each of whom will leave heartily satisfied and with leftovers to boot.

The ordering process is much like what you would find at a Vietnamese restaurant: you’re given a piece of paper to mark down your choices and then you place the order with a cashier. Despite this being slightly unusual service, it’s friendly, unobtrusive, and accurate.

House specialties include succulent chicken, beef, or lamb kebabs at \$2 a piece, and biryani, a mouth-watering combination of rice, meats, and spices. With all of the enticing options, it’s hard not to order a little bit of everything; luckily, the mains are traditionally shared around the table so you really get a chance to sample the variety of scrumptious curries and karahis. Don’t forget an order of naan, a traditional South Asian flatbread, because you’ll want to soak up every last bit of sauce left on your plate.

Note that Lahore Tikka is Muslim owned and operated, so they don’t serve alcohol, but there are juices and smoothies aplenty. If you opt for spicy dishes, try a refreshing mango lassi to cool your taste buds!



Dukem Restarant—Ethiopian

Named after the city located just south of Ethiopia’s capital, Dukem restaurant is the place to go if you’re looking for a truly unique, authentic Ethiopian dining experience. Those unfamiliar with Ethiopian dining may be taken aback by the large platters of stews and purées and complete absence of cutlery, but it is also easy to be taken in by the warmth and comfort of the communal experience.

Small, romantically lit, and simply designed, Dukem is a cozy and inviting space. Lively Ethiopian music and the smell of incense and spices greet you as you enter from Danforth Avenue.

Order a combo platter with a selection of both meat and veggie dishes to share with a good group of family or friends (vegetarians will be pleased that a full veg platter is not only available, but full of intense flavours). The platters are served with a spongy sourdough flatbread called injera, used in lieu of cutlery to scoop up mouthfuls of the delicious food.

If you’re feeling extra adventurous, try an order of gored gored—a house favourite served in the style of beef tartar, mixed with a house sauce, diced onions, spicy jalapenos, and herbed butter. The taste combination is out-of-this-world and not to be missed.

Finally, in order to get the full experience, spring for the \$10 traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony; this service is a delight to the senses and the wonderful scent of this warming, delicious coffee is unparalleled. This ceremony is traditionally a symbol of mutual friendship and respect and is an integral part of Ethiopian hospitality.

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Pizzeria Libretto
550 Danforth Avenue, at Carlaw.
Prices from \$7 to \$18.
www.pizzerialibretto.com

La Cabana
467 Danforth Avenue, at Logan.
Prices from \$7 to \$24.
www.restaurantlacabana.com

Lahore Tikka House
1365 Gerrard Street East, west of Coxwell.
Prices from \$2 to \$15.
www.lahoretikkahouse.com

Dukem Restaurant
950 Danforth Avenue.
Prices from \$8 to \$14.
www.dukem.ca