



RETRO REVIVAL

Walking down Pierce Street in downtown Birmingham on a Friday night, passersby curiously look up to see a new neighborhood addition, Toast. Thom and Regan Bloom have been known for their famous breakfast and lunch offerings the past eight years at the original Toast location in Ferndale. Now, with the second location, they've stepped it up with dinner and a full bar to provide the neighborhood a bistro dining experience. "People who don't know us have been coming in to discover what we're all about," Thom says of the new spot.

Upon entry one is greeted by an authentic Detroit Jewel Stove which serves as the hostess station – an appropriate introduction to the main dining area complete with red high-back supper club style booths and a life-size Betty Boop on skates. The retro feel is carried through the central part of the restaurant right down to the "Joe" and "Sally" restrooms. The comfortable Blue Room with its cozy fireplace serves as an Internet café by day, cocktail lounge by evening, and can be reserved for private parties. During warm weather, Toast Birmingham will offer sidewalk seating off of the space's big German glass doors, which will open to Pierce Street to complete the big-city, European feel.


The food and coffee are served in a mix of vintage dishes and mugs. Old toasters from different eras are on display as well. "I enjoy searching for unique, vintage pieces at thrift stores and other shops," Regan says. "I just love it." She has also handpicked pieces, such as light fixtures, that tie in with the funky, retro vibe.

The Blooms' self-described "fun, kitschy" recipes are inspired by time spent living in cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York. "Eat, good, food, yum," is the mantra printed on the menu, which

blends European styles with Southwestern cuisine. Favorites include Carnitas, a Mexican dish using shredded orange-cola pork, served on a green onion and cilantro corn waffle with sour cream and a lime jicama slaw.

The bar, a highlight of the new Toast concept, provides additional seating and serves yummy cocktails such as Pink Ladies, Manhattans and Grasshoppers. The Blooms sought bartenders with extensive experience mixing custom, retro drinks. Mimosas and Bellinis are perfect breakfast accompaniments. Or try the Bloody Mary, made with Toast's secret recipe, if you prefer something with more kick. There is also an approachable wine selection and a variety of great beers available, including Pabst Blue Ribbon on tap, which is an indication of the resaturant's fun vibe.

"We use local purveyors whenever possible," Thom says, echoing a growing movement in support of local farmers and products. The Toast Roast, their custom coffee blend, is roasted in Waterford. Much of their cheeses, meat and produce come from Eastern Market, and tortillas come from Southwest Detroit. Even the staff's uniforms are locally designed by Robert Stanzler of Made In Detroit.

Toast Birmingham offerings to watch for include wine tastings, cooking classes, local artwork on display, L.A. style "Taco Tuesdays" with margarita specials, and the Toast Upper Crust Club (A-list for exclusive VIP events).  – Mervit Bashi

203 Pierce St., Birmingham, 248.25.TOAST.

Hours: 7 a.m.-1 a.m., Monday-Wednesday. 8 a.m.-2 a.m., Thursday-Saturday. 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Sunday.

