

Toast

Some might say Portland needs another crowded brunch spot about as much as it needs another adult entertainment venue. But the neighbors around Southeast 52nd Avenue and Steele Street seem pretty pleased with the transformation of Angie's Bad Ass Video into Toast.

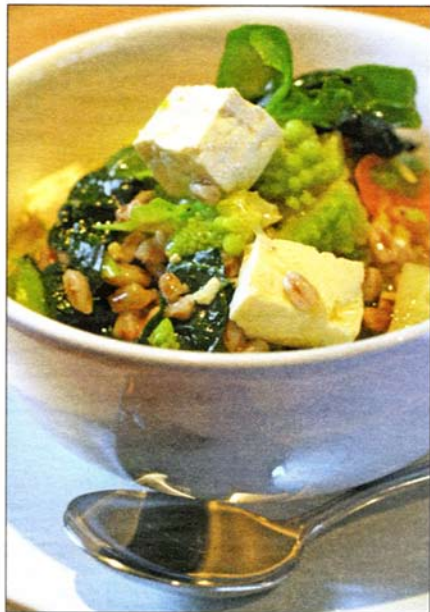
Brunch lovers amass early at the airy, modernly designed spot. Many greet servers as repeat customers, good-naturedly grouching about the wait while helping themselves to the coffee positioned smartly next to the sign-in sheet.

There's quite a bit of bar seating, which is a nice option if you're disinclined to sit near the children who populate many of the tables at this kid-friendly establishment.

Chef-owner Donald Kotler, a longtime neighborhood resident who opened the restaurant last August, is the picture of hands-on.

The menu is unfortunately populated with cutesy items (does anyone really want to ask their waiter, "Do you recommend the Benedict Oh, or the Population 17?"), but there's no denying the appeal of the Truck Stop, a pan-seared hanger steak, served sliced into pink medallions, with a lacy potato pancake and two eggs on the side.

The Golden Pig pairs thick strips of pork belly (basically bacon on steroids) with rich eggs scrambled with crème fraîche, all arrayed over a hefty slice of house-made



The Good Monk — a bowl of tofu and seasonal vegetables in an onion broth — kept diners warm this winter at Toast.

TRIBUNE PHOTO:
KATIE HARTLEY

toasted bread.

At dinnertime, the menu is small — just six or so entrees — and it's not uncommon for the kitchen to run out of things, but that shows Kotler's commitment to serving only the freshest local ingredients.

A stuffed pasta served with tender hunks of braised chicken got a salty jolt from Gouda, and the light tomato sauce didn't overwhelm the pasta. The Truck Stop P.M. serves the same tasty steak with a potato purée.

There's also a burger served on toast (of course) and the Good Monk for the veggies among us made with tofu, toasted farro and seasonal vegetables in an onion broth.

The tiny wine list is by the glass and only

includes a few of each color, but there's a full bar, too, and some creative cocktails.

— AV/B

When: 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday

Where: 5222 S.E. 52nd Ave.

Contact: 503-774-1020

Entree prices: brunch \$4.50-\$14, dinner entrees \$8-\$17