

OUTPOST ON BURNSIDE

Blend • 2327 E. Burnside St.; 503-234-8610
 Hours: 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekends
 Queer Quotient: ☺ Cup: ☺☺ Vibe: ☺☺

Blend is a great example of a place that serves as both a neighborhood meeting spot as well as offering a queer-friendly atmosphere. Featuring a long, dark room, with an even darker room down a few steps, the best place to drink coffee here is out on the stoop, where a parade of dogs and bikes pass on busy Burnside.

On the other hand, the back room of Blend would be a perfect place for a small group meeting or study session, and has the potential for coziness in the rainy season. In the summer, it is more like a cave than anything.

The coffee, offered up by a charming young man, was fairly good, although not altogether delicious. There are snacks for purchase, including

yogurt, bagels, hummus and other veggie-friendly treats.

The community bulletin board at Blend is worth taking a look at to find out what is happening around town. There is also a good selection of local newspapers, as well as the Los Angeles hipster mag *Arthur*, which is hard to find in Portland.

The ambiance of Blend is low-key, with some fairly distressed pieces of furniture.

The art on the walls is unusually interesting compared to the regular coffeehouse fare, and the rubber-ducky collection is outstanding.

There is nothing at Blend to suggest it is particularly gay, although it is queer-owned. Instead, the vibe is friendly, casual and neighborhood-focused.



ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

Cooper's Coffee East • 4500 S.E. Stark St.; 503-238-2120
 Hours: 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays
Cooper's Coffee West • 1010 S.W. Gibbs St.; 503-944-5000
 Hours: 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday
 Queer Quotient: ☺ Cup: ☺☺ Vibe: ☺☺

"Hip to be square" is the prevailing attitude at Cooper's Coffee House, owned by Michael McRae.

A former construction worker, McRae says he opened his shop "for the fun of it." Yet with its success after 2 1/2 years of business, he branched out to open Cooper's Coffee West on the Oregon Health & Science University campus.

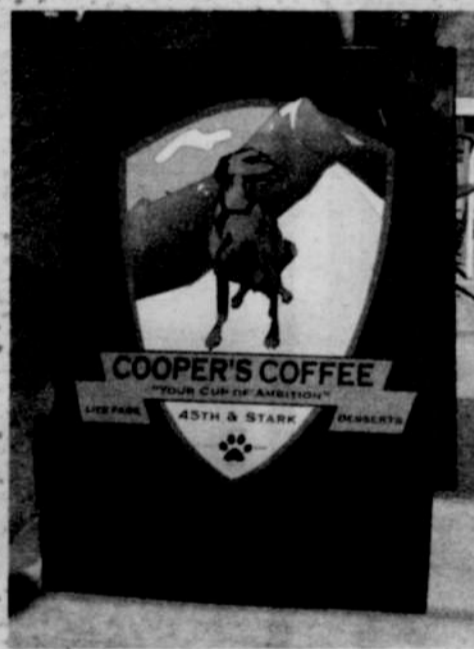
Cooper's East is an open, airy neighborhood spot attached to Addison's Market. McRae points to his middle-aged, mainstream clientele and says, "I don't have hipsters here."

He prides himself on the smiles from his friendly baristas and their method of meeting and greeting every customer.

"They're always smiling, always thanking," he says of his staff. "That's important to me."

Cooper's is an extremely dog-friendly environment, with the shop itself named after McRae's red Doberman. Free doggie treats are offered at the front counter, and the shop is decorated with pooch portraits.

McRae is very involved with the community, raising



money for the Oregon Humane Society and holding food and gift drives during the holidays and a free pumpkin-carving event for Halloween.

Besides typical coffee fare and pastries, Cooper's offers quiches and fresh sandwiches with cream cheese spiced up in-house. Bridgetown provides the beans.

According to McRae, business is "rockin,'" and the shop is "flying through food." He attributes most of the shop's success to the "personalities behind the counter," offering no lip and a warm welcome.

KID AND QUEER FRIENDLY

Cafe Destino • 1339 N.E. Fremont St.; 503-284-9455
 Hours: 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekends
 Queer Quotient: ☺☺☺ Cup: ☺☺☺ Vibe: ☺☺☺

On any given morning, Café Destino is teeming with moms and kids. The proximity to Irving Park, a preschool, and kid-focused Peanut Butter and Ellie's perhaps explains this, but neighbors in the know are familiar with proprietress Chantal Zinn and her own kid-focused life:

After working for McMenamins for 10 years, Zinn founded Café Destino, which will celebrate its fifth year in business this year. Her own changing life reflects the changes in the shop:

"When we first opened, it was more gay and lesbian focused because we brought in our friends. Now it is more of a neighborhood place, where you run into your neighbors and friends. It's a place for families, gays and lesbians, kids, older folks."

Zinn claims to know 95 percent of her clientele, a figure that cannot be disputed when you watch her greet them.

"I know what is going on in their lives, and they know about mine," she notes.

Café Destino is an especially welcoming place for queer parents. Zinn knows of five lesbian families with kids less than 1 year old within a mile radius of her shop who visit regularly. She has a 20-month-old son named Parker Reno Zinn who keeps her busy when she is not working in the shop.

"I'm so glad these kids will grow up with each other," she says.

"They'll have peers and also people to commiserate with!"

Favored among denizens of Irvington, as well as the younger hipsters from the Alberta area, are Café Destino's breakfast sandwiches. The menu offers steamed and fried eggs with all sorts of fixins. The coffee, which is rich and velvety, is roasted in Seattle at Café Vita, and the pastries are locally produced.

Zinn's enthusiasm about her shop is contagious: "We love coming to work every day," she says. "It's a great, fun place where you'll have delicious food and really great coffee!"



Our rating system:

- ☺ weak brew
- ☺☺ balanced blend
- ☺☺☺ perfect cup



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