



TOBY'S ESTATE

BY DANIELLE BEURTEAUX

Ask an Australian about Toby's Estate and their eyes are likely to light up. Toby's is a well-known brand in Australia, but stateside? Nobody knew who they were when they opened their New York branch in January 2012. But that quickly changed.

Toby's aim is to create the "ultimate coffee experience," with a comfortable space, and welcoming staff and brewsters, Aussie-style. "It's sort of the Australian approach to be laidback and approachable," says Adam Boyd, operations director and co-owner. "Offering a great product without the attitude that often comes with it."

Toby's Estate, which has five cafes in Australia, is named after founder Toby Smith, who first started roasting in his mother's garage in Sydney, spent a year in Brazil doing intensive coffee training, and was at the forefront of Australia's coffee awakening. The New York store is co-owned by long-time friends Smith, Boyd, and director Amber Jacobsen.

As with many New York City newcomers, the team initially had their sights set on Manhattan. But after a tour of expensive spaces, and, finding that the city's permit laws that would have made on-site roasting nearly impossible, they looked further afield. The search brought them to Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood on a busy stretch of North 6th Street: an old meat warehouse with high ceilings and 3,000 square feet. It was a lucky setback. "It became very apparent to us that not only was our market here in Brooklyn, but it was also a far better location for the wholesale business," Boyd says.

In the spirit of neighborliness, they even introduced themselves to nearby Blue Bottle Coffee, 'cause that's just the Australian way. "The coffee industry in Australia is very close-knit," says Boyd. "We wanted to enter

this market with a similar approach, being open and friendly and approachable."

They did a complete renovation, putting floor-to-ceiling shelving on the side walls, filled with objects and mementos. For the south-facing front of the store they installed a multi-paned full-wall window. The service counter is at the back, home to a shiny, new Kees van der Westen espresso machine (Toby's is their non-exclusive distributor). Behind are a windowed tasting room, offices, storage, the roasting room and a loading dock.

The open plan and use of glass and warm-toned wood creates an airy and comfortable space, where patrons feel free to hang out on the long, grey couch, on a stool at one of the many small tables, or at the communal tables. Toby's core customers are the neighborhood young creatives who set up their laptops for some caffeine-fueled work time, but the store is also sought out by tourists, especially visiting Australians.

Toby's sells both brew and beans at their retail outlet, and wholesales to area cafés and restaurants. Smith and his team are responsible for finding the perfect Toby's bean. He relies on relationships with producers that he's forged over 15 years, and who've come to know what the Toby's Estate brand is looking for. "At the end of the day, it's a blind cupping on the table," Smith says. "It all comes down to what's on the palate and it's selected on that basis."

And their customers keep coming back for the quality coffee and the relaxed environment, a place to get away from New York's hurry and noise. "In a lot of places in New York, you feel very rushed," Boyd says. "We allow clients to hang out because it gives people a sense of ownership, and they're encouraged to take their time and enjoy the space." SCR

Fact Box

EQUIPMENT:

KEES VAN DER WESTEN ESPRESSO MACHINE; BACK-UP: LA MARZOCCO STRADA EP - 3 GROUP; LA MARZOCCO STRADA MP IN THE LAB; PROBAT P25 ROASTER; MAZZER ROBUR GRINDER; THREE-STAGE WATER FILTRATION; PROBAT BRZ 2000 ROASTER FOR PURCHASING AND SAMPLING.

STORE INFORMATION:

125 NORTH 6TH STREET,
BROOKLYN NY 11249

WWW.TOBYSESTATE.COM

347-457-6160

HOURS OF OPERATION:

M-F 7AM TO 7PM;
SAT-SUN 8AM TO 8PM