

# Parlez-vous LE SELECT BISTRO IMPORTS PARISIAN ROMANCE TO TORONTO'S WEST SIDE BY LAUREN FERRANTI-BALLEM PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER DEW bistro?



**PAS DE DEUX**  
(Left) Jean-Jacques Quinsac and  
Frédéric Geisweiller reflect  
on life in their new digs

Imagine you're Frédéric Geisweiller, co-owner of a well-established French bistro in Toronto. The neighbourhood that seemed charming when you opened some 29 years ago has changed; the bohemian arts scene and independent merchants have been replaced by tourist-targeted junk hawkers and retailers like the GAP. Do you spit out French expletives and stand your ground?

Nope. You don't stay at all costs — and there would have been many. As Queen Street — the original site of *Le Sélect* — became a more desirable piece of commercial real estate, rents began to climb. "We would have had to pay five times our lease," Geisweiller explains. "It's the equivalent of being kicked out. But had we not been forced, we would have moved anyway."

There were also other reasons for relocating. Parking spots are costly and difficult to find on the strip, which made it expensive to visit the bistro for a drink and a nuisance for aging clientele. What's more, its proximity to downtown's Entertainment District saw the restaurant associated with the violent tangles that occasionally exploded on the doorsteps of nearby nightclubs. "It created a negative image for the whole neighbourhood, which made our customers uncomfortable," says Geisweiller, offering a *c'est la vie* kind of shrug.

And so, he and business partner Jean-Jacques Quinsac, gently transported their 12,000 bottles of vintage wine and set down someplace new. For 10 years they'd had their eye on an area directly south, a quiet leafy boulevard with plenty of parking. They could never have predicted the quarter would grow into an important gastronomic enclave. Today, their neighbours