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The It List 2009

by Ondine Cohane



The café at the Drake Hotel, Toronto, Canada

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Toronto, Canada

Fans of this indie-minded city have always enjoyed foraging for its underground ethnic restaurants and digging around one of the latest artsy neighborhoods to sprout up like mushrooms. But nowadays, [Toronto](#) is showing a bit more swagger. The [Toronto International Film Festival](#) is a big reason for the city's swelling reputation: The event is a growing counterpoint to Cannes and is increasingly scoring blockbuster premieres like Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire*. There's some showy architecture here now as well. Daniel Libeskind's glass-and-metal extension to the [Royal Ontario Museum](#) (pictured) last year has become a must-stop—don't miss C5, the restaurant on the fifth floor where gourmets congregate for the six-to-eight-course tasting menu. Local son [Frank Gehry](#) has just completed a multimillion-dollar home for the [Art Gallery of Ontario](#), the city's most ambitious project in years. Meanwhile, though the [Hazelton](#) is currently the It Toronto hotel, with a Mark McEwan restaurant and stunning lap pool, other big players, including [Gansevoort](#) and [Thompson Hotels](#), have projects in the pipeline. (Travelers who want fashionable digs for less should check out the [Drake](#) and the [Gladstone](#), where rates dip below \$200 a night.) Music fans should head to the [Sound Academy](#), where homegrown talent such as the Stills, Feist, and Broken Social

Scene—all signed to the city's pioneering Arts & Crafts label—play regular gigs. To round out the Toronto-is-cool experience, stop at [Madeline's](#), the latest restaurant from chef Susur Lee, who's on the verge of star chef-dom: He's just opened a place at [New York's Thompson LES](#). Too much wattage for you? Take a stroll down Ossington Avenue and wander among the vintage shops, galleries, cool cafés, and ethnic neighborhood joints.