

LIFE



The "Sass-Squash" toast at The Katonah Reading Room in Nyack. The restaurant, also known for its toastinis, features its avocado toast topped with olive tapenade, an over easy egg, and Bulgarian feta topped with a seed and nut mix. SUBMITTED



The "House Favorite" at Scott & Joe in Nyack comes topped with prosciutto butter, prosciutto di parma, burrata, basil, extra virgin olive oil, and aged balsamic. SUBMITTED



Room in Katonah: Roasted squash puree, fried basil leaves, burrata and sunflower seeds. SUBMITTED

Beyond avocado

Where to find artisan toasts in Westchester, Rockland

Jeanne Muchnick Rockland/Westchester Journal News | USA TODAY NETWORK

Everyone knows avocado toast is a biggie for brunch or lunch. But what about marinated and roasted mushrooms (oyster, shiitake, cremini) with truffle butter and radicchio on a slice of Balthazar bread lightly lathered with extra virgin olive oil and whipped mascarpone? Or roasted squash puree, fried basil leaves, burrata and sunflower seeds? Suddenly, there are more toasts at more Lower Hudson Valley eateries than ever, with artisan combinations featuring everything from Bulgarian feta to figs to spicy tuna tartare. Perched perfectly atop golden, just-right toasted bread (and usually also available gluten-free), these simple pleasures usually come with heft, meaning you may need to move beyond your hands to a knife and fork. Why the sudden draw? Michael Boulos, owner of The Raconteur Bar & Kitchen in Pleasantville, believes the reason they've grown in popularity is because of their accessibility. "It's something simple and easy to understand," he said. "Plus, they're generally low-cost and not a huge portion." Gretchen Menzies, owner of The Katonah Reading Room in Katonah, agrees, crediting their popularity to the fact that they're not as filling as sandwiches. "They're always interesting and something you don't see everywhere," she said. "They're also easy to eat, and make sense at all hours. I want them for breakfast AND lunch." So, where can you find these creative items with their fusion of flavors? A sampling follows. **See TOAST, Page 4C**

Bake a batch of biscotti for that perfect hot drink partner

Tammy Algood

Special to Nashville Tennessee
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

February begs for time to sit with a hot cup of something. Whether it's coffee, tea or mulled wine, we need the warmth it brings to our insides and just holding the cup is comforting. But along with that comes the need for just a little something to nibble on while you relax. Biscotti couldn't be more perfect for the job.

Biscotti is a gift to us from the Veneto region of Italy. The texture of this "cookie" is hard due to the way it is double baked. But that texture is what makes it ideal for dipping into warm beverages

and enjoying at a leisurely pace.

The name comes from "biscuit" and these intensely crunchy snacks were originally made for travelers. They had a long shelf life and didn't need to be cared for like softer treats or breads. And that shelf life makes it ideal for a weekend baking project even today.

Traditional recipes flavor them with slices of almonds, but there are recipes galore to fit anything you are craving. That includes everything from hazelnuts to anise seeds to dried fruits to chocolate to Kahlua. The ingredients are mixed, then shaped into small loaves (usually 9x2 inches) then baked for half an hour.

It comes out of the oven, cooled

slightly, then sliced diagonally with a serrated knife just as you would bread. The slices are placed back on the baking sheet and returned to the oven for another 10 minutes of baking, flipping halfway through. That second trip to the oven is what gives the biscotti the crunchy texture that is desired.

Some actually prefer soft biscotti, which is not returned to the oven and it is delicious. But there is nothing like that harder consistency that is so lovely when dipped into that warm beverage. *Tammy Algood is the author of "Vintage Gardener" on PBS stations in Tennessee. Follow her at www.hauteflavor.com.*



Chocolate chip biscotti is the perfect treat to pair with a hot beverage. THE HERALD

Toast

Continued from Page 1C

Rockland

Art Cafe of Nyack, Nyack

There's toast and then there's toast-in, which this Mediterranean coffee-shop boasts eight of. Served sandwich style or open-faced (just ask!), you can get them in eight different cheese combinations including Brie (with cream cheese, Roma tomato and onion), goat (with onions and sundried tomato dressing), Gruyere (French Gruyere, fresh mozzarella, mushroom and red onion), three cheese (goat, mozzarella, Muenster and Roma tomato) and moz-zarella (with Roma tomato and pesto). There's also a Bulgarian toastini with Bulgarian feta, Israeli pickle, onion and Roma tomato in addition to hummus (with olive tapenade) and pesto (with goat cheese, pesto and organic hard boiled egg).

Avocado toast is also an option, dressed with olive tapenade, an over easy egg, and Bulgarian feta that's topped with a seed and nut mix. You can sub vegan feta/tofu scramble to the made vegan and/or with gluten-free bread.

65 S. Broadway, 845-384-2300 Come summer, they also do seasonal conversions including a tomato toast and a blueberry toast, the latter of which this reporter is addicted to.

Cafe Diem, Pearl River

Fresh salmon and a poached egg was to create a top toast aficionado comprise the Salmon Benedict here, spot. "We always had an avocado toast with more toasts to come. Yes, there's and often one or two other types in the avocado (and yes, it's still a fan fave beginning," she said. "Now toasts make complete with a poached egg, sea salt, up about half of our menu." The three olive oil and chili flakes), but diners can "regulars" are the avocado, the avocado also expect smoked salmon with capers with scrambled eggs and the "Granny," and red onion; whipped goat cheese with three specialty toasts; rotated topped with strawberries, fresh herbs weekly. All are served on either gluten- and extra virgin olive oil; and heirloom free bread or Wave Hill grilled country tomato bruschetta with garlic confit and bread and are made to order. **19 Edge-balsamic glaze. Also in the works: bur-mont Road, 914-334-8019, katonahrea-rata toast and peanut butter with a host of room.com**

Peach Pit Bowl Shop & Kitchen, New City

The world is your oyster at this healthy eatery where, along with avocado toast (on low carb or gluten-free bread), you'll find a host of "Not So Regular Toasts" including banana, peanut butter and a drizzle of honey; strawberry, banana, and Nutella; and the same combo with a drizzle of vegan cookie butter. In addition, there's "The Boca Toast," (cream cheese, smoked salmon, sliced avocado, pickled onions, everything seasoning and lemon olive oil), "Apollo Toast," (house made avocado mash, feta cheese, olive tapenade, cherry tomato, pickled onions and lemon olive oil) and "Power Toast," (house made avocado mash, crumbled applewood smoked bacon and fried or hard boiled egg).

62 N. Main St., 845-708-5312, peachpitbowlshopkitchen.com

Scott & Joe, Nyack

The "House Favorite" is just that — a local fave. Topped with prosciutto butter, prosciutto di parma, burrata, basil, extra virgin olive oil, and aged balsamic, it's served opened face on artisanal toast. Come summer co-owner Scott Young likes to add thinly sliced cantaloupe. There's always one toast at this cheese shop, with its bistro menu and ambiance. But if you're lucky, Young may feature another (he did a squash one this past fall). **1 S. Broadway, 845-535-3736, scottandjoe.co**

The Village Blend, Sloatsburg

There's nothing better than a hot mug of fresh brewed coffee and a simple toast to start your day. At this cozy coffee-shop you get both. Toasts, which are available in whole wheat, sourdough or gluten-free, can be topped with butter, jam, peanut butter, cinnamon sugar, Nutella or almond butter. **86 Orange Turnpike, 845-712-5585, thevillageblend.net**

Westchester

Katonah Reading Room, Katonah

Toast is king at this coffeeshop/bookstore/gift shop with six versions usually available including the queen bee herself: Avocado, which is mashed with olive oil, a sprinkle of sea salt and a scrambled egg on top. More out-of-the-box combinations include "The Granny Toast," with peanut butter, Granny Smith apple, housemade granola, and honey drizzle; the "Cram Bam Thank You Ma'am," with ricotta cheese, house made cranberry jam, honey, prosciutto and a sprinkle of salt; "Dilly" with creamy dill hummus, topped with lemon dill cucumber salad, red onion and crispy chickpeas; "Fig-et About It" with ricotta, fig jam, Mike's hot honey, pistachios, fresh figs, and salt; "Honey, Please!" with warmed brie, sautéed ap-

ples, pecans, and rosemary infused honey drizzle; "Garden Party" featuring roasted red pepper hummus, lemony cucumber and carrot ribbons, feta, pickled onion, and cracked pepper; and "Sass-Squash" with roasted squash puree, fried basil leaves, burrata and sundried tomatoes.

Case in point: The labne yogurt



Toast options at The Raconteur Bar & Kitchen in Pleasantville include burrata bruschetta, hummus toast (made to order), and pimiento cheese toast with jalapeño pepper jelly and micro chive.SUBMITTED

Expect lots of good-for-you choices at this fast, casual eatery where the motto is "Live a fruitful life." Sure you can get an acai bowl and swing on the eatery's four swings that grace a table towards the front (perfect for the Insta!), but why not go for something more toasty? The eatery, which Nelli Servedio opened in Feb. 2020, has been under new ownership since Jan. 2021, with Owner Kristi Godek's mantra: "Just a girl who decided to go for it." The California-esque spot with its breezy, neighborly vibe and down-to-earth ambiance, has six toasts: The Barese (with avocado, arugula and balsamic vinaigrette); the Vegan Caprese (with avocado, tomato, basil, salt and pepper); the Nutella (with Nutella, strawberries and powdered sugar); Hummus (with hummus, cucumbers and everything bagel seasoning); Peanut Butter (with peanut butter, banana slices, chocolate chips and a drizzle of honey); and Sprouts (with hummus, avocado, alfalfa sprouts and everything bagel seasoning).

2 Maple St., 914-259-2296, nellasnutribar.com

Nella's Nutri-Bar, Croton-on-Hudson

The Granola Bar, Rye

The Granola Bar may have gotten a facelift and a rebrand last March with new décor, evening hours, a full bar, and a nighttime menu featuring shareable plates. But its avocado toast, which put it on the map originally (along with its granola), still reigns supreme. You can get it "classic" on Tuscan bread, with feta and crushed red pepper, or with apple, goat cheese and honey. It's also available with a soft or hard boiled egg or with tuna tartar. Other toasts include "Spicy Tuna Tartar & Everything Bagel," (avocado, tuna, chili cream cheese on everything bagel); "Truffle Honey Ricotta Toast" (whipped ricotta and truffle honey on toasted sourdough); and Mushroom (whipped ricotta, roasted mushrooms and chimichurri). With each you can add additional veggies or protein such as bacon, egg, chicken and pickled onions. Bread choices include gluten-free, multigrain, sourdough or Tuscan.

The Raconteur Bar & Kitchen, Pleasantville

Burrata bruschetta with pistachio pesto and arugula ranks high on the menu here. So, too, does the newly created mushroom, which is topped with a balsamic reduction and fresh micro herbs. Boukos said he started playing with different toasts for a brunch menu, but when brunch didn't take off, he had to do something else with the bread he had from Balthazar. "The toasts were the perfect way for our little one-person kitchen to utilize the great ingredients we already had in new and interesting ways," he said. "I also love introducing new flavors that are simple, but maybe different than what most people are used to."

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Mushroom toast at The Raconteur Bar & Kitchen in Pleasantville. The bar has six toasts on its menu.SUBMITTED

spread with truffle honey, za'taar, bee pollen and cilantro, which is something he'd never tried before, but ended up loving (as do many of his customers). Other toast options include pimiento cheese (sharp cheddar spread, hot pepper jelly); country toast (paté de campagne, fig and onion marmalade, fleur de sel, chive); and the aforementioned

burrata and truffled labne. He also offers bread and butter with blueberry butter and rosemary drizzle. **914-769-4040, theraconteurbar.com**

Jeanne Muchnick covers food and dining. Follow her latest dining adventures on Instagram @lohud_food or via the lohudfood newsletter.

WHAT TO WATCH | CONTENT BY TV WEEKLY

All times listed are Eastern/Pacific Time. Shows air one hour earlier in Central/ Mountain Time.

The Reading

NETFLIX Original Film
Lee Daniels is an executive producer of writer/director Courtney Glaude's horror film. Mo'Nique stars as recently widowed Emma Leeden, who details the loss of her family in a new book. To generate press, Emma agrees to a staged psychic reading by 19-year-old Sky Brown (Chastity Sereal) in Emma's now-fortified home. There's only one problem: Sky's spiritual connection is real, and evil emerges in a house that they can't get out of.



"Freeridge" KEVIN ESTRADA/NETFLIX

Law & Order

NBC, 8 p.m.
When a graduate student is found dead, Cosgrove (Jeffrey Donovan) and Shaw (Melkad Brooks) follow the evidence to a suspect with no clear motive. Then, when Price (Hugh Dancy) and Maroun (Odeya Halevi) uncover a money-grabbing scheme within a close-knit church, McCoy (Sam Waterston) warns them to focus on the suspects and not the institution.

Accused: Guilty or Innocent?

A&E, 9 p.m.
This episode features a traveling nurse who is pulled over for a traffic violation in New Mexico and arrested for a felony burglary carried out in Ohio.

Welcome to Flatch

FOX, 9 p.m. Season Finale
Season 2 of the comedy series following the residents of Flatch, Ohio, concludes with "Churn Here."

Married to Real Estate

HGTV, 9 p.m.
A couple wants more house for their money, so they're relocating from San Francisco, California, to Smyrna, Georgia, and they need Egypt Sherrod's help.

CSI: Vegas

CBS, 10 p.m.
Catherine's (Marg Helgenberger) day off gets interrupted when a woman wakes up from a four-year coma and remembers details from the night her sister died.

Celebrity Jeopardy!

ABC, 8 p.m. Season Finale
We're riding high on the announcement of a new **Jeopardy!** Masters event — but first let's see who takes the title (and \$1 million grand prize) here. Of the three players, like Barinholtz and Wil Wheaton are the two names confirmed at prestime.

Young Sheldon

CBS, 8 p.m.
Sheldon (Iain Armitage) learns the university is building a database without him in the new episode "Ruthless, Toothless and a Week of Bed Rest."

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