

STR Hosts Partner with Local Businesses:

The Story of the Tōv Coffee Bus

From Ann Kopel, Host2Host Member and co-host in SE Portland



Tōv is a Hebrew word that describes perfection and serves as an umbrella for everything that is good. The word also describes the coffee that Joe Nazir serves in the double decker British bus (painted red) that sits on the corner of SE 32nd Ave and SE Hawthorne Boulevard behind a small food cart pod.

Although Joe graduated with a degree in engineering, he has been steeped in the love of coffee since 2005 when he landed his first barista job. Thinking it would be temporary until he found work as an engineer, he found that he loved the art of making a delicious cup of coffee.

Joe eventually landed at Starbucks where he learned a lot about customer service, but he became disappointed when that company began to prize profit over product. “I realized that my days with Starbucks were numbered,” Joe remembers. He wanted to do more than push buttons and make a profit.

He dreamed of owning his own business. That led him to business classes offered by Mercy Corps Northwest. “I thought about doing a coffee cart, but I saw someone who had a coffee cart that wasn’t very successful during the winter. I envisioned a place that would be warm, dry, and cozy all year. By luck, I found this bus in San Diego and I applied for a loan from Mercy Corp to buy it and bring it to Portland.”

The application process was arduous and the competition fierce, but Joe’s enthusiasm and work ethic had apparently impressed people because he was granted their maximum loan amount. Joe transformed the bus into the cozy space he had dreamed of with a rich purple interior and Egyptian carpets, tables, and coffee services. He takes pride in using only top ingredients, making all his own syrups and flavorings, and offering sweets baked by his mother and crafts made by his brother. His business is now such a success that he has 5 part-time employees and has repaid the loan in full.



Airbnb hosts Lee Lancaster & Ann Kopel with Joe Nazir @ Tov’s coffee bar.

Joe says that 90 per cent of his business comes from tourists and many Short-Term Rental businesses in the neighborhood not only recommend him, but also buy gift certificates for their guests. My husband and I opened our home to Airbnb at about the same time that Joe opened his bus, and we send every guest we have to Tōv with the promise of “probably the best coffee you will ever have.” Our guests are grateful for the tip, and some say they will stay with us again just to be near Tōv. In fact, that word also perfectly describes the way neighborhood STR’s and local businesses work together for the good of the neighborhood.