

Keene Bean

The Hometown Coffee Shop



Keen Bean's covered entrance during the fall. Picture from keenbeancoffee.com

Keen Bean Coffee Roasters

★★★★☆ \$\$

1031 South Market Street
Mount Vernon, Missouri
February 17, 2021
By Sylvia Long

Tracy says Darrel was fine-tuning his roasting skills when they first met in Montana over excellent coffee. Now, 20+ years later, Tracy and Darrel have built a family and a successful coffee shop together in Mount Vernon, Missouri.

Mount Vernon sits half-way between Springfield and Joplin, on I44. You should take the exit onto 39 East and drive to the stoplight at Market Street. Look to your right and you'll see Keen Bean's grey building.

Tracy and Darrel created their restaurant from a car wash 17 years ago. Keene Bean opened selling coffee. They imported their coffee beans and Darrel roasted them on location. They've since expanded their shop to include a restaurant with a laid-back, boho atmosphere and a full sandwich, soup, and salad menu.. Keen Bean sells African, Indonesian, Arabian, and flavored coffees, and great loose-leaf teas. They also offer catering, seasonal outdoor dining, and music events. Locals tell us Keen Bean has gone from being the local coffee supplier to *the* hometown meeting place.

My husband and I traveled in the snow for brunch last Wednesday. A plow was creating narrow frozen lanes around the coffee shop. We circumnavigated the lot twice before finding a space near the rectangle building. Outside, concrete planters created a barrier between cars and the icy dining area. Inside it was warm, and soft folk music strummed in the background.

“Good morning!”, a server called as the door banged. We waved and got in line. The air smelled like caramelized pastry. The locals were right about the atmosphere; it was comfortable and homey. The clientele was eclectic; students, retired folks, and young parents read, worked, or chatted. Mixed-matched mugs sat on the counter and vivid acrylic paintings lined a wall. A burgundy couch nestled in one corner and light streamed through thin bright pink or gold patterned fabric over floor-to-ceiling windows. It made you want to camp with a hot drink and stay awhile.

A chalkboard menu hung over the counter. The prices were reasonable for fresh, homemade food. I ordered a red pepper and cheese pastry-quiche and a bottomless cup of coffee, in a big mug. That way I could drink all the hot coffee I wanted! Wally ordered hot chocolate and a hand-sized cinnamon roll, warmed.

“We bake our own pastries every morning and we’re happy to warm up them for you.”, said our server. There were quiches, chocolate chunk cookies, cherry scones, and fluffy blueberry muffins under glass cake covers. We waited at the counter for about three minutes, listening to the hiss of the espresso machine, until they handed us our food on warm plates.

We found a table, settling into our chairs and brunch. My pastry crust was golden, buttery, and had that thin caramelized crackle of a perfect shell. My teeth crunched through the flakes and sunk into a mouth of cheesy quiche mixed with onion and roasted peppers. The tang of cheddar cheese with nutty swiss was satisfying. My only complaint was I should have asked for it warmed and I’d have liked more filling.

The coffee was exceptional. I could have set drinking coffee all afternoon. I ordered my favorite type, an Ethiopian blend that had a slight cocoa flavor. My husband said his hot chocolate beat Starbuck's hands down, and his cinnamon roll was soft and spicy. That’s his shorthand for real good.

Verdict:

- **Overall 3/ 4 stars:** Keen Bean did what they advertised; they provided a clean, comfortable atmosphere with well-made food and excellent coffee. I’d have preferred more custard filling in the quiche, but we liked the rest of our meal.
- **Noise 3/ 4 stars:** The restaurant is noisier near the front door, but it was simple to find a fairly quiet corner to visit or work.
- **Accessibility 4/ 4 stars:** The front and back entrances and bathrooms were accessible, and on one level. There was ample room between the tables for easy maneuverability and I saw staff helping a customer transport food to a table.
- **Prices \$\$:** I rated Keen Bean’s price point as reasonable for fresh food made on location. Brunch and drinks for two cost us about \$14.
 - Hot drinks ranged from \$2 for batch coffee or hot chocolate to \$5.45 for the largest specialty brews.
 - Cold drinks ranged from \$2 to \$4.75, and meals from \$4 to \$11.
 - Domestic and imported beer and wine were also available at comparable prices.
 - I compared Keene Bean’s prices to *Travellers House Coffee & Tea* in Springfield.

We enjoyed the staff, the atmosphere, and the food and drink. It’s no mystery why this shop has become the town meeting place. We’ll be sure to come back. Give Keen Bean a try this weekend. You’ll be glad you did!

'All our coffees are craft roasted in small batches with a Sivetz fluid bed roaster. We love what we do, and we do it well. We purchase with our hearts and we roast and prepare the same way.' (keenbeancoffee.com)

Keen Bean Coffee Roasters

1031 South Market Street
Mount Vernon, Missouri 65712
(417) 461-7101

Hours:

Monday: 6:30 am - 6:30 pm
Tuesday: 6:30 am - 6:30 pm
Wednesday: 6:30 am - 6:30 pm
Thursday: 6:30 am - 6:30 pm
Friday: 6:30 am - 9:00 pm
Saturday: 6:30 am - 6:30 pm
Sunday: Closed

