



NYC RESTAURANT OPENINGS

Inside Milk Bar's Huge New Flagship, a Sugar-Fueled Playground Opening Saturday

New menu items, build-your-own desserts, and lots and lots of Milk Bar gear are on deck at the new Ace Hotel outpost

by [Caleb Pershan](#) | Nov 12, 2019, 1:13pm EST

Photography by [Alex Staniloff](#)

New York City's new "flagship" **Milk Bar** location is so big that owner Christina Tosi has taken to calling her 10 other NYC locations "minis." The new location — opening this Saturday, November 16 — spans 4,000-square-feet on the ground floor of the Ace Hotel, in the space at 1196 Broadway at 29th street that used to house **John Dory Oyster Bar**.

That expanse is divided into four parts: a downstairs classroom and bakery, an upstairs counter with cafeteria-style seating for dine-in customers, a grab-and-go “mini mart” for pre-packaged items and Milk Bar merchandise, and a group of stations for customers to design their own cookies, cakes, and pints of ice cream. Think Build-a-Bear Workshop, but with edible results.

It's an expansion for Milk Bar that looks tailor made for a tourist pilgrimage. The Nomad location is centrally positioned near trendy hotels, and fans who've seen Tosi on shows like *MasterChef Junior* — or who've just heard the Milk Bar name — will find space to sit, things to do, and neon signs begging to be photographed. The overall effect that Tosi's going for, she says, is one of giddy imagination.

“It kinda feels like a slumber party that happens during the day,” says Tosi.





The mini mart section



The mini-mart is stocked with kits for friendship-bracelet-making, plus ideal sleepover supplies like Milk Bar cookies and candies, alongside Tosi's favorite convenience store snacks, like Cool Ranch Doritos and Big League Chew. At a miniature post office, visitors can send Milk Bar "care-packages" and postcards in a pink letterbox.



A letterbox for Milk Bar post cards

Below the ground floor action, a disco ball-decorated classroom space offers courses on cake-layering and Milk bar pie-baking. A basement bakery supplies the Milk Bar hits upstairs, like compost cookies and sprinkle-spiked birthday cake, plus store-specific seasonal items like caramel corn truffles, a vegan apple pie soft serve, and savory stuffed breads like pepperoni and eggplant parm "bombs." (A Williamsburg commissary kitchen supplies the rest of New York's Milk Bar locations). Customers can also pop down to the basement to sample not-yet-finalized Milk Bar goods from an R&D "lab" team through a barn-style half-door.



Vegan apple pie soft serve



A Thanksgiving croissant and bagel bomb (left) and expanded savory menu (right). A pepperoni bomb, eggplant parm bomb, and Italian hero bomb

The new Milk Bar flagship also sells a chance for customers to personalize their own flavors: Customers can “build-a-cookie” (\$40), “build-a-cake” (\$65), or “build-a-pint” (\$15) with Milk Bar staff. To create a giant, eight-inch wide cookie, for example, visitors reserve a time slot online (or just walk in, if there’s room). They taste through base flavors (like sugar, vanilla, and corn) and mix-ins (like pretzels, cereal crumbs, and chips from chocolate to potato) before a Milk Bar employee pops their choice in the oven, and it’s ready to eat minutes later.





The make-your-own-cookie station



Tosi opened the first Milk Bar 11 years ago this weekend, spinning off from David Chang's Momofuku Noodle Bar, where she was pastry chef. The business has now grown to include 400 employees at 16 locations and counting — there are two other “flagships,” in DC and LA. This fall, she closed a series B funding round from Sonoma Brands, the company behind Krave Jerky and more packaged snacks, with eventual plans for the grocery store aisle.

The chef chose her new investors with particular care, she says, after blowback to the involvement of series A investor Stephen Ross. The major Momofuku backer landed businesses like Equinox and Milk Bar in hot water when he hosted a fundraiser for Donald Trump this summer. Some customers **called for boycotts**.

“It was definitely a surprise — it was a surprise to everyone that he has invested in — and it stunk. The table stakes are higher now than ever before. We took this very seriously,” Tosi says, adding that they raised money from a different group for “a broader approach.” Focus Brands (Cinnabon, Auntie Anne's, etc.) and North America president Kat Cole is now on the Milk Bar board.



Christina Tosi outside the new Milk Bar flagship

As Milk Bar gears up for national growth, then, Tosi's new flagship offers a chance to reaffirm its place in New York.

“The thing I realized over time is that [we were missing] the ability to come in to a store in New York City and see all the humans baking and scaling and layering,” she says. “We missed the interaction that we had with people.”

Milk Bar NYC Flagship’s business hours are: Sunday to Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 12 a.m.; Friday and Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 2 a.m.. It opens this Saturday, November 16, at noon.



The ordering portion for customers



The dining area





Milk Bar cakes in a display case



Milk Bar merch





A claw machine is free to play



The build-your-own-cake station



The new savory menu at Milk Bar's flagship



Left to right: A pepperoni bomb, a bagel bomb, an Italian hero bomb, and an eggplant parm bomb



Hallway to the Ace Hotel
