

Coming Soon: In-Store Restaurants That Put the ‘Bar’ in Barnes & Noble

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At the end of August, the embattled US bookseller Barnes & Noble announced plans to open a 9,000-square-foot retail concept in Plano, Texas, in early 2017 to highlight the “bar” in the first part of its name. The new store is one of a handful of locations across the US that B&N is developing as a concept store that combines beer with books and eats.

“It’s a tremendous opportunity to join the list of ‘best in class’ restaurants and merchants opening at Legacy West,” David Deason,

vice president of development at Barnes & Noble, told the *Dallas Morning News*. “We are excited to be opening a smaller format store, as part of a number of different concept stores that we’re testing nationwide.”

For many recreational readers, the idea of curling up with a good book and a glass of wine at home sounds like the ultimate way to relax. Would this soothing formula work outside of home, though?

In December 2015, Barnes & Noble filed a beer and wine license application with the town of New Hartford, NY for its store location there. At the time, an attorney representing Barnes & Noble indicated with the license application that the plans was to test whether or not customers would enjoy beer and wine offerings from a more robust in-store café offering. The town’s board unanimously approved that application.

Besides Plano, Texas, and New Hartford, NY, Barnes & Noble plans to introduce a restaurant and bar concept at locations including its Eastchester location in New York, its Folsom location in California, its Ashburn location in Virginia and its Edina location in Minnesota.

In a presentation to investors in June, Barnes & Noble president of development and the restaurant group Jaime Carey revealed the design concept for the new restaurant/bar experience (at top and below) and noted that the new concept stores would serve as community spaces for customers to learn, discover and grow; feature contemporary aesthetics; would be geared towards discovery; offer increased customer seating areas; use digital to improve the store experience; and upgrade the in-store cafe, currently operated in partnership with

Starbucks.

And according to *Westchester* magazine's profile of the upcoming store in Eastchester, NY, there's more in store for that particular location: "In addition to the restaurants (and the books, obviously), there will be outdoor spaces with a bocce court and fire pit, expanded seating, and open spaces for in-store events—all things B&N is banking on providing a unique experience compared to primarily online competition like Amazon."



While sprucing up its in-store café sections and serving beer and wine—a move that Starbucks is testing with its Evenings store initiative and Urban Outfitters planning as a way to keep shoppers hanging around—may seem like baby steps towards transforming its brand experience and relevance to customers, Barnes & Noble has taken bigger steps to establish and protect a brand identity for the concept.

On September 7, 2016, two applications were filed by Barnes & Noble Cafe, LLC with the US Patent & Trademark Office for the “BARNES & NOBLE KITCHEN” word mark (App. No. 87163079) and a “BARNES & NOBLE KITCHEN” (App. No. 87163074) logo.

Both applications were filed under International Class 043, for “restaurant, bar and café services”, including sit-down restaurant services, take-out restaurant services, and online restaurant ordering services. The logo, which incorporates the current Barnes & Noble logo, includes a stylized form of the word “kitchen” in a terracotta tone underneath.



Both applications were filed based on an intent to use the marks, which means that Barnes & Noble has yet to use the name or logo. In fact, when looking up the locations where Barnes & Noble has added its restaurant and bar concept, the location pages only list a “café” under each of the location’s “Store Features” section, which links to a basic café section on its [website](#). Neither the stores’ location pages or the Barnes & Noble website’s café section mention the looming arrival of full-service restaurant or bar features at the handful of stores in line for the concept.

If the applications are successful, Barnes & Noble could be simply addressing the upgraded café sections of these concept store locations. Filing for federal protection with the United States Patent & Trademark Office, however, could be indicative of bigger plans. It could

mean that every Barnes & Noble bookstore will feature these new Barnes & Noble Kitchens, ready for those wanting to dine, wine, and read outside of the comfort of their homes. It could also mean that these Barnes & Noble Kitchens could pop up as standalone restaurant, bar and bookstore locations separate and apart from the traditional bookstore locations.

In any form, a Barnes & Noble Kitchen is a bold step for a traditional bookstore. Given the recently reported 6.6% decline in the bookstore's total sales, this bold step could provide the bookstore with a much-needed boost.