

FOOD & WINE

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The Barnes & Noble of the Future Is a Restaurant with Books



Bloomberg / Getty Images

The book chain opened its fourth location that includes a full-service restaurant with craft beer and wine.

MIKE POMRANZ November 13, 2017

As the world began transitioning toward online shopping, book stores were some of the first to feel the crunch. Though it's easy to forget in an age where Amazon sells almost everything, the tech giant started out as a book seller, quickly putting pressure on brick and mortar heavyweights like Borders (R.I.P.), B. Dalton (R.I.P.) and Barnes & Noble. In its fight for survival, that last chain, Barnes & Noble, has made a number of changes to its business model over the years, but in the past year-plus, four locations have gotten perhaps the biggest rethink of all: full-service restaurants – including the latest iteration in Plano, Texas.

In June of last year, Barnes & Noble announced plans to launch four locations with what has become Barnes & Noble Kitchen – in-store eateries featuring everything from sharing plates and coffees to entrees and wine. These full-service restaurants have already opened in Scarsdale, New York; Folsom, California; and Edina, Minnesota; and now the fourth iteration from this promised first batch opened on Friday in Plano.

The new Texas Kitchen offers 113 seats at both indoor and outdoor tables, a community worktable with outlets and a counter bar – which is likely the easiest way to choose from the café's section of wine and craft beer on tap. According to Nation's Restaurant News, the menu features appetizers, salads, entrees, shareable items and desserts, with entree prices ranging from \$14 for grilled cheese and tomato soup to \$22 for plancha-cooked salmon with tabbouleh salad and basil dressing.

"This store is part of our ongoing effort to test new concept stores," said Demos Parner Barnes & Noble CEO. "We are still learning from all of the new stores that we have oper... across the country, and we are excited about the knowledge we have gained in these markets."

Though that ambiguous statement does little to tip the company's hand on whether more Barnes & Noble Kitchens will be coming in the future, the fact that the brand went through with opening the Plano restaurant over a year after the initial announcement probably means the test hasn't been going terribly. And for what it's worth, the first three Barnes & Noble Kitchens have all performed quite well on Yelp – with the food getting plenty of compliments. So maybe Barnes & Noble has found its new niche.... at least until Amazon opens a restaurant next door.