

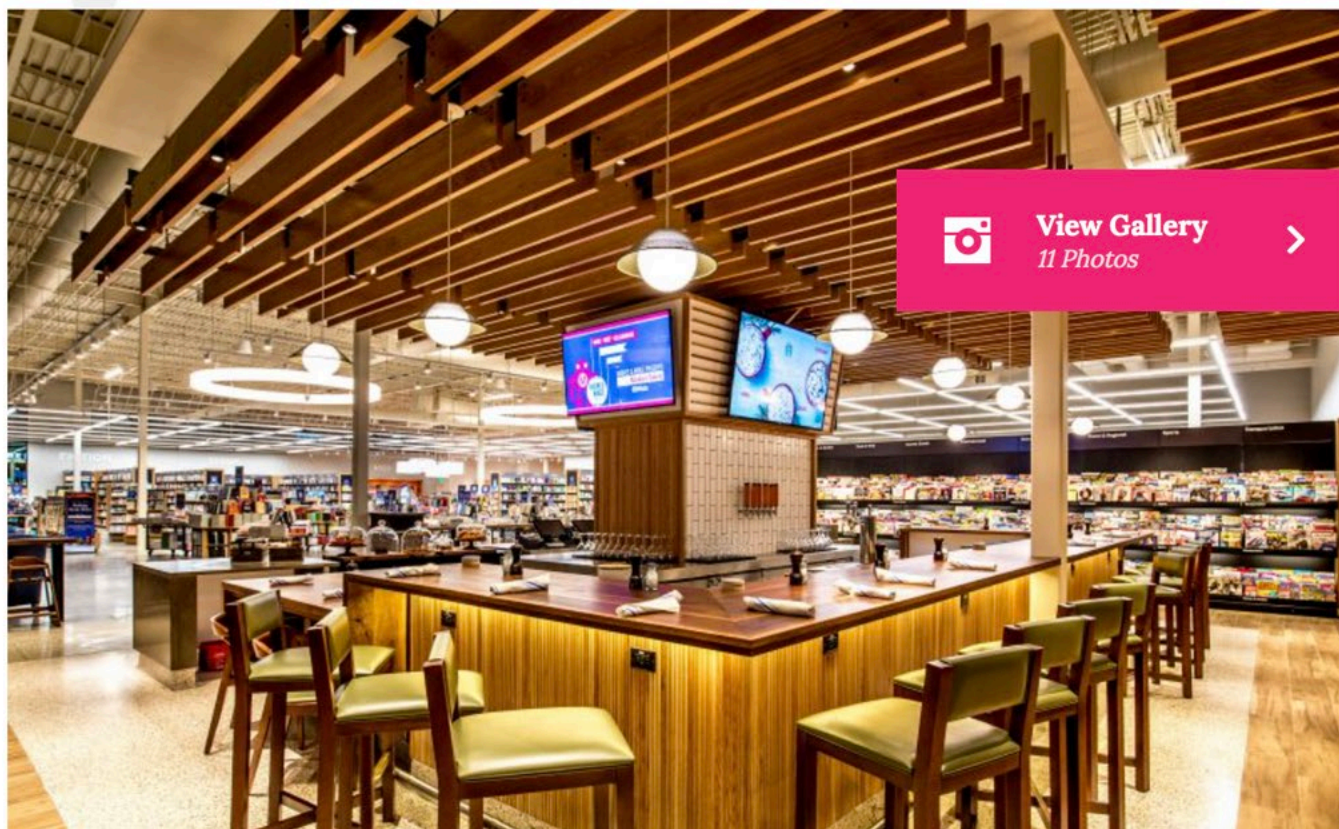
Northern Virginia

CULTURE FEATURES

Eat, drink & read at One Loudoun's new Barnes & Noble Kitchen

NOVEMBER 30, 2017 by [BRIANA ELLISON](#)

With floor-to-ceiling glass windows and local wine and beer on tap, Ashburn's Barnes & Noble is not your typical bookstore.



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Four years after the [closing of the Barnes & Noble Bookstore in Reston](#), the book-selling powerhouse has opened a new Northern Virginia location—with a twist.

[Barnes & Noble Kitchen](#), the fifth bookstore to include an in-house restaurant, opened in [Ashburn's One Loudoun](#) on Wednesday, Nov. 22. [Barnes & Noble Ashburn](#) joins the other bookstore-restaurant hybrids in Folsom, California; Medina, Minnesota; Eastchester, New York; and Plano, Texas.

“Our concept is ‘fast-casual,’” says kitchen manager Dominik Daul. “Fast because people nowadays move and don’t have a lot of time. They would like to take their time when they choose to, so we have the option of ‘come here, get good food, get good drinks and leave,’ or ‘come here and spend all the time you want.’”

The 17,000-square-foot bookstore will feel familiar to guests who know some of Barnes & Noble’s most popular features: large piazzas stacked high with best-sellers, a large Fiction section, an extensive children’s section, comfortable seating, an Ask Desk for guests who need assistance and a display of the company’s [NOOK e-readers](#).

Yet the new location is also different, in a very exciting way.

Two sides boast floor-to-ceiling glass windows that let in natural light and the bookcases are a white oak wood, making the store appear larger than it already is.

“Our books are very front-facing, so they’re talking to our guests,” says store manager Christopher Louderbach, who’s been with Barnes & Noble since 2004. “There’s not a lot of spines [on display], you’re seeing the covers. ... they’re doing a little bit of selling without us.”

No Barnes & Noble would be complete without its books, and the One Loudoun location doesn’t disappoint. As Louderbach says, guests don’t need to spend a lot of time deciding on which section to hit first, because the large floorplan and high ceilings accentuate the tall genre headers on the wall, among them: Fiction; Teens; Nature and Wildlife; and History.

And then there’s the kitchen.

With a wrap-around bar that has local beers and wines on tap (also available by the glass and bottle), an all-day menu with freshly made snacks and seating for 72 people, the Barnes & Noble Kitchen is poised to be a serious contender in the already eatery-packed

shopping center.

Daul—a Germany native with a history in hotel and restaurant hospitality and management—is overseeing the kitchen’s day-to-day operations while Executive Chef Ben Ford—the California restaurateur known for his appearances on *Hell’s Kitchen* and *Food Network Star*—is spearheading the menu in the all-electric kitchen.

Prior to 4 p.m., grab-and-go options made in-house, charcuterie platters (all with locally made meats and cheeses), and fresh bread and pastries (from Sterling’s **Baguette Republic**) will be available. Starting at 4, a menu with entrees such as herb-rubbed chicken and a 9 oz., asadero cheese-stuffed meatloaf will be available. The Kitchen also includes a Starbucks, which is where the concept for a restaurant started.

“The combination of books and hospitality has been in place for 25 years with our cafes,” says Carl Hauch, vice president of stores for Barnes & Noble. “When we updated the look of our stores, we thought we’d try out different looks to update our cafes.”

There’s a long communal table where Daul hopes people will sit down and converse with strangers, plus power outlets are always at least five feet away from one another other and next to every table.

“There’s no one area where you won’t be able to plug in your laptop and get to work,” says Louderbach.

With the four other Barnes & Noble Kitchens being full-service restaurants with a formal wait staff, careful consideration went into choosing Ashburn as the first fast-casual prototype.

“Loudoun isn’t tiny, but you have Leesburg that’s close to us and then you’re not far from D.C.,” says Louderbach. “We wanted to be able to appeal to everyone, but not be in the city. We already have those stores. Ashburn is [a place] we were really looking for: someplace with a little more green around it and just a bit more of a smaller community.”

One Loudoun is a growing shopping center in Ashburn, especially with its proximity to the **Dulles Town Center** and airport. Those leading the new store are excited for the opportunity their proximity to other businesses will present.

“This area has a bit more of a nighttime business, it’s got a great weekend [atmosphere] to it,” says Ford. “As businesses come in and occupy, the daytime parts will work differently and evolve, and we’ll move along with that as the needs change with the neighborhood.”

From referring to those who come into the store solely as “guests;” to providing younger visitors with an interactive Lego table and costumed story times; putting local authors on a larger piazza display and holding expo-style events with local and best-selling writers (formal announcements will be made in January); and a contemporary, non-intrusive style of food service, Barnes & Noble is poised to become Louderbach’s vision of Ashburn’s community bookstore.

Daul emphasizes that they want guests to think of Barnes and Noble Kitchen as an extension of their living room.

“For us, it’s about the Ashburn community and inviting them to visit us and come try us out,” Hauch says. “We’d love to have them in.”