



SELECTED PRESS COVERAGE

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Ronnybrook Milk Bar by Ami Kealoha

The latest addition to NYC's Chelsea Market is the Ronnybrook Milk Bar featuring [Ronnybrook Farm's](#) line of milk, yogurt, cheese and ice cream incorporated into seasonal breakfast and lunch menus. Team CH stopped by this morning for some Moccachinos and Eggs-in-a-hole, and spoke to purveyor Mark Sarosi about his foray into brand extension, the possibility of bringing Ronnybrook to the airport and lactose intolerance.



The Ronnybrook Milk Bar seems like a unique example of brand extension. Can you tell us a little bit about the idea and how you came to it?

My family has known the Osofsky family, the family that owns Ronnybrook Dairy, for about 15 years. We would visit the farm a lot in the summertime. I'd sometimes go work at their stand at the Greenmarket in Union Square and also in their old Chelsea Market store. I always had an attraction to the brand and realized how accepted it was in the city. People really responded to it.

My background is in architecture and design, and I live and work in New York City. I'd say (to the Osofsky's) "you should get an ice cream truck" or "open a bar that only serves milk and cookies." I went to work for (Rafael) Viñoly Architects, and then for the Rockwell Group, but for years I was obsessed with the idea of doing something with Ronnybrook.

Last September I said, "you really should redesign the space in the Chelsea Market," and they said, "why don't you do it, raise the money, design it and it will be your store." Now we are thinking about opening up other Milk Bars. In fact, I spoke with someone today about putting one in a NYC airport.



How did your thinking influence the design of the space?

Chelsea Market itself is an environment where transparency is key. It's a marketplace without walls where you can watch purveyors practice their trade. Our transparency is kind of minimal, but you can watch drinks and sandwiches being made and ice cream being dipped. It's a nod to old Americana, the milk shop and the North Eastern kitchen.

We teamed up with [Studio A+1](#), a small Brooklyn design firm. We had the idea of the [circular island] counter from the beginning. And we had this stock of old antique wooden milk boxes and we were dying to find a way to use them. It just so happens that two crates are the exact width of the fridges, which I had already decided I wanted to have along the walls. I thought wouldn't it be cool to make it feel like you're back at the farm?

As far as brand extension, we were like, why not? Why can't we create an environment where people can sit down and enjoy a simple meal or a milkshake? In places like England, Wales, Poland and Russia there's a history of milk bars. And now there area lot of articles being written about how the problem some people have is not the fat content of milk; it's with the kind of milk they're drinking. A lot of people confuse lactose intolerance with milk allergies.



Most people who get gas and stomach aches from drinking milk have an allergy which is often the result of homogenization and ultra pasteurization which destroys the bacteria that tells you how to digest the milk. Our milk isn't ultra pasteurized, so fewer people have that problem.

And the response so far?

I never thought it would be this busy!