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Max Brenner opening first of several chocolate bars planned for D.C. region



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Bethesda Row's sweet new addition, [Max Brenner Chocolate Bar](#), should open within the next week, but that's just the beginning of the growth in the D.C. region for the New York-based chocolatier.

The company would like to open at least four more stores in the region and is actively looking for space in downtown D.C. and Dupont Circle, Tysons Corner and Reston, according to [Sam Borgese](#), CEO of Max Brenner International.

Although the company operates four of its full-service Max Brenner restaurants in the United States — in Boston, Philadelphia, Las Vegas and New York City — this will be the first of the more casual chocolate bar concepts here. They have big development plans, though, to the tune of "a couple hundred" stores during the next decade, Borgese said.

For the chocolate bar, Max Brenner tends to go in three types of locations: Urban street-front and semi-urban village environments such as Bethesda Row. Also, a large shopping center or mall where the location could be on the exterior of the mall with access to outdoor seating — hence, the reason Borgese is eyeing Tysons One in Tysons Corner.



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The interior of Max Brenner on Bethesda Row, which should open later this week or early next week.

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The chocolate bar is part sit-down, fast-casual restaurant and part retail shop. Those eating in can indulge in fondue, a chocolate pizza, waffles or crepes, all incorporating the company's signature milk, dark or white chocolate ganache. There's also a "popsicle fondue" where customers have a plain vanilla ice cream bar, a bowl of melted chocolate and toppings to continuously create their own frozen treat.

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"It's all about the experience," said [Katzie Guy-Hamilton](#), executive chef for Max Brenner. "We want you to play, to lick, to get chocolate on your face."

Many of Max Brenner's specialties are served in custom ceramic vessels, like the "hug mug" for hot chocolate that's the perfect shape and size to hold in two hands, and the kangaroo cup, which allows customers to slowly incorporate melting chocolate into their cup of coffee.

Hot and cold drinks — including a milkshake that was named one of the Daily Meal's top eight milkshakes in the U.S. recently — are also available to go. The company plans to open the Bethesda Row store later this week or early next week.

Rebecca Cooper covers retail, restaurants, tourism and the arts.

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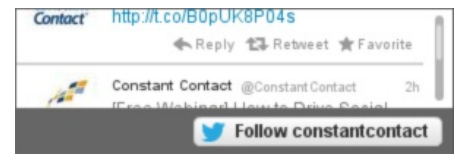
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