





Denver Milk Market is slated to open June 1 on the Dairy Block at 1800 Wazee Street.

Mark Antonation

Frank Bonanno's Milk Market Takes Shape for June Opening

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Construction of nearly every kind is stirring up dust inside the vast, sprawling space on the Dairy Block downtown that will soon become **Denver Milk Market**, a multi-concept market in LoDo that shares some similarities with the Denver Central Market, Zeppelin Station and Avanti Food & Beverage. There's one big difference at Milk Market, though: While the other food halls have gathered multiple independent purveyors under one roof, all sixteen food counters and bars inside this one will be run by chef/restaurateur Frank Bonanno.

The chef, who already has a stable of ten bars and restaurants that employ some 250 people, won't be going it alone, however. His wife and business partner, Jacqueline Bonanno, is the creative director, and Frederick Kelly, a recent transplant from Florida, has been brought on as executive chef for the whole project. Kelly says he's consulted on similar projects in Miami, but this will be his first chef gig in Colorado.

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Milk Market takes up the quadrant of the Dairy Block closest to the corner of 18th and

Wazee streets, connected to the Maven Hotel next door and sided by the Alley at the Dairy Block, where other businesses will share access and patios. While a large doorway opens from the Maven's lobby into the Milk Market (offering an unobstructed view from the market's Moo Bar at one end to Kachina Cantina at the opposite end of the hotel), the market's outdoor seating will be on Wazee Street, not in the Alley itself. Several windows will open onto the Alley, though, allowing customers to walk up and order coffee, ice cream and other food and drink items. And Bonanno will have a separate, Alley-facing pizzeria called the Engine Room that will sell New York-style slices, 22-inch pizzas and Sicilian-style pies baked on rectangular sheet trays.

When Milk Market opens (the goal is June 1), customers won't be able to carry alcoholic beverages purchased there out onto the Alley, however. Right now, just the Maven's liquor license extends from end to end, so only customers with appropriately marked cups bought at Poka Lola Social Club (inside the Maven, with a patio facing the Alley) will be able to carry drinks into the rest of the Alley.





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Inside Milk Market, a high-tech point-of-sale system designed by Toast will make it as easy as possible for guests to shop, eat and drink at the various stations. "We want it to be as seamless as possible, especially for people in the offices around here," Bonanno explains.

Part of the POS system will allow customers to order and pay for food online from any of the vendors and then pick up everything at once. Concierges working from a station near the front entrance of the market will track purchases electronically and gather food into one order for pick-up (and eventually delivery). Customers will also be able to order at any of the counters, while servers will circulate around seating areas to take additional orders, creating a hybrid of fast-casual and full service to meet the needs of guests.

With so many different food-service operations making everything from bao buns to hand-pulled mozzarella to ice cream, Bonanno will double the number of employees under his Bonanno Concepts umbrella by the time the market opens. Milk Market will be far more than a typical food court; customers will be able to grab ready-to-eat foods to

take back to their offices or apartments, order something fresh-made to eat at one of 325 seats inside the space (or 65 more outside), or shop for meats, cheeses, pantry items and fresh-made ingredients like pastas and sauces to make a meal at home.

For example, you'll be able to sit down at the Fem Crepes counter and enjoy sweet or savory crepes – and then grab a jar of crepe mix to take home and make your own. Or you can grab a burger at Ruth's Butchery while you wait for the butcher to cut a dry-aged ribeye steak that you can grill on your own time.





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Much of the action will take place in full view of customers, so you'll be able to watch mozzarella being made from buffalo, goat or cow's milk; see sides of beef, lamb and pork turned into individual cuts; catch pizzas being fired in a wood-burning oven; and view house-cured pastami and corned beef being shaved to make towering sandwiches in the tradition of the best New York delis.

Milk Market will have three bars: Moo Bar, serving spirits and cocktails; the Cellar, pouring wines by the glass, quartino, carafe and bottle; and the Stranded Pilgrim, offering two dozen taps of craft beer that will initially all hail from Colorado (Bonanno notes that other exciting beers from around the country will be rotated in, too).

The food rundown includes Albina by the Sea (seafood), Ruth's Butchery, Fem Crepes, Bao Chica Bao (Asian street food), Green Huntsman (salads and produce), Mano Pasteria (Italian dishes and fresh pasta), Bonanno Brothers (wood-fired pizza), Mo Poke (Hawaiian poke), Morning Jones (coffee and housemade pastries), Cornicello Gelato, Lou's Hot & Naked (which will offer fried chicken plus the "greatest hits" from the original Lou's for breakfast, lunch and dinner), and S & G (an expansion of Bonanno's Salt & Grinder, offering cheeses and cured meats).

Milk Market will be joined by several other new bars and restaurants scheduled to open on the Dairy Block in the coming months, including Run for the Roses, a restaurant and cocktail bar taking over the old Celtic Tavern space; Seven Grand, a Los Angeles-based whiskey bar; and Foraged, a seasonal eatery helmed by chef Duy Pham (**Parker Garage**), who will also show off his skills as a maker of Japanese carbon steel knives.

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