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EATALY TORONTO: FOOD, FUN, FANTASTICO

Toronto is abuzz at the opening of the newest location of this worldwide sensation, as the authentic Italian marketplace brings its immersive food experience to Bloor Street

WRITTEN BY RICK MULLER

In any major North American city, new retailers open every day. But few openings in recent memory have garnered the attention, anticipation, excitement and community buzz of the November launch of the new Eataly marketplace in midtown Toronto's Bloor-Yorkville area.

It may be because at more than 500,000 people, Toronto represents one of the largest Italian populations in the world outside of Italy. More likely, however, it's the reputation of this worldwide sensation which draws everyone, with Toronto bringing the number of Eataly's worldwide to more than 40 locations, this one being the first of potentially more in Canada.

"Toronto, given its heavy focus on food and culture, was hungry for unique food experiences and was on our radar for years," says Nico Dagnino, director of store operations, Eataly Toronto. "We often say, 'We cook what we sell, and we sell what we cook,' as the ingredients we use in our restaurants are also sold in our marketplace for guests to enjoy."

To walk through a marketplace in Italy is one of life's true pleasures to be savoured and never hurried. It is an exploration that is a feast that seems to stimulate all five senses, and Eataly magically captures that experience. It cleverly brings to urban environments what makes Italy one of the world's top tourist destinations – a spirit, a joy, an embrace of *la dolce vita* and, most importantly, an immersion in that most beloved Italian passion: food.

Eataly Toronto is a 50,000-square-foot gourmand food emporium in the Manulife Centre in the heart of the city's "Mink Mile" on Bloor Street, one of the world's leading retailing destinations. Situated over three floors, even Eataly referred to the space in a recent social media post as a "unique experience."

It features a vast marketplace carrying every conceivable Italian food and delicacy, including rows of high-end pasta, white truffles, ready-to-eat meals for takeaway, 300 different types of imported and Canadian cheeses and more than 100 different olive oils.

Eataly Toronto also features nine restaurants, a wine bar, bakery, retail items, a cooking classroom and learning centre and even a mozzarella-making counter. It features some marketplace areas run by local merchants, such as a fish counter run by Diana's Seafood and the Birroteca brewpub run by the Toronto-based Indie Alehouse. Visitors will clearly not pop into Eataly just to quickly grab some milk.

This immersive and sensory experience is what founder Oscar Farinetti envisioned when

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he began Eataly in January 2007. An entrepreneur and businessman, Farinetti converted a closed vermouth factory in Turin, Italy, into the first location of Eataly.

Eataly Toronto is Italian to the core, with its stunning design by Toronto design company Giannone Petricone Associates (GPA) and interior millwork and displays manufactured by Unique Store Fixtures. This is the first time Eataly's interior fabrication has been awarded to a Canadian firm with Italian origins. Bright, open, airy and interactive, its design engages and invites the visitors inside to wander and explore the many food experiences.

GPA, which has worked with Eataly on its Copenhagen and Chicago locations, says its design inspiration was the "*passeggiata*," the tradition which sees Italians take to the main street and piazza at night to stroll and socialize, and stop at bars and shops along the way. The design augments social exchanges made possible by the universal catalyst of great Italian food.

GPA completed the interior design of all spaces of Eataly Toronto, including Il Gran Caffè, the grand café on the main floor, and the Birroteca brewpub located on the concourse level. It takes advantage of carefully crafted canopies, eased counters, textured upholstery and customized patterns of Italian handcrafted terrazzo tile. The design is choreographed to lure customers into pockets of Eataly delights with changing materials, seating, lighting fixtures and elements such as a large carved wood bar and twin wood-burning ovens.

Unique's 35 years of experience and meticulous craftsmanship by its artisans certainly shine throughout the interior of Eataly Toronto, adding to its long list of leading global clients such as Tiffany's, Gucci, Holt Renfrew and Bergdorf Goodman.

"We were proud to be a part of the team with Giannone Petricone to bring the inclusive and sensory experience of Eataly to Toronto," says Ferro Corrente Jr., chief operating officer of Unique. "The overall design of this Eataly perfectly captures the creativity, adrenaline, fun and excitement of its dynamic concept, and we are excited by its opening."

Gathering for Italian food has always been a passionate and communal experience best shared with friends and family. Eataly Toronto is bringing that simple recipe to the city and so vividly and wonderfully demonstrating that the taste and joy of food are so much better when enjoyed together, as laughter, smiles and celebration come with every Eataly experience.

Bravo, Eataly.

www.eataly.ca
@eatalytoronto



With design by Toronto's
Giannone Petricone
Associates and interior
millwork by Unique Store
Fixtures, Eataly Toronto
is a bright, open, airy and
interactive experience

