

Popular Italian Gelato Chain Arrives on Upper West Side

By GABRIELLE BIRKNER
Staff Reporter of the Sun

The artisanal gelato that has Italians queuing up in Turin, Milan, and Florence is arriving on the Upper West Side.

On Saturday, Grom, a rapidly expanding chain of all-natural ice cream and sorbet shops, will open its first location outside Italy, on Broadway at West 76th Street.

Launched four years ago by a pair of childhood friends from Turin, Grom now boasts two gelaterias in that city and eight other stores in northern and central Italy. The owners, Federico Grom, 34, and Guido Martinetti, 32, said they are planning to roll out four more outlets in Italy this summer — and, if their concept takes off here, they will open many more such sweet shops stateside.

Grom already has one famous fan here in New York: Katie Couric. The “CBS Evening News” anchor discovered the store’s gelato last year while in Italy covering the Olympics for the “Today” show. “Unfortunately for my waistline, I’ve been spending far too much time at Grom, which is Guido Martinetti’s gelato shop here in Torino,” Ms. Couric said at the time.

Gelato, made of a whole milk and sugar base, is generally denser than American-style ice cream and contains less air and butterfat.

Like many good ideas, the Grom concept was born over beers. “I said, ‘No one makes gelato come una volta, like once upon a time,’” Mr. Martinetti, then a winemaker, recalled telling Mr. Grom, who at was working in finance at the time.

“We started talking about starting a gelato store, making gelato with all of the best ingredients from all over the world,” Mr. Grom said. “It was like a joke.”

But a week later, Mr. Grom had drafted a five-year business plan to open gelato stores throughout Italy, and within a year the pair opened their first shop in Turin.

Messrs. Grom and Martinetti



HEUICHUL KIM

SPREADING THE JOY A gelato store on Broadway, between 76th and 77th streets, will open May 5. Above, Guido Martinetti, one of two founders of Grom, in front of the Upper West Side store.

and their respective girlfriends take frequent trips to seek out fruits, nuts, and chocolate products for their gelato. They purchase lemons from the Amalfi coast, pistachios from Sicily, and chocolate from Ecuador and Venezuela. And they recently bought a 20-acre organic farm in northern Italy to grow their own gelato-bound produce.

The gelateria offers about 20 flavors, and the menu changes seasonally. The most popular flavor, available year-round, is Grom Cream, which has an egg cream base mixed with corn biscuits from a Piedmont bakery and chocolate flakes from Ecuador.

A cup of the creamy dessert comes at a price: \$4.75 for a small portion, which the owners said contains 8 to 10 grams of fat, de-

pending on the flavor. Larger servings sell for \$5.75, \$6.75, and \$9, respectively.

While Americans have a love affair with ice cream — they consume more than 1.5 billion gallons of ice cream and related frozen desserts a year, International Dairy Foods Association statistics show — gelato is in its infancy stateside. But a food-marketing consultant with Technomic, Joseph Pawlak, said Italian ice cream is quickly gaining a foothold in the dessert market, as Americans become more adventurous and sophisticated eaters. “What we’re seeing is people moving away from value products and consuming premium or super-premium products,” he said. “They figure that if they’re going to cheat, if they’re going to indulge, they’re

going to get the good stuff.”

Messrs. Grom and Martinetti said they are optimistic that their idea will be successful in America and that their new Upper West Side location — two blocks from Fairway and Citarella — will attract foodies willing and able to drop \$5 or more for a serving of gelato.

The president of the Gelato & Pastry Institute of America, Andrew Seabury, who has tasted Grom gelato, said he thought that the dessert would win over discerning palates in the neighborhood and beyond. “They’re going for the highest end of the market, using natural and organic products to produce what they would claim, and many would agree, is the highest-quality product,” he said. “It’s outstanding.

MTA Track Work Suspended After 2nd Death

By ANNIE KARNI
Special to the Sun

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority is suspending maintenance work and construction throughout the subway system indefinitely for the first time in five years, the president of New York City Transit, Howard Roberts, said yesterday.

The announcement came after a second track worker was killed Sunday in less than a week. Marvin Franklin, 55, was struck on Sunday afternoon by a northbound G train at the Hoyt-Schermerhorn station in Brooklyn and died on the tracks. Jeff Hill, 41, was sent to Bellevue Hospital Center in critical condition after the accident.

One transit source said that Mr. Hill was filling in for a worker attending a wake for Daniel Boggs, the transit employee who was killed last Tuesday working on the tracks at the Columbus Circle station in Manhattan. The MTA scrambled to fill the spaces of workers attending the wake, and Mr. Hill may have been working on unfamiliar turf, the source said.

The 6,000 transit employees will be shuffled through a crash course in safety training before track maintenance work resumes, Mr. Roberts said.

CORRECTION

Twenty-two percent was the city’s public school dropout rate in 2005. The rate was misstated in an article on page 3 of the April 26 New York Sun.

It’s a particularly striking example of city development plans taking precedence over history, culture — particularly black history — in Brooklyn,” she said.

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