

# The New York Times

## Diner's Journal

Notes on Eating, Drinking and Cooking

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### Maison Kayser, a Global Baker, Touches Down in New York

By FLORENCE FABRICANT



Andrea Mohin/The New York Times

A global chain of artisanal bakeries sounds like an oxymoron. But that's precisely what Eric Kayser has created since he opened his little boulangerie on Rue Monge near the Sorbonne in Paris in 1996. Now his first bakery-cafe in New York is set to open on Wednesday, and leases have been signed for two more. Like his other [Maison Kayser](#) establishments, including some 20 in the Paris area, 22 in Japan and scores of others in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, the new bakery on the Upper East Side has bakers who were trained in his Paris headquarters.

What sets Mr. Kayser's bread-baking apart is that he uses only natural sourdough leavening, or levain, in liquid form; he employs no commercial yeasts in his breads, and even in his brioches and croissants, achieving a richer balance of flavor. His method also involves a longer, slower fermentation, or rising, than most commercial bakeries use. As any home baker knows, a slow rise adds taste and complexity.



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Mr. Kayser has developed equipment to make the liquid levain, and the slow rise, consistent despite the mass production. The machines and the levain are also used in a separate wholesale baking operation, Bakery de France, that he runs with a partner in the Washington area.

Lou Ramirez and Louis-Jean Egasse are the licensees for all the Kayser bakeries in the United States; Mr. Ramirez said they wanted to open one in New York because “the quality of breads and pastries was disappointing and there was no good baguette in New York.” Many of the 25 or so different breads — some whole grain, others with nuts and seeds — are baked using organic flour from upstate New York, which the bakers, Yann LeDoux and Stéphane Jimenez, preferred to the French variety. But they are using French butter.

The baguette is beautiful and deeply flavored, with a crisp crust that is not as thick as some, and an interior texture that is fairly uniform and a bit soft. The croissant is excellent, though bigger, Mr. Égasse conceded, than what they make in France. Pastries are not overly sweet, though a layer of dense frangipane in a stunning strawberry tart made it a bit heavy. The bakery is introducing the Épi East Side, a classic style of baguette shaped like a wheat stalk.

The new bakery is decorated in off-white, with dark wood and pale marble.

There is a retail shop in front, and tables with 100 seats for breakfast fare, salads, sandwiches, bread-based items and desserts, including ice cream. Beer and wine are served. Beyond, visible through glass, is the working bakery.

*Maison Kayser, 1294 Third Avenue (74th closer to 74th, than 75th Street), (212) 744-3100. Open Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Breads are \$2.75 for a baguette, \$3.50 for the Epi East Side, and go to \$11 for pain de mie. Croissants are \$2.50, financiers are \$4.75, and a whole fruit tart is \$11. In the cafe, menu items range from \$8 to \$24. In November, another Maison Kayser will open at 921 Broadway (21st Street), and next year a smaller one, mostly for takeout, will open at 8 West 40th Street.*

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[Maison Kayser menu](#)

