

Weekend Pass | dining

TIME TO EAT THE DOUGHNUTS

When District Doughnut made its public debut at the Metro Cooking & Entertaining Show in November, the shop earned a dubious distinction.

"We were the most ransacked booth," says co-owner Greg Menna, citing a superlative bestowed by the CityEats blog. Within the first 30 minutes, all 400 free "bites" (a bite being half of a mini doughnut) had been handed out. Within the next two hours, all 200 of District Doughnut's full-size pastries sold, too.

The next day at the event, Menna, co-owner Juan Pablo Segura and pastry chef Christine Schaefer tried something different, planning a "timed release" of 20 bites at regular intervals.

"Every 30 minutes, a mob scene would be at the booth," Menna says. "Some people wouldn't get them, and then we would be yelled at."

Stressful situation? Yes. Bad omen? No way. As the cooking-show crowd demonstrated, there's an appetite here for boutique-style baked goods (waning cupcake craze notwithstanding). To District Doughnut and a couple of other shops opening locally within the coming weeks, that's sweet news.

District Doughnut, which began taking catering orders about six months ago, plans to open a brick-and-mortar location by June. Astro Doughnuts & Fried Chicken, the brainchild of another local trio, began catering in late 2012 and will open in Metro Center by late February. The same doughnuts-and-fried chicken concept is the focus of GBD ("golden brown and delicious"), the latest project



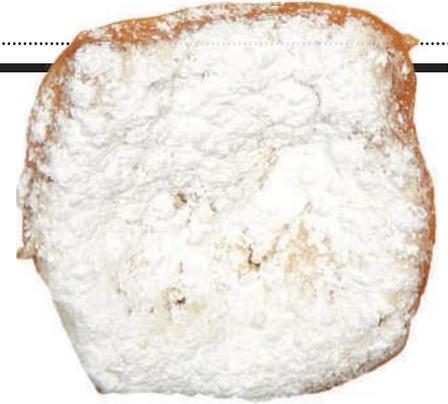
Twink-Nut

Astro Doughnuts & Fried Chicken (\$2.50; 1308 G St. NW; 202-809-5565, Astrodoughnuts.com). Beneath the vanilla-glaze exterior lies golden sponge cake piped with airy buttercream. It's evocative of a Twinkie (only fresher-tasting).



Chocolate Earl Grey

Family Meal (\$6 for three; 880 N. East St., Frederick, Md.; 301-378-2895, Voltfamilymeal.com). Pastry chef Johnny Miele makes this flavor (served for dessert with fudge, hazelnut pudding and coffee ice cream) by incorporating ground tea leaves into the ricotta-based chocolate batter.



Beignet

Bayou Bakery (\$3 for three; 1515 N. Courthouse Road, Arlington, 703-243-2410; Bayoubakeryva.com). The New Orleans-themed cafe does the traditional French Quarter treat proud. The 3-inch-wide squares are fried in peanut oil, heaped with powdered sugar and served hot.



Bomboloni

Fiola (\$15 for five; 601 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; 202-628-2888, Fioladc.com). Pastry chef Tom Wellings' bomboloni—Sardinian-style sugar-covered dough—are slightly spongy on the inside (thanks to ricotta in the batter). Fiola serves them as a dessert alongside burnt-honey gelato.



Bacon-Toffee

Birch & Barley (\$6 for assortment of three; 1337 14th St. NW; 202-567-2576, Birchandbarley.com). Coated in sticky, toffee-flavored glaze and covered with bacon, this brunch item from pastry chef Tiffany Maclsaac will be at GBD as well.



Glazed

Heller's Bakery (\$0.70; 3221 Mt. Pleasant St. NW; 202-265-1169, Hellersbakery.com). A fresh example of this yeast-raised pastry represents the Classic American Doughnut ideal: generously sized, with light, sugary glaze. The airy dough is delicate yet chewy.



Lemon-Nutella

Pizzeria Orso (\$2, 400 S. Maple Ave., Falls Church, Va.; 703-226-3460, Pizzeriaorso.com). These lemon-glazed dough balls are topped with a Nutella-flavored mousse and served slightly warm for a quirky post-pizza treat.



Raspberry

Jackie's (\$6 for two, 8081 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring; 301-565-9700, Jackiesrestaurant.com). Pastry chef Carolyn Crow's creation (one of three flavors served at brunch) is a yeast-raised pastry topped with fruity glaze made from a French raspberry puree. (Plus, sprinkles!)



Lemon Meringue

District Doughnut (\$25 per dozen; 571-215-6122, Districtdoughnut.com). Topped with toasted meringue and filled with yellow curd that's true to the bright taste of real lemon, this is one of chef Christine Schaefer's newest flavors. "I want it to taste as good as it looks," she says.

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PHOTOS BY MARGE ELY (EXPRESS)

WHO'S WHO:

- **Fresh Batches** (new doughnut shops)
- **Cupcake Unseaters** (restaurant desserts)
- **All-Purpose** (breakfast, lunch, snack or dessert)
- **Late-Risers** (weekend brunch only)
- **Multicultural** (ethnic and regional variations)

by Neighborhood Restaurant Group's pastry chef Tiffany MacIsaac, slated to open next month in Dupont Circle. That neighborhood has already seen the soft opening of Zeke's D.C. Donutz, owned by TangySweet's Aaron Gordon, which officially opens Friday.

But wait, there's more: Dunkin' Donuts is in the process of expanding locally (the chain announced plans to open 86 new shops in the D.C. metro area by 2020). Even restaurants are increasingly featuring doughnuts.

So what makes the timing right for this hole new frontier?

"People are reinventing them," says Astro Doughnuts co-owner Elliot Spaisman, "using good ingredients and putting interesting twists on flavors. It's making them more exciting."

District Doughnut's Menna brings up the popularity of other inventive bakeries around the country, such as New York's Doughnut Plant (which sells a legendary creme brulee doughnut) and the even quirkier Voodoo Doughnut in Portland, Ore. (where you can get a doughnut in the shape of a voodoo doll). "Every other city has its niche doughnut spot, and D.C. doesn't," Menna says.

Then there's the nostalgia. A number of locals — including Carolyn Crow, the pastry chef at Jackie's Restaurant in Silver Spring — have warm childhood memories associated with a baker's dozen.

"It's comfort food," Crow says, "and it always makes me think of when I was little and my grandparents would bring over doughnuts on Saturdays."

Many chefs and restaurateurs who have witnessed the cupcake boom of the past several years have already considered whether doughnuts will be another short-lived craze, or if they'll stick around as part of the area's food scene. The trailblazers of D.C.'s doughnut scene are betting on the long view.

"Doughnuts are an American staple," Menna says. **KATIE ABERBACH (EXPRESS)**

● **Cuckoo for Cocoa**

GBD (price unavailable; 1323 Connecticut Ave. NW; Gbdchickendoughnuts.com). A beloved cereal adds a strong crunch (and extra sweetness) to these chocolate-glazed doughnuts from Tiffany MacIsaac's forthcoming bakery.

● **Peppermint Patty**

Fractured Prune (81 cents, 1202 E. Patrick St., Frederick, Md.; 301-682-3668, Fracturedprune.com). Mint, chocolate and fried dough are surprisingly well-matched in this cake doughnut, made by a chain that had a Dupont Circle location in 2006 and 2007. The chain's new owner has hopes to return to D.C.

● **Creamsicle**

The Oval Room (part of \$35 pre-theater menu; 800 Connecticut Ave. NW; 202-463-8700, Ovalroom.com). One of an assortment of mini doughnuts served with coffee ice cream and malted milk foam as dessert, the cake doughnut gets its flavor from fresh orange juice and zest.

● **Teiglach**

DGS Delicatessen (\$7; 1317 Connecticut Ave. NW; 202-293-4400, Dgsdelicatessen.com). Chef Barry Koslow reinterprets this old-fashioned Hungarian-Jewish snack as a dessert. Fried dough balls are covered in lemon-laced honey sauce, hazelnut brittle and toasted almonds.

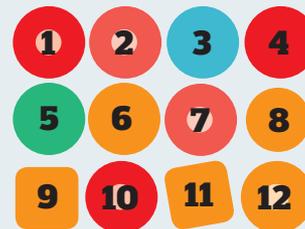
● **Princes Krofna**

Ambar (\$5 for three; 523 8th St. SE; 202-813-3039, Ambarrestaurant.com). Chef Ivan Iricanin says a few of these eggy baked "Balkan doughnuts" filled with vanilla cream are enjoyed as an unfussy dessert after a leisurely lunch or brunch in Serbia.

● **Mexican Chocolate**

Zeke's D.C. Donutz (\$2.70, 2029 P St. NW; 202-822-6200, Zekesdcdonutz.com). Don't let the caramel-colored icing fool you: This doughnut is all cocoa and spice. The topping is ancho-chili glaze, and the center has a puddinglike, spicy chocolate filling.

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ON THE COVER:

1. Grapefruit Campari Cake doughnut with a citrus liqueur-flavored glaze. **GBD** (price unavailable).

2. Chocolate Glazed Classic yeast-raised doughnut with vanilla drizzle. **Dunkin' Donuts** (Dunkindonuts.com).

3. Vanilla Powdered sugar on cake. **Oval Room** (on \$35 pre-theater menu)

4. Caramel Apple Streusel Loaded with apples, streusel and caramel. **District Doughnut** (\$25 per dozen).

5. Cream-Filled Brioche-like Italian pastry containing vanilla pastry cream. **Pupatella** (\$3; 5104 Wilson Blvd., Arlington; 571-312-7230, Pupatella.com).

6. Apricot-Pistachio Topped with a cinnamon-sugar-covered doughnut hole. **Lyon Hall** (\$2.50; 3100 N. Washington Blvd., Arlington; 703-741-7636, Lyonhallarlington.com).

7. Black Forest Raspberry glaze, chocolate chips and coconut on cake. **Fractured Prune** (\$0.81).

8. Sugar-Covered Yeast-raised; served with whipped cream for dipping. **Tabard Inn** (\$1.50; 1739 N St. NW; 202-785-1277, Tabardinn.com).

9. Lemon-Poppyseed Lemon glaze with poppyseeds; filled with lemon curd. **Eventide** (\$2.50; 3165 Wilson Blvd., Arlington; 703-276-3165; Eventiderestaurant.com).

10. Mixed Berry Covered in raspberry glaze and blueberry-flavored drizzle. **Zeke's D.C. Donutz** (\$2.30).

11. Banana-Nutella Topped with Nutella glaze and hazelnuts; filled with banana jam. **Eventide** (\$2.50).

12. Creme Brulee Coated in custard-flavored glaze and sprinkles. **Jackie's** (\$6 for two).