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Balducci's looks to return to NYC's table

Gourmets rejoice as the fabled purveyor of Italian delicacies scouts Manhattan for several small locations, as well as a site for a 10,000-square-foot flagship.

By [Adrienne Pasquarelli](#)

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After exiting the Big Apple last year, high-end grocer Balducci's is now planning to make a comeback. The gourmet chain, known for its enticing assortment of meats, cheeses and Italian delicacies, is eyeing several locations for small, quick-service stores, as well as for a 10,000-square-foot flagship.

Balducci's, which was founded in New York 64 years ago, currently operates six locations in New York state, Connecticut, Virginia and Maryland, along with three quick-service shops at John F. Kennedy International Airport. Starting this fall, it is planning to open as many as three small midtown locations, ranging from 1,000 square feet to 2,000 square feet in size

"We're looking to put our foot in the market," said Jason Pruger, the Newmark Knight Frank Retail broker who, along with colleague Ross Kaplan, is exclusively representing Balducci's in its search. "Balducci's is an iconic New York brand that we're excited to bring back."

For its larger Big Apple flagship, the chain is searching "affluent, dense residential neighborhoods" such as the Upper East Side and Upper West Side, Mr. Pruger noted.

Sizing down its first outposts is a good starting point for the chain's re-entry here, according to industry consultants.

"Real estate being as expensive as it is in Manhattan, it's not a bad idea to go smaller," said Matt Casey, who runs grocery consultancy Matthew P. Casey and Associates.

Balducci's shuttered its two last Manhattan locations in Chelsea and the Upper West Side in April of 2009. The grocer also operated a storied outpost on Sixth Avenue in Greenwich Village from 1972 to 2003. At the time of the Manhattan closures, the gourmet chain also terminated a Washington, D.C., store. It is now operated by New York investment firm Angelo Gordon & Co., which also owns New Jersey-based Kings Super Markets.

Jim Demme, the Angelo Gordon & Co. senior advisor who led the acquisition of Balducci's, did not immediately return calls for comment. However, Burt Flickinger, a supermarket consultant, expects him, along with the operating power of Kings, to return Balducci's to prominence.

"[Balducci's under Kings] will be a very formidable foe, particularly for A&P's Food Emporium," said Mr. Flickinger. He also noted that Kings "is of the best seafood retailers in the U.S. and is very strong in delis and will bring those skills to Balducci's in New York."

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