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Starbucks Debuts in Italy, Betting New Roastery Will Win Over Espresso Aficionados

(MILAN) — Starbucks is opening its first store in Italy, betting that premium brews and novelties like a heated marble-topped coffee bar will win customers in a country fond of its daily espresso rituals.

5 Decades ago, Milan's coffee bars inspired the chain's vision. Now Starbucks is hoping clients will visit its new store, called the Reserve Roastery, to watch beans being roasted, sip coffee or enjoy cocktails at a mezzanine-level bar in a cavernous, former post office near the city's Duomo, or cathedral.

10 Starbucks chief design officer Liz Muller told The Associated Press earlier this week that the company's "not coming to Italy to teach people about coffee. This is where coffee was born."

Instead, Muller said, Starbucks "wanted to come and bring a premium experience that is different to what people in Italy are used to."

She described that formula as including "many different brewing techniques and a space where we want you to stay longer and relax and enjoy."

15 In Italy, an espresso at a coffee bar is usually a quick morning or after-lunch ritual performed standing up. In many neighborhoods, cafes are practically on every corner, and Italians are on a first-name basis with their trusted barista.

20 Italy is Starbucks' 78th global market, and the Milan opening comes 20 years after Starbucks opened its first store in Europe, in London. The company has described the Milan store as "the crown jewel of Starbucks global retail footprint." It says it plans more cafes for Milan later this year.

Milan is the first place where Starbucks has opened a store in its Roastery format in untested territory. It opened a Roastery in Seattle, the U.S. city that is home to its corporate headquarters, in 2014, and a second one in Shanghai last year.

25 Italians are used to marble counters for coffee bars, but Starbucks boasts that it outfitted its counter tops in the Milan store with heating so they won't feel stone cold on chill days. The centerpiece of the Milan store is a 6.5 m (22 ft.) high bronze cask, part of the roasting process.

30 The company also hopes the store's cocktail bar will be an attraction: Many who work in Milan, Italy's fashion and financial capital, cherish the tradition of meeting friends or colleagues for an "aperitivo," or pre-dinner cocktail, often in cafes.

By Associated press, adapted from *www.time.com*, September 6th, 2018