



Kernel of a trend: A variety of popcorn flavors at KuKuRuZa.

FOOD & DRINK | SWEET INSPIRATIONS

## Sweet new fad pops up in Omohara

BY ROBBIE SWINNERTON

ARTICLE HISTORY OCT 31, 2013

Want to know what's new and hot in the sweets world? Just head to "Omohara," the district where the youth fashion of Harajuku intersects with the high-end consumer culture of Omotesando. You can spot the trends from a block away: Just look for the lines.

For the last three years, the longest have been those outside pancake restaurants. Hawaiian specialist Eggs 'n Things led the way, with queues snaking down the street and around the corner. It was briefly ousted from the top spot, in terms of waiting time, when Ben & Jerry's opened in spring 2012.

Now there's a new hit item on the block that is racking up waits of over two hours. The object

of such fierce desire? Popcorn.

Specifically, KuKuRuZa artisan popcorn. This small U.S. company based in Seattle, Washington, has taken America's simplest, most traditional snack, known and enjoyed since pre-Columbian times, and turned it into a gourmet treat.

Why settle for the two standard choices — the bog-standard “salty” or “sweet” sold in movie theater foyers — when you could have the run of 36? In fact, KuKuRuZa does its own very superior versions of the classics: Hawaiian Salted Caramel, and Brown Butter & Sea Salt. But even those pale when set against the likes of Black Raspberry with Vanilla Cream glaze. Or Cinnamon Bun. Maple Bacon, anyone?

The savory versions are equally out there: Jalapeno White Cheddar; Buffalo Bleu Cheese; and, my favorite, Truffle Fromage Porcini. And although Halloween may be over, that's no reason to pass up on the limited-edition seasonal Pumpkin Spice Pecan.

That is, of course, if you don't mind joining the end of the long and almost exclusively female queue. At least the railings along the Omotesando sidewalk are designed as benches. Don't expect the wait to be much shorter in the rain, either. But the friendly staff at the door had this tip: Try arriving at around 5 p.m., and you may “only” have to wait an hour.

Just to show that KuKuRuZa might not be a flash in the popping pan, there is strong competition coming from the other end of Omotesando. Outside Garrett Popcorn Shops, close to Harajuku Station, the lines are almost as long. On the downside, you will have to stand the entire time. And when you finally get in, there are a mere seven flavors to choose from — albeit all time-tested Chicago classics.

And just for handy comparison, on a recent sunny weekday afternoon, the estimated wait times were: KuKuRuZa 120 minutes; Eggs 'n Things 110 minutes; Garrett 100 minutes.

---

*KuKuRuZa: Omotesando Hills Dojinkan 1F, 4-12-10 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo; 03-3403-0077; [www.kukuruza.jp](http://www.kukuruza.jp) (<http://www.kukuruza.jp>). Open 11 a.m.-9 p.m. (Sun and hols till 8 p.m.). Garrett Popcorn Shops, 1-13-18 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo; 03-6434-9735; [jp.garrettpopcorn.com](http://jp.garrettpopcorn.com) (<http://jp.garrettpopcorn.com>). Open daily 10 a.m.-9 p.m.*

---

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE