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Ice Cream Dreams Sweet Moses brings the sugar to Gordon Square

by [Douglas Trattner](#)

When Jeffrey Moreau promised that his dessert shop would be unique, exceptional, and authentic, only he could truly comprehend the meaning of that pledge. Now that Sweet Moses has opened in the Gordon Square Arts District, we can all appreciate what he meant.

"It came out exactly as I had envisioned," Moreau says via a post-launch phone call.

That vision — a 1920s-style soda fountain — had been percolating in the former ad man's mind for decades. Over the past year, he and his team molded those mental images into reality, transforming an old Detroit-Shoreway storefront into one of the happiest places on Earth.

The heart of the elegant shop is the ornate soda fountain, made up of a handsome backbar, dipping and soda stations, and a marble-slab counter. Dating back to 1910, the backbar measures 10 feet tall by 12 feet wide, and features glowing stained glass and the original ice-chilled base cabinets. The true workhorse of the room, the 1940s dipping station is a shimmering sea of stainless steel, with chilled compartments for ice cream, sundaes toppings, and sauces.

Moreau spent hours hunting, repairing, and restoring the graceful wire-backed parlor chairs that furnish the two rooms. Elsewhere, brightly drawn chalkboards, historic prints of Cleveland landmarks, and an old-timey root beer barrel complete the vibe.

But who gives a clap about the hardware, right?

It's the software that matters, and this place is wall-to-wall with ice cream, chocolate, shakes, sodas, and malts — with a handful of crunchy popcorn tossed in for good measure. Sweet Moses sticks to traditional American favorites like hot fudge sundaes, chocolate malted milk shakes, root beer floats, and strawberry phosphates. Also on tap are chocolate cups, chocolate barks, and caramel corn — with or without nuts. Everything from the ice cream to the marble-slab fudge is made in house.

"It's amazing the things you can do with just sugar, butter, cream, vanilla and cocoa," says Moreau.

Order a root beer float (\$4.50) and watch the well-trained soda jerk fill a frosted mug with root beer syrup, fizzy soda, and housemade vanilla ice cream. Cold, creamy, sweet, and bubbly, the drink satisfies all major food groups. Banana splits (\$6), a popular item regardless of the decade, feature bananas topped with three scoops, hot fudge, whipped cream, and the requisite cherry.

Sweet Moses' addictive caramel corn is a toffee-coated diet destroyer sold by the bag (\$6). A late addition to the lineup, says Moreau, but surprisingly popular are the peanut butter sandwiches (\$3.25), gilded with toppings that range from sliced banana to crisp bacon. The perfect pairing? Ice-cold whole milk, natch.

To say that folks have embraced Sweet Moses is like saying Augustus Gloop is fond of chocolate. Lines formed on Day One and have barely relented. "This isn't McDonald's," Moreau points out. "These old-style methods take time." But unlike McDonald's, there is plenty of eye candy (and real candy too) to keep customers visually stimulated. Free samples don't hurt either.

Moreau says he chose the Sweet Moses name because of its strong Cleveland — as in Moses Cleaveland — connection. Rather than build a franchise-ready unit suitable for globalization, the owner wanted to create a place that belonged nowhere else but right here.

And that's the wonderful thing about Sweet Moses. Despite being worm-holed here from another millennium, the shop feels as though it has always been a part of the neighborhood: like there is no more natural thing in the world than to leave the Capitol Theatre or Luxe Kitchen and stroll down the block for a chocolate malted and two straws.

If that isn't the true measure of a successful vision, what is?

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