

[Jewish bakeries](#)

Israeli-style Michaeli Bakery opens a new outpost inside the JCC on the Upper West Side

Babka maestro Adir Michaeli's new kosher eatery will also serve prepared foods like salads, sandwiches and more.



Israeli baker Adir Michaeli is now operating an outpost of his Michaeli Bakery inside the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan on the Upper West Side. (Nico Schinco and courtesy Michaeli Bakery)

By [Rachel Ringler](#) February 4, 2025

Before Rabbi Joanna Samuels joined the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan on the Upper West Side in 2022, she was the executive director of Educational Alliance's Manny Cantor Center on the Lower East Side. She divides her nine-plus years there as "before Michaeli" and "post-Michaeli."

The Michaeli she's referring to wasn't an important hire. Rather, she's talking about Michaeli Bakery, a kosher, Israeli-style bakery on Division Street founded in 2019. It's located about a five-minute walk from the downtown community center.

“I think I was at the bakery the first day it opened,” Samuels told the New York Jewish Week, recalling how, once Michaeli opened, the Educational Alliance team brought their baked goods to just about every meeting. “It became a loving part of our staff culture and of the neighborhood.”

And now, Samuels is hoping that the same magic will repeat itself uptown. Last week, a new outpost of Michaeli Bakery opened inside the lobby of [the JCC Manhattan](#), where Samuels is the executive director. There, [the bakery’s founder and baker, Adir Michaeli](#), sells his renowned babka and rugelach, as well as stuffed pastries like the spiral-shaped Galil filled with goat cheese, honey and zaatar, and bourekas filled with the likes of feta, mushroom or spinach.

Like the bakery’s other two locations — an Upper East Side branch opened in 2022 — Michaeli at the JCC is certified kosher by the IKC, International Kosher Council, and is closed on Shabbat and Jewish holidays.

“The quality of the baked goods is extraordinary,” Samuels said of Michaeli. “I am excited to bring the vibrancy of Israeli food and Israeli baked goods to the JCC. Particularly at this time, I think when food plays such an important role in building community, it will flow from this.”

Bakeries are currently having a major moment in New York City. In December, Eater New York declared that [a “bakery renaissance” is underway](#), while over the summer, New York Magazine’s Grub Street declared that “the hype bakery is here to stay.” As Anna Hezel writes: “Chances are good that no matter where you live in the city, you are not far from a line of customers, stretching around a block, all waiting patiently to buy some baked goods.”

Eateries operating within NYC cultural institutions are having a moment, too. Last winter, Frenchette Bakery at the Whitney Museum [opened to great fanfare](#), while, in the fall, the Jewish Museum generated buzz when it opened the kosher cafe [Lox at the Jewish Museum, taking over the space vacated during the pandemic by Russ & Daughters](#).

At the JCC Manhattan — where Chef’s Table Cafe, run by Bruce Soffer and Ava Lang Soffer, owners of Chef’s Table Kosher Catering, had been operating for the past two-and-a-half years — Samuels decided it was time for a change. “We saw the popularity of Israeli baked goods all throughout the city, whether it’s Breads Bakery or Michaeli,” Samuels said. “This has become something that is so precious to the Jewish community.”

She saw Michaeli — which is kosher certified, whereas Breads is not — as the perfect fit for taking over the space. (Having a kosher cafe, Samuels explained, is “a way of assuring that the whole community can participate and eat there.”)

And so she cold-called Michaeli. Would he consider taking over the cafe space in the JCC building?

Michaeli, who in 2023 told the New York Jewish Week that he would like to have an Upper West Side location one day, said he was initially hesitant to operate the bakery inside the JCC — after all, for customers to access the space, they have to pass through security and a metal detector at the building’s front door.

“It was a bit of a hurdle — not the most convenient,” Michaeli said. But after giving it some thought, he had a change of heart, and decided that in today’s climate — which has seen a rise in antisemitic incidents in New York City since Oct. 7, 2023 — the “high level of security protecting anyone coming in and out of the building is a very good factor to consider.”

The Israeli-born and -raised Michaeli has been widely acknowledged for the quality of his offerings. Before opening his own shop, he was the head pastry chef at Tel Aviv’s acclaimed Lehamim Bakery, and he was part of the original team that opened Breads Bakery in New York in 2013.

In 2023, he was one of a handful of people spotlighted in a T: The New York Times Style Magazine about [bakers who are reimagining traditional Jewish pastries](#). The Wall Street Journal described his bourekas as “[both preserving bureka tradition and putting his own spin on them](#).”

“To offer Israeli/Jewish food at the JCC is an awesome match,” Michaeli said. “At the Lower East Side, we have mostly locals. At the Upper East Side, there are a lot of local Jewish customers visiting the bakery every day. I believe, at the JCC, it will be similar when the Upper West Side locals know we are here.”

For those in search of laminated pastries like croissants, Michaeli bakes plain and chocolate as well as some filled with pistachio cherry, halva or banana. He also has vanilla raisin danish, apple turnovers, gluten free nutella cookies and some dairy free offerings like a honey cake and orange cake. For Purim, which this year begins on the evening of March 13, he prepares a Purim Galette, shaped like a triangle, the traditional shape of that holiday’s cookies, and filled with plum and marzipan cream. A barista prepares coffee from upstate Irving Farm New York in a La Marzocco coffee machine.

The pastries at the JCC location — which range in price from \$3.50 for a cheese bureka to \$17 for a whole babka — are baked in Michaeli’s Upper East Side kitchen and brought to the JCC. Within a few weeks’ time, after the soft-launch period is over, customers will also be able to select items from a menu of heartier fare, including a soup of the day, salads, paninis and sandwiches made on freshly baked rolls.

For now, however, there's one iconic Jewish bakery item that isn't on offer: challah.

"We have a limited operation in terms of challah," Michaeli said. "We can barely catch up with demand on Friday on the Upper East Side. So it stays out, for now, at the menu of the JCC, just for the beginning. Later on, we will see what we can do."

Since the bakery opened last week, Samuels said she's treated herself to Michaeli's coffee every morning. "My husband joked that we are going to get a lot more Shabbat invitations because people will realize that I will always bring Michaeli baked products," she said.

"They're going to say 'Joanna is a nice guest, but she is definitely bringing great desserts.'"