

Biz Buzz



Photos by Eric Best

Soft serve shop replaces Empire Coffee off Broadway

By ERIC BEST

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Minnesota Nice Cream gets a brick and mortar inside the Highlight Center

Edible glitter comes at no cost at Minnesota Nice Cream.

Instagrammable creations come out of the soft-serve ice cream parlor and café that recently replaced Empire Coffee & Pastry in the Highlight Center in Northeast Minneapolis.

Owner Katie Romanski launched the business two years ago as a [food truck](#) — the state's only soft-serve food truck — serving made-to-order ice cream cones that are intentionally — and literally — over the top. The shop's creations come topped with three optional additions, from home-made Puppy Chow and popcorn to Oreo cookie crumbles and fruit. Then glitter is sprinkled on top to give the desserts their sparkle.



Minnesota Nice Cream's first brick-and-mortar location opened earlier this spring off Broadway Street Northeast in a retail space tucked away in the back of the Highlight Center near Able Seedhouse + Brewery. Northeast-based Empire had [opened its second location](#) there two years ago.

Inside, Minnesota Nice Cream has kept much of the coffee shop's white, marble and gold look, as well as a 1,200-square-foot kitchen in the basement. The opening menu features vanilla, chocolate, swirl and a non-dairy ice cream, tie-dye and galaxy-colored waffle cones and about a dozen or so topping options. There's also a signature creation menu with a selection of uniquely crafted ice cream cones, shakes, ice cream sandwiches and more.

Minnesota Nice Cream serves coffee from Twin Cities-based Bootstrap Coffee Roasters, along with beverages like a house coconut chai and matcha lattes. The cafe has kept a similar breakfast and lunch setup with pastries, sandwiches, paninis, soups, salads and smoothies.

The approximately 12-seat cafe, at 807 Broadway St. NE, is open 7 a.m.–3 p.m. Monday and Tuesday, 7 a.m.–8 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, 7 a.m.–9 p.m. Friday, noon–9 p.m. Saturday, and noon–8 p.m. Sunday.

