

# DAILY NEWS

## Starbucks is all set to say cheese

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BY NANCY DILLON

DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

The big cheese of the coffee biz is hoping customers will want some fancy fromage with their next Frappuccino.

Starbucks, the folks who hooked the country on designer coffee, is teaming up with New York celebrity chef Terrance Brennan to roll out a pricey new artisanal cheese box to 340 stores in the tristate area next Monday.

The \$5.95 offering is part of a larger lunch-menu overhaul that fits with the java giant's ongoing effort to diversify - and grab a bigger chunk of customers' wallets.

Seattle-based Starbucks has already begun selling Starbucks Coffee Liqueur through a partnership with Jim Beam Brands. And many Starbucks locations now include media stations where customers can master music CDs - for a \$10 fee, of course.

"The biggest challenge was price," Brennan told the Daily News. "Artisanal cheeses are expensive. We really tasted a lot of cheeses to find these."

Brennan, who owns the French bistro Picholine on the upper West Side and runs Manhattan's Artisanal Cheese Center in Hell's Kitchen, pitched the idea to Starbucks about a year ago and hopes the program goes nationwide.

Packaged in a special box imported from France, the spread of aged Gouda, Vermont cheddar and blue cheese will come with crackers, dried apricots, walnuts - and advice on pairing the creamy confections with barista brews.

Along with the cheese, Starbucks is revamping some 60% of its lunch items, according to Crain's New York Business.

"I'm already willing to pay \$5 for coffee, so \$6 for a light meal isn't so bad," said 25-year-old Chelsea resident Sharon Yun resignedly outside a Starbucks on 10th Ave. "Unfortunately, I'm a Starbucks addict."