

Moody Cow: Joburg's gelato, coffee and candy retail hybrid

For Jose dos Passos, a self-confessed coffee addict with a sweet tooth, it makes sense that his latest venture is a gelato and coffee company called Moody Cow, which recently opened its first outlet in Clearwater Mall.



He describes the Moody Cow hybrid store as a Mediterranean gelato-coffee-sweet shop and retail experience. "With our warm climate, there was definitely a gap in the market for a real gelateria," he explains.

A serial entrepreneur, Dos Passos has vast experience in building and managing hospitality and retail businesses. Having originally studied architecture at Wits, and with a post-grad business diploma from G.I.B.S, he has designed and built numerous hospitality projects over the years and "the food bug bit". His career is varied and extends from being a wine distributor to being an Italtile/CTM franchisee for many years. After that, he founded Floors Direct before franchising that out.

These days he is a shareholder in newly-opened Parktown North restaurant, La Boqueria. He also owns the Doppio Zero franchise in Clearwater Mall. "Across the mall was a tired little sweet shop. In a moment of insanity, when I asked the owner if he wanted to sell, he said: 'Yes!' and Moody Cow was born," he explains.



A sweet celebration

The menu at Moody Cow celebrates all things sweet. Everything from the handmade (halal-certified) gelato and fruit-based sorbets, cookie sandwiches, gourmet popcorn and waffle tacos are fresh and made-to-order in the store. These can be paired with one of the specialty coffees, an Uber Shake or a Sicilian lemonade. There are also selected candies, imported chocolates and liquorice and a gifting section that can make up bespoke gifts for special occasions or corporates. As Dos Passos believes that Moody Cow is a 'hybrid store', he says it is imperative for him to identify 'points of difference'.



Dos Passos visited Sigep, the biggest gelato and coffee fair, in Rimini, Italy, to learn from the best and import all the machinery. His vision is to franchise Moody Cow and have a central depot where all the gelato and Moody Cow branded sweets will be made and packaged, thus reducing operating and capex costs for potential franchisees. The idea is to have both smaller 'Express' stores and bigger stores depending on the available sites and business case.