

A sweet beginning

Shruti Jaipuria of MAIA Design Studio creates a chocolate lounge that serves as the design template for a confectionery brand with expansion plans

Below left and below

Following an open plan, the Smoor chocolate lounge is an immersive space where visitors can experience the entire range of delicacies the brand serves. The lounge houses a pastry and gelato counter, chocolate retail area, bread and coffee bar, café seating and an open kitchen.

Far left below The pastry and gelato counter features hanging brass lights, which impart an edge to the space.

When MAIA Design Studio took on the project

of designing the very first chocolate lounge for Smoor, a homegrown chocolate brand, the prime directive was to create a distinct brand identity that would go on to define the aesthetic of future outlets. The space was to provide a design template for multiple formats, such as kiosks, chocolate stores and chocolate lounges like this one.

“Smoor is positioned in the premium segment, and our approach was to then design the multiple brand attributes that could work as pieces of a puzzle to be put together for each of their future outlets, depending on scale and location,” says Shruti Jaipuria, founder and creative director at MAIA Design Studio.

The final look for the store included several eye-catching elements that lend the Smoor chocolate lounge an unmistakable character. By incorporating bespoke wall paneling, specially designed retail shelf units, custom lighting fixtures and wall graphics, the design identity was etched out in bold strokes. Weaving these into a cohesive unit involved clever spatial planning that responded naturally to the challenges of the site. As this was an interior design project, the designers had to incorporate five zones, namely a chocolate retail area, pastry and gelato counter, bread retail and coffee dispense area, café seating, and hot and cold finishing kitchens, within the pre-existing structure.

Having inherited an old, worn-down house in



Below The coffee dispense and bread retail bar in the lounge's centre was intended to camouflage three ceiling beams.





Facing page top An accent wall, with custom panels — which were router-cut in MDF and then hand-finished to draw associations between their form and chocolate moulds — frames the rear seating and pastry and gelato serving areas.

Facing page bottom and below The chocolate retail area sees prepackaged products displayed on an adjustable, custom-made shelving system. The dark backdrop of the shelves serves to highlight the bright colours used on the products.

Bangalore, MAIA Design Studio had to first demolish the internal walls between rooms and clean out the front façade in order to create an open space in which to execute their vision. The next challenge was how to disguise three large beams that cut across the middle of the space.

“Due to three large beams cutting across at a 900 mm depth in the middle of the space, a bread retail and coffee dispense bar was created in the centre so as to camouflage the beams and form an impulse purchase zone,” says Jaipuria, explaining how a solution was found.

Situated in the centre of the space, the bar forms a connecting space between the chocolate retail section on its left, the pastry and gelato section on its right and the seating and open kitchen to the rear of the lounge. A contemporary aesthetic, awash in a palette of grey, white and oak, ties the varied zones together. The neutral palette was opted for over the usual tones of brown that most chocolateries sport to help the brand stand out from competition, as well as highlight the products on display at the lounge.

MDF panels that take inspiration from chocolate moulds for their form make up the accent walls of the space. Meanwhile, the window displays sport custom made MS shelves

that were finished in brazen brass tones and are height adjustable and modular. In order to tie the space’s design and the brand identity together, the hand illustrations and visual imagery seen on the product packaging are brought onto the walls through the graphic panels and artworks.

Putting together an iconic look that is sure to become synonymous with the Smoor brand, MAIA Design Studio was able to craft a memorable space. In summation, Jaipuria says, “An overall emphasis has been laid on finesse, details, straight lines and a look that is sophisticated, yet not intimidating. It was imperative that the design approach was such that the product remains king. The very beautiful and colourful packaged products, chocolates and fresh pastries must take visual prominence.” ■

Owners Bliss Chocolates India Pvt. Ltd.
Interior Designer MAIA Design
Contractor Pratik Arts
Graphics Bloombox Brand Engineers
Paints Asian Paints
Flooring Square Foot, Somany

Story by Dushyant Shekhawat
Photography by Manoj Masand

