

Mark McEwan launching gourmet grocery chain **By Karen Hawthorne, National Post**

Toronto celebrity chef and restaurateur Mark McEwan is taking on Pusateri's, Whole Foods and other high-end grocers to launch a gourmet supermarket chain.

The first McEwan store is scheduled to open in Don Mills in January, featuring meals-to-go and grocery staples.

"If you travel to any major city in Europe, you'll find these absolutely beautiful 25,000-square-foot food stores. There's nothing like that here. So that's what I'm doing," says Mr. McEwan, 51.

The concept is restaurant-quality prepared foods at a 68-foot-long counter — cuisine he says would pass muster served at his top-flight restaurants — as well as an in-house bakery, fresh fish and meat counters, produce and other regular grocery items.

"It's a full-service, one-stop shop," he says. "You'll never have to cook again." The \$6-million, 23,500-square-foot store will be in the new Don Mills Centre at Lawrence and Don Mills, next to what he's describing as "the newest and grooviest Vintages LCBO."

Mr. McEwan is already scouting a second location.

He's financing the chain himself, and plans to have four in the city over the next four years. He wants the stores to be "restaurant-like," where the manager on the front floor can talk about the products and help customers make selections.

"It's not about making a food store pretentious at all. It won't be," he says. "You can shop there 99% of the time unless you need to go to Costco to buy Tide and tissue paper."

The store's name, McEwan, resonates with foodies in Toronto and internationally, he says, thanks to his Food Network TV show *The Heat*, now in its third season.

The question is, will people still want to dine in Mr. McEwan's restaurants if they can get the same quality product at his food stores?

"Sure they will," he says.

After 30 years in the restaurant business and working nights, he likes dinner at home with his wife. "Her spaghetti and meatballs is to die for."