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A 30-Pack of Charmin, but Where to Store It?



Suzanne DeChillo/The New York Times

Noreen Shevlin McManus, of the Upper East Side, hauled off her purchases. [More Photos »](#)

By ELISSA GOOTMAN

Published: April 15, 2010

WHEN Costco [opened its first Manhattan outpost last November](#), in a soaring East 116th Street shopping complex with river views, management did not know precisely who or what to expect: Would customers stream in from East Harlem and Washington Heights? Or would the aisles be flooded with Upper West Siders stocking up on San Pellegrino? How much demand would there be for kosher meat? Costcos nationwide sell some 57 million rolls of Charmin per month: would people living in cramped apartments go for those 30-roll packages?

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Turns out there are even more Upper East Siders shopping at the Manhattan Costco than had been expected (and a lot were expected), but there are also plenty of people from Harlem, Morningside Heights, the Bronx and beyond. Kosher food is in high demand, though not as high as in Costco's kosher capital, Lawrence, N.Y. And as for the question of where shoppers keep it all, Iliana Dimitrova, 36, an accountant, offered this clue: "If you open my kitchen cabinets, it's all toilet paper and Bounty from Costco."

In fact, Bounty paper towels have been the store's most popular item: 258,000 rolls were sold by April 6, 12 at a time.

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On a recent sunny Friday, Costco was an oasis of urban harmony: Parents who live in public-housing complexes shopped for after-school snacks alongside people planning to split their loot between homes in the city and the Hamptons. Some strolled home, fruit salad and Pop Tarts teetering over the edge of their granny carts; some piled flat-screen televisions into livery cabs; some packed their bottled water and eggs — the store sells 76,000 eggs a week — into beat-up trucks or Mercedes S.U.V.'s. A black [Michael Kors](#) blazer hung from the handle of one woman's cart: a \$79.99 gift for her driver.

Rob Coope, the store's general manager, said Manhattan shoppers were more likely to prefer the smaller — O.K., less big — and higher-end version of things. At most Costcos, large tubs of Polly-O mozzarella easily outsell containers of buffalo mozzarella at nearly triple the per-pound price. Not in Manhattan, though Mr. Coope is still trying to determine whether that is more about a taste for finer things or a lack of refrigerator space.

"Almost all the questions we had were, 'Can you get the healthier version?' Organic sugar, low-calorie bread, soy cheese," Mr. Coope recalled of the early weeks. "Kosher, big. Healthy, organic, big. Much bigger than the other buildings."

[See the accompanying slide show for a look at some shoppers and their purchases.](#)

A version of this article appeared in print on April 18, 2010, on page L18 of the New York edition.

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