



KIDS



(Photo: Bjorg Magnea; courtesy of Apple Seeds)

PLAYDATE

Play Outside the Park First-rate kid zone off Madison Square.

Two years ago, Alison Berna and Allison Schlanger, both mothers of twins, met while struggling to shoehorn their double strollers into a tiny elevator on the way to music class. "Everything was rushing, rushing, rushing," says Berna. "It would be a 20-minute walk to one place for a 45-minute class that was really 30 minutes by the time you took off hats and scarves. And there was no place to hang out afterwards." You know what happened next: In March, Berna and Schlanger and their husbands, Bobby and Craig, opened Apple Seeds, a 15,000-square-foot kid-tastic wonderland just off the family-friendly Madison Square Park. The indoor playground was designed by Roto Studio, the folks behind the Children's Museum's acclaimed learning zones, who built nine city-centric installations, from a New York deli complete with bountiful crates of plastic fruit to a yellow cab that two can climb inside and "drive." Cleanliness is a big priority. Three times a day, all the toys in the playground are replaced with new, sanitized versions, and strategically placed disinfectant bins allow plastic items that have been stuck in mouths to be dunked. The playground requires a \$750 yearly membership, but anyone can sign up for the exhaustive list of classes for newborns to 5-year-olds, some of which will be demo'd free of charge from August 16 to 22. (See "Events: For Children.") Branded music classes like Little Maestros and Music Together are the big draws, and others come with a twist: Each session of My Chelsea Art Opening, for example, is themed on a classic children's book, and students host a wine-and-cheese "gallery opening" for family and friends at semester's end. Next month, a children's hair salon opens, with chairs shaped like cars and mani-pedis for mom. There will also be a nut-free, allergy-sensitive café serving everything from organic baby purées to healthy finger foods and, as Berna notes, "really good coffee." And most important, there are no stairs or elevators to impede the stroller set.

SARAH BERNARD