

BIRCHBOX®

*Scorpion* star Katharine McPhee enjoys the VIP treatment at a Birchbox pop-up event.



# Out of the Box

Birchbox brings its signature sampling and insider beauty knowledge to a flagship store in New York



After four years of sending subscribers monthly beauty care packages filled with premium samples from the hottest

brands, **Birchbox** is thinking outside the box by opening its first brick-and-mortar store in New York. Now all of the things beloved about the site by fans—including *Scorpion* star **Katharine McPhee**—have come to life in its SoHo shop.

“The vision for the store was to have the whole Birchbox concept—try, learn and buy—in one environment,” says co-founder and co-CEO **Katia Beauchamp**. “When they walk in the door, our subscribers feel like this is their Disneyland.”

The airy 4,000-square-foot bilevel shop has a sleek yet warm vibe, thanks to clean wood with white accents. “We loved that we had two floors to play with because we had really big ideas for the store,” Beauchamp says.

What’s popular on the site fills most of the shelves, and iPads dot the store so shoppers can see how fellow customers rated each product. In one corner, an interactive touch screen gives shoppers the traditional Birchbox experience: After you fill out a profile that includes your style personality and beauty needs, you receive tailored product recommendations that you can click on to discover more (including ratings).

The store offers thousands of products and 250 brands, ranging from indie labels like **Tata Harper** and **Juliette Has a Gun** to mainstays like **Benefit** and **Clarisonic**. Unlike traditional beauty boutiques that organize merchandise by manufacturer, Birchbox follows its Web model and arranges offerings by category and product type to make browsing a cinch. Shopping for mascara? Lip gloss? A new cheek stain? The selection is



*“The whole point of Birchbox is discovery.”*

— co-founder Katia Beauchamp



Clockwise from top: Birchbox's SoHo flagship store offers thousands of products and 250 brands; co-founders Hayley Barna (left) and Katia Beauchamp met at Harvard Business School; shoppers can test-drive the latest beauty trends at the boutique's Try Bar application stations.



expertly curated; there's even a section dedicated to second-day hair.

To make the latest beauty craze approachable for everyone, the shop's Try Bar includes different application stations, focused on specific trends and techniques that change every month. Staffers are on standby to help shoppers figure out everything from how to find the right BB cream to creating a bold lip. “This is where our merchants and editors come up with stories, and consumers can play with a predefined set of things, like pencils or color trends,” Beauchamp says.

The best-sellers section, which also changes monthly, showcases the most popular items from the site, and for a true hands-on experience shoppers can BYOB, which in this case stands for Build Your Own Birchbox. Customers mix and match five samples—product

categories include Body & Nails, Fragrance, Hair, Makeup and Skincare—to create their own packages. A lifestyle section is stocked with tea, jewelry and candles. “We find little things that are inspirational and fun,” Beauchamp says.

The downstairs floor is devoted to hair, nail and makeup services. Customers can get a smoky eye before a date, choose a fun braid before a wedding, or dabble in Birchbox's cult nail art, which has its own Instagram account. On Wednesday nights the area turns into a classroom, where employees, aestheticians, makeup artists or brand representatives instruct six to eight students on anything from contouring to updos.

“People are excited that there is so much to do here,” Beauchamp says. “Those of us who aren't savvy when it comes to beauty want advice. The whole point of Birchbox is discovery.”

— Celia Shatzman