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General News

Hasz family to open four BBI yogurt shops in Tulsa metro

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TULSA – Franchisees Gary and Carol Hasz will add four or more FreshBerry Frozen Yogurt Cafés in metro Tulsa.

That would greatly multiply the one and only location opened in January by franchiser Beautiful Brands International of Tulsa, parent of Camille’s Sidewalk Café and Coney Beach.

“We were looking for a little diversification,” said Carol Hasz, whose family owns Baker’s Pool Service of Broken Arrow. “We liked what FreshBerry offered.”

David Rutkauskas, the founder, president and chief executive of Beautiful Brands, said FreshBerry offers several low-cost advantages: a franchise fee of only \$25,000 per store, a footprint of just 800 to 1,000 square feet, low labor requirements, and projected startup costs of \$150,000.

All of those factors look especially promising in a food-service market squeezed by fuel and food inflation.

“We offer only one product, and it has a locked-in price,” he said. “And there’s absolutely zero product loss.”

The Hasz franchise represents the first Oklahoma expansion for FreshBerry, which opened in January at 111th Street and Memorial Drive in Bixby, beside BBI’s original Coney Beach hamburger and hot dog eatery. Rutkauskas has projected first-year store sales for that store at \$400,000, beating projections.

“I think it could go more than that,” said Hasz. “I would think that the way it is moving, that’s not a surprise ... the way people love the product.”

FreshBerry features frozen treats of all-natural yogurt, providing a range of desserts or snacks with fruit toppings that are still low on fat and calories while high in protein and calcium. Hasz said that appeals to health-conscious customers seeking a guilt-free delight.

“The fact we first started out as customers and then became franchisees isn’t a coincidence,” said Gary Hasz. “The decadent chocolate flavor is Carol’s favorite; I’m personally addicted to the FreshBerry tart.” Carol Hasz, who has her eye on the Riverview Shopping Center under construction in Jenks, intends to open their first FreshBerry in September. Other areas under consideration include the corner of 61st and Yale, the Utica Square shopping center, and Broken Arrow.

The Hasz family hopes to open two shops this year.

“We hope to do multiples within the five-year period,” she said. “I don’t know, though. We’re doing one step at a time.”

Their yogurt interest reflects neither a slowdown in pool service or installation, or the seasonal aspects of that business.

“It’s not really, for us,” she said of perceived seasonal trends. “We build pools if the weather’s anywhere decent. We can build all winter. We have maintenance all winter.”

Baker's Pool Service has enjoyed a 30-percent boost in revenue this year, defying the credit crunch, Wall Street jitters and other national economic trends that might suggest reduced discretionary spending. "It's exceeding our expectations this year," she said, noting their business focuses on homeowners. "I think Tulsa is a really blessed market."

"We don't get many price shoppers," she said. "Less than 1 percent of customers have said, 'Oh, we're going to do it ourselves.'"

Baker's main problems with fuel inflation draw from its own fleet of heavy vehicles, which presents a difficult cost to pass on to clients on bid jobs.

"We can feel it," she said. "But there's nothing we can do about it because it's a big job."

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