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Camille's parent plans Fresh Berry Yogurt chain: Tulsa company signs 14 franchisees for new Coney Beach concept

by Kirby Lee Davis
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TULSA – The parent company of Camille's Sidewalk Cafe intends to launch a third restaurant chain this year: Fresh Berry Yogurt.

Beautiful Brands International intends to unveil details of the new frozen yogurt concept after getting its second restaurant franchise, Coney Beach, off the ground.

Although the first eatery will not open until June at 111th Street and Memorial in Tulsa, BBI has sold 14 Coney Beach franchises that promise 20 of the gourmet hot dog and hamburger restaurants opening this year in Chicago, Omaha, Kansas City, St. Louis, Oklahoma City, Little Rock, Dallas, Houston, Little Rock, Atlanta and Birmingham, Ala.

Another 10 potential franchisees are said to be waiting until the '70s beach hot-dog-stand concept opens – so that they can taste the food – before putting their money forward.

Camille's founders David and Camille Rutkauskas had planned on following Coney Beach with a chicken franchise. While that theme remains active, two weeks ago they unveiled within the company the new yogurt concept.

The Web site www.freshberryyogurt.com offers the hint "coming soon" and an e-mail link to David Rutkauskas.

As with Coney Beach, the Rutkauskases developed the yogurt concept by first creating the logo and restaurant ambiance. The menu was crafted to feature a healthy alternative to competitors.

Officials said Fresh Berry Yogurt franchises will not be sold until Coney Beach has reached a solid foundation. But the new concept is expected to open late this year.

Like Coney Beach and Camille's, Tulsa-based BBI expects Fresh Berry Yogurt to bring a distinctive twist to that sector – with intent to sell several hundred franchises worldwide. The privately held parent company has more than 1,000 restaurants either open or in development.



Ranked among the world's top franchises five years running by Entrepreneur magazine, BBI oversees more than a hundred Camille's restaurants in 36 states, all but one franchised. It has just landed a developer to take its foundation chain into Massachusetts.

RJO Inc. of Boston signed a development agreement to bring Camille's Sidewalk Cafe to the Bay State's South Shore area. The deal with Camille's Franchise System Inc. involves opening three Camille's in Boston over the next three years – with a goal of 10 or more. The first should open by the end of this year.

"I was sold on the idea from my first bite," said Robert Ocko, owner of RJO. The career banker, who last served as senior vice president, senior business development officer with Horizon Bank and Trust of Braintree, Mass., earned a professional chef's degree from the Cambridge School of Culinary Art.

Site selection is under way, with cities in Massachusetts being considered including Braintree, Hingham, Norwell, Hanover, Pembroke, and Plymouth. Camille's offers lunch and dinner menus ranging from several wrap selections and grilled paninis to deli-style sandwiches, flatbread pizzas, salads, smoothies and desserts.

"I can honestly say that in a city that has more than its share of delicious food, Camille's Sidewalk Cafe will stand out from the crowd," he said. "It's that good."

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