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Real Estate

## FreshBerry plans 11 Southern California shops

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TULSA – California franchisee Sunny Sandhu will open 11 or more FreshBerry Frozen Yogurt Cafés under a new agreement with Beautiful Brands International of Tulsa.

This marks BBI's entry into that West Coast hub. As the parent of Camille's Sidewalk Café, which has enjoyed success in California, Beautiful Brands founder, President and Chief Executive David Rutkauskas expects the Sandhu agreement could mark the first of many in that state for the new yogurt chain.

Sandhu, who operates several 7-Eleven stores in Southern California, intends to open at least one FreshBerry unit in Los Angeles County and 10 in Orange County over the next two to three years. As the third franchise concept developed by Beautiful Brands, FreshBerry opened its first restaurant in late January at 111th Street and Memorial Drive in Bixby, next door to BBI's original Coney Beach hamburger and hot dog eatery. That marks the only company-owned location for both chains.

With FreshBerry's sales topping projections, BBI founder, President and Chief Executive David Rutkauskas projected the store will finish its first year with about \$400,000 revenue.

This agreement marks the sixth franchise agreement for FreshBerry, and the fifth to expand the concept outside the Sooner State. Rutkauskas said these pacts, if fulfilled, would plant 25 of the fresh yogurt shops in five states over the next two to three years.

In March, software engineer Max Hamilton became FreshBerry's first franchisee, announcing plans to open one store this year in Scottsdale, Ariz. Rutkauskas expects Hamilton to maintain his leadership post as the first franchisee to actually open a location this fall.

Linda Addy was a close second at the signing stage, buying a bundle of three franchises for northern Nevada.

Earlier this month Beautiful Brands signed up two Texas franchisees to take the FreshBerry concept into Texas. Courtenay Kimball agreed to open three in Dallas over the next two years, while Anthony Taylor will take FreshBerry into Houston.

In BBI's backyard, Broken Arrow franchisees Gary and Carol Hasz plan to open four or more sites around metropolitan Tulsa, the first one also intended to open this fall.

Rutkauskas has projected 15 FreshBerry units would open this year from up to 100 franchisees. He credits BBI's successful launch to FreshBerry's low-cost advantages, which includes a small 1,000-square-foot footprint, controlled food costs, limited labor requirements and low initial investment needs, from its \$25,000-per-store franchise fee to projected startup costs of \$150,000.

Its menu features all-natural frozen yogurt and fruit smoothies, with toppings ranging from staple fruits like strawberry, blueberry and mango to Fruity Pebbles cereal, granola, almonds and chocolate chips. The stores also feature a Smoothie Bar, yogurt by the pint or quart, and FreshPops.

“This expansion into Los Angeles and Orange counties for our FreshBerry brand marks a rapid growth pattern for this unique frozen treat,” said Rutkauskas.

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