
RETAIL

Cafe Yumm! expansion hums

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After toiling for years in retail cubbyholes, Eugene's fast-growing Cafe Yumm! restaurant chain has finally found a place to spread out.

The latest addition to the Cafe Yumm! string is expected to open by early October in a sprawling, longtime restaurant building at 730 E. Broadway.

The new location already is serving as a production kitchen for other local Cafe Yumm! outlets. After it opens to the public, the new restaurant also will offer the chain's first banquet facilities, serve as its catering center and research-and-development kitchen, and become its largest walk-in retail outlet.

"This is what we've been looking for," said Mark Beauchamp, who founded Cafe Yumm! with his wife, Mary Ann, in a tiny, basement space at the Fifth Street Public Market. "The fact it can have the multiple uses really works for us."

The East Broadway space was most recently an Elmer's restaurant, but has served previously as the Cheerful Tortoise and as an Izzy's pizza parlor. The building is owned by Herb Nill of Junction City.

Beauchamp said he is spending \$250,000 to \$300,000 to remodel and redesign the space to suit his company's image. Landscaping is being replaced, the parking lot will be resurfaced, the building's exterior has been repainted and the interior layout has been reconfigured to accommodate its variety of uses.

The Cafe Yumm! owners said they are thrilled with the new location, which they believe will draw customers from the University of Oregon and Northwest Christian College, the new federal courthouse district, Sacred Heart General Hospital and downtown businesses.

Their brand may be a better fit for the area than those of the other restaurants that have tried the building, they said.

"The visibility here is extraordinary, and there's a lot going on in this corridor," Beauchamp said.

He and his wife are hoping the Cafe Yumm! menu will stand out among those of other restaurants in the area. "I just have a feeling there's a lot of fast food here," Mary Ann Beauchamp said. "And there's a need for something besides fast food."

Cafe Yumm! is considered to be part of the "fast casual" restaurant segment, which typically leans more toward dine-in customers and more middle-of-the-road pricing

than those in the "quick service" or fast-food segment.

The Eugene chain serves a menu anchored by its beans-and-rice bowls, with a variety of sauces and toppings. Its meals range from \$3 to \$8.

The Beauchamps gave up their original location in the Fifth Street Public Market almost two years ago, citing the market's plans for a major remodel along with their restaurant's limited space and exposure at the location. That left them with two restaurants - in the Meridian Building at 1801 Willamette Street, and at Oakway Center.

But the couple then built a new flagship restaurant at Green Acres Road and Delta Highway, which opened in July. They also began offering franchises, and have sold franchise rights for restaurants that are expected to open at The Crossroads center on Springfield's Gateway Street in October, and at Bend's Old Mill District shopping center in November.

The rapid growth has been a challenge, but the Beauchamps said they've been able to maintain quality by cultivating good managers and employees who embrace their concept of environmentally friendly practices and healthful foods.

"(Managing the growth) is like with a small child," Mary Ann Beauchamp said. "You're following that child, trying to make it safe, but it has a life of its own."

The Beauchamps have set an initial target of 50 restaurants within five years, with probable expansion into the Portland, Corvallis and Medford-Ashland markets, followed by various areas in Washington and California.

Retail Notebook runs on Fridays. Joe Mosley can be reached at 338-2384 or jmosley@guardnet.com.

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