

Bagel rival aims to open 20 shops in NYC

BY ADRIANNE PASQUARELLI

New Yorkers' beloved bagel is facing some new competition from something called a simit, a flat, round, sesame-seed encrusted baked good popular in Turkey and Romania, which is similar to the bagel. Simit + Smith, a brand new would-be restaurant chain that specializes in simits, recently opened its first location on the Upper West Side. Two additional outposts are under construction, as the company ramps up to have a total of seven outposts up and running here by year-end.

"The simit is the original bagel—it's a mix between a bagel and a street pretzel," said Vanessa Vardon, director of marketing for Simit + Smith. "We are actively looking at locations and our goal is to have 20 shops by the end of 2015 in Manhattan and possibly in the surrounding boroughs."

The company has signed leases for about 1,000 square feet each at 100 Williams St. and 111 Worth St. Both locations are expected to open for business before April. They follow a 700-square-foot outpost which opened Dec. 20 at 124 W. 72nd St.

Ms. Vardon said her company is looking at spaces for new shops near Grand Central Terminal and the new Barclays Center in Brooklyn. She said she expects the simit to catch on with consumers because, with 290

calories, it is healthier than a bagel, which typically packs around 400 calories. Simit + Smith also hopes to eventually wholesale its products at popular grocers such as Whole Foods and Trader Joe's.

One food expert said the simit should catch on, and is especially timely to be introduced when New Year's resolutions might include calorie-counting.

"New Yorkers love their bagels but are adventurous eaters," said Arlene Spiegel, a restaurant consultant.

Each new Simit + Smith shop will include walls decorated with the simit's history and pictures of how it is traditionally sold through street cart vendors in Eastern Europe.



Simit + Smith's first NYC outpost at 124 W. 72nd St.