

More burgers for NYC as Checkers expands

BY ADRIANNE PASQUARELLI

New York City is getting a second serving of burgers, wings and cola. By 2015, fast-food chain Checkers will more than double its local presence—adding 22 outposts to the 19 it now boasts.

“The segment is hot and this burger nation, as we like to call it, is as relevant as it’s ever been,” said Jennifer Durham, vice president of franchise development for Tampa, Fla.-based Checkers. She noted that an average meal at Checkers is \$6.40, substantially cheaper than the near \$10 price-tag of competitors like Five Guys.

In Manhattan, Checkers will open a spot on St. Nicholas Avenue in Hamilton Heights, bringing its count in the borough to three—the first opened in TriBeCa in 2009. The other spots will be concentrated in the Bronx and Brooklyn, where Checkers already has six restaurants in each borough. Though Checkers, which primarily offers drive-thru service in the suburbs, has a typical store size of 980 square feet, its New York City outposts are substantially larger to accommodate customers dining-in. Ms. Durham noted that sites should range in size from 1,300 square feet to 2,000 square feet, which should seat between 12 to 40 patrons.

“With the double drive-thru design, we weren’t able to go into the boroughs of New York,” she said. “We opened up our thinking around developing in these high-density urban areas.” Most of the new restaurants will be franchises.

Checkers’ franchise fee is \$30,000, but depending on construction fees and build-outs, the full cost of opening a restaurant climbs to near \$500,000. The company said that several franchisees of other brands that are prevalent in New York, including Subway, Popeyes and Dunkin’ Donuts, have added Checkers to their portfolio since those brands have already saturated the market.

There’s definitely room for the chain here, according to Arlene Spiegel, a restaurant consultant.

“I see them filling the space between quick-service-restaurants like McDonald’s and gourmet burger concepts,” said Ms. Spiegel, noting that Wendy’s is also making a big push in the city. But she cautioned that it may be difficult for a suburban drive-thru concept to adapt to an urban market.



Photo by www.Checkers.com