

Louie's chain expands in metro area

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March 14, 2009



Restaurant-goers in Broken Arrow could be singing "Louie, Louie" in coming months.

The Hal Smith Restaurant Group out of Norman plans to open a new Louie's Grill and Bar restaurant in Broken Arrow near the Bass Pro Shops store, but an opening date has not been set yet since the site remains under construction, said Brent Kennedy, a partner with the Hal Smith group.

The Louie's restaurants are known for their American style menu of burgers, pizza, sandwiches and beer.

"Louie's is a casual-type neighborhood grill and bar," Kennedy said. "The one thing that really makes us work is that there is nothing on the menu over \$9.99, which makes it great for all people."

The restaurant will range from 3,000 to 5,500 square feet, with seating for 100 to 150 and will employ 50 to 100 people.

Louie's has 10 locations in Oklahoma, Kansas and Arkansas, including one already operating at 101st Street and Sheridan Road.

Hal Smith Restaurant Group runs other popular franchises in Oklahoma, including Charleston's Restaurant, Krispy Kreme and the Toby Keith's I Love This Bar and Grill in the Bricktown district of Oklahoma City.

The Louie's concept started four years ago near the University of Oklahoma campus in Norman.

The new location in the Tulsa area is part of an aggressive plan for the brand to expand in coming months. Kennedy said the company will open seven Louie's locations this year and also is considering another Tulsa-area restaurant near 71st Street and U.S. 169.

Despite the recession and the pressure it has put on the food and beverage industry, Kennedy said he is confident that the new restaurants can succeed, given the under-\$10 price structure of menu items.