

Ones to Watch by Sherri Daye

A BETTER SANDWICH SHOP

The specialty café is hardly a new idea. Neither is placing one in a retail setting. Neiman's in-store café and to-die-for chocolate chip cookies are almost as legendary as the emporium itself. And you can find a panini in any mall foodcourt worth its plastic trays. So why is there a buzz building around the growth plans of Coco Moka Café, the new sandwich/coffeehouse café concept slowly finding its place in the nation's foodcourts and department stores? One word for you: positioning.

Coco Moka Café is designed for anyone whose lifestyle includes regular visits to a retail center, from the ladies-who-lunch who frequent Macy's to the teens who cruise mall foodcourts. "Everything has been

since the '80s and specialty gifts.

But it wasn't always that way. When Rosenberg and his team opened the prototype of what would eventually become Coco Moka in the late '90s, the idea was simply to increase traffic at Candy Express. "Nobody was eating a Snickers at 9 A.M. We noticed that Starbucks was pretty busy at that hour." Together with Seattle Best Coffee, Rosenberg opened a coffeehouse/candy shop in a Vancouver, Canada, Hudson Bay department store. The menu also included pastries and gelato.

Two years later, Macy's West

ment store chain to open units in 10 U.S. cities. 'Nuff said, we think.

FROM C-STORE TO QUICK-SERVE

Nothing irks Barry Applebaum more than someone slapping a few slices of shaved steak on a hoagie and calling it a cheesesteak. Given a forum, he'll rant about the imposters for hours. What he serves at his Grilladelphia



thought of to create the right atmosphere and experience for this concept," says David Rosenberg, president of Candy Express, Inc, parent company of Coco Moka Café. "The entire store environment is geared towards customers who prefer to be in a store like Coco Moka Café."

A store like Coco Moka Café includes a menu of signature artisan bread sandwiches and decadent desserts. Its ambience is decidedly upscale and hip, designed to attract the teens who told market research folks they wanted to "shop in a cool store." That's right. Coco Moka is more than merely a restaurant. It is also a retail center in its own right, offering the packaged and bulk candy that has made Candy Express a mall favorite

caught wind of the concept and came calling. "They liked the fact that candy expanded the daypart beyond coffee. But they also asked, 'Can you also do soup, salads, and sandwiches?'"

Rosenberg decided he could, and Coco Moka Café was born, much to the delight of retail center landlords everywhere who love the concept because of the versatility of its design. Whether a landlord is looking for restaurant or a coffeehouse or a bakery, Coco Moka fits the bill, an alternative to both Starbucks and Panera.

WHY IT BEARS WATCHING: Insiders say Coco Moka is in negotiations with a major depart-

shops is the real deal, he says, complete with processed cheese spread and tomatoes, if you want 'em.

Applebaum's main gig is running the three Exxon-branded c-stores he owns in the greater Philadelphia area. In fact, he opened his first Grilladelphia inside his Port Richmond station. But as the fuel business begins to look less lucrative, the Pennsylvania native has turned his attention to taking his steak shops beyond his c-stores.

Already he has opened a 200-square-foot unit inside a Philly Italian restaurant in a deal that calls for a 50/50-revenue split with the owner of the Italian eatery and minimal investment costs for Applebaum. "I don't have to buy anyone out. I don't have to sign a long-term lease, and I don't have to lay out any cash. Where's the risk in that?" says Applebaum. As part of the agreement, Grilladelphia gets outside sig-



Critic's Review

Coco Moka Café
Leisure World Plaza
12/23/2010
Tara L.

When there is a mother-daughter team behind the counter, good things happen. And by good things I'm talking attentive and gracious service, lovely baked goods and rich, Belgian Hot Chocolate. (Which I think would be an excellent name for a 2011 male models calendar, btw.) Plus, they also offer a large variety of decadent and creative cold and hot beverages to choose from, so you will have plenty of options year round. I can't help but wish this place was a little closer to me. It's the perfect place to meet someone for coffee or perch for a few hours to do work. There is a really cozy fireplace in the center of the cafe and plenty of table real estate as well. I probably won't make it out this way too much unless I'm planning on kickin' it at Leisure World, but if you're in the neighborhood it's a great place a quick snack or fill up with a soothing beverage.



Critic's Review

Coco Moka Café

Leisure World Plaza

8/30/2010

Derryk A.

...need to make a quick stop by my bank to make a deposit and here is good enough as any but wait what is this?!? Signs that say "NOW OPEN" "NEW" promising me delicious smoothies and ice coffee as well as hot coffee and made with Starbucks' newly bought cousin but no bitter after taste, "Seattle's Best Coffee." Got to get me a chilly tasty smoothie. This is a nice little cafe located smack dab in the middle of Leisure World Plaza just watch out for all the people walking slowly while you only have eyes for a frosty beverage... Inside the new and clean place is nicely spaced out for a small cafe with plenty of cafe bistro chairs and tables to accommodate your notebook computers with their free wifi. Cool jazzy music plays on the ceiling speakers and in the case are sweet somethings to satisfy any sweet tooth. They can grill up some nice and not too expensive paninis and sandwiches, soups by the bowlful. Other things include salads and ice cream. Go ahead order up coffee tea or latte they are quick and hassle free you won't have to wait long for those who work there.

This is better than your typical Fivebucks Coffee. Their smoothies are cool and delicious I'm coming back. People look out I'm faster than you so please wait your turn after me! Hehehe!=D