

## Bone Daddy's fashions a new approach

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*BUILDING SOMETHING NEW: Bone Daddy's plans to open two locations each year for the next few years, CEO Mike Leatherwood says. He's opening one near West Parker Road and the North Dallas Tollway.*

Bone Daddy's House of Smoke will open its fifth restaurant next week in Dallas-Fort Worth and plans to break into the Houston market in 2012.

The Addison-based barbecue chain with an all-female wait staff will open an 8,340-square-foot location near West Parker Road and the North Dallas Tollway, the first opening since December 2008. In the three years since opening its last location, the company has decided to eliminate a second floor, and increase the amount of fabric for its waitress uniforms.

The latest restaurant is a more flexible design than the three locations around DFW and one in Austin, accomplished by eliminating an upper level the other restaurants have.

While all of the restaurants have been ground-up, stand-alone, the company is looking for alternatives that are less expensive and time consuming. The West Parker Road location was an 18-month project, said founder and CEO Mike Leatherwood.

"We'd love to fill in the market with some smaller locations," Leatherwood said. "We are open to new construction, retrofits, even endcaps if it was right."

The company plans to open two locations each year for the next few years, Leatherwood said. Brian Glaser, president of Dallas-based **The Weitzman Group**'s commercial retail division, is helping the restaurant chain find locations.

"Bone Daddy's will be a chameleon to the market. If it's the right space and the right sequence, Bone Daddy's will adapt to the space to get in the right market," Glaser said.

The company plans to open a location southeast of Houston in Webster by the middle of 2012, Glaser said. Bone Daddy's is also looking for a location in Fort Worth near I-30 and University Drive.

While the company has only three Dallas-Fort Worth locations (Arlington, Grapevine and in Dallas at 75 and Spring Valley Road) Leatherwood said he didn't want to cannibalize existing restaurants and decided to expand to Houston.

"We are committed to developing a brand in the state of Texas before we start looking outside the state of Texas," said Leatherwood, who was also a founder of Addison-based Razzoo's Cajun Cafe.

Bone Daddy's restaurants, which make an average of \$5 million each in sales a year, are company-owned. There are no plans to franchise, said CFO Ted Beaman.

The company will, however, start to sell portions of the company to longtime employees in January, said Leatherwood, who currently owns Bone Daddy's entirely. Bone Daddy's calls its managers "coaches."

"We spent the last year putting together a program that's going to allow our coaches and our support team and even maybe some long-term employees an opportunity to purchase an ownership share in Bone Daddy's," Leatherwood said.

### **A ploy that's played out**

Supporting staff members is also one reason behind the company's decision to cover its servers more.

"With the old uniform, they had to tie it up to fit the contours of their body," Leatherwood said. "There was just a lot more skin showing. This one is tailored."

While the new uniforms still show a portion of the midriff, Leatherwood hopes the change distances Bone Daddy's from some of its "breastaurant" competitors in the skimpy-outfit-restaurant-chain category. Addison-based Twin Peaks recently promoted watching the Victoria's Secret fashion show at its restaurants because its waitresses would also be dressed in lingerie.

"We just don't like being lumped into that category. It's demeaning to the girls that work here, and it's just not what we are committed to," Leatherwood said.

When the company started in 2000, Leatherwood admitted he was trying to capture some of the Hooters market. Now, the restaurateur isn't as comfortable using attractive women to sell his restaurant.

"I think the way that we relate to our employees has changed over the past 12 years," Leatherwood said.

The ploy of using attractive staff to lure customers started off as just that.

“The original intent was to open a barbecue restaurant, and that’s exactly what we did,” Leatherwood said. “The original intention behind and all-female staff was going to be a temporary deal. That was going to distract our guests until we figured out the food. It became such an important part of the concept we just kept doing it.”

Steven covers retail, hospitality, marketing and public relations.