



## Fast Casual Mediterranean chain coming to Indy

6/18/2020 | By Susan Orr

The fast-casual restaurant chain Garbanzo Mediterranean Fresh is gearing up to open its first Indianapolis store at 1340 E. 86th St., and the local franchisee said he plans to add several more over the next 16 months.

The 1,600-square-foot spot, which will offer indoor seating for about 32 and patio seating for about 20, formerly housed a Huddle's Frozen Yogurt shop. The space is adjacent to the Monon Trail in the Nora Plaza shopping center, which is located between College Avenue and Westfield Boulevard.

Local franchisee and area developer Lee Kleiner said construction is under way at the Nora Plaza site, and the restaurant should be open in August.

Kleiner's partner in the venture is Brian Kahn. The men, who both live in Carmel, are experienced franchisees. Through their Janes Franchising LLC, they operate three central Indiana Dairy Queen locations and four Which Wich Superior Sandwiches sites.

Kleiner and Kahn are in the process of identifying other parties who would become franchisees in Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio.

"We're engaged with a few people right now, and things are looking pretty good," Kleiner said.

Kleiner said he hopes to have five stores in some stage of development over the next 16 months, though he declined to identify specific locations. “We have four or five areas right now we feel are hot. The market will dictate where we go next. We don’t want to pass up a good opportunity.”

When Kleiner and Kahn [signed](#) a development agreement with Garbanzo Mediterranean Fresh a year ago, the two envisioned opening 25 locations in Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky over the next five years.

It might now take up to seven years to achieve that goal, Kleiner said, because the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down business deals. But the duo is still aiming for 25 stores. “No one really left the game (due to the pandemic). It’s just slowed things down a little bit,” Kleiner said.

This will be Indiana’s second Garbanzo Mediterranean Fresh location. The other one is on the campus of the University of Notre Dame. That location is not affiliated with Kleiner and Kahn.

Founded in 2008, Denver-based Garbanzo Mediterranean Fresh sells pitas, plates, salads and wraps filled with ingredients such as gyro meat, falafel, tabbouleh, hummus and tahini sauce. Customers order the food by walking along a serving line and telling an employee what they want, and all menu items are prepared in-house.

The restaurant chain’s website lists 22 locations as either temporarily closed or now open, including the one Indiana location at Notre Dame. Others are in Colorado, Georgia, Missouri, Virginia, Texas, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Illinois. An additional location in Massachusetts is listed as coming soon, while a store in the St. Louis suburb of Creve Coeur, Missouri, is listed as closed. In other news this week:

— The Black Acre Loft, a speakeasy-style bar at 130 ½ N. Delaware St. which had been open for only a short while before the COVID-19 pandemic forced it to close, has now reopened.

The Loft occupies a 1,315-square-foot space above Greek's Pizzeria and is accessible via the Wabash Street alley on the north side of the building.

It initially opened Jan. 15, and reopened Friday with limited hours of 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The space is also available for private rentals between 9 a.m. and 10 p.m. Sundays through Wednesdays.

The Loft is owned and operated by Black Acre Brewing Co., which is owned by Justin and Holly Miller and Steve Ruby. Black Acre also operates Black Acre Garden, a primarily outdoor space at 5529 Bonna Ave.; and it has two other sites set to open or reopen this year.

Black Acre is working to reopen an expanded version of its original Irvington location at 5632 E. Washington St., which has been closed since suffering a fire in December. It's also planning a new location called Corvus at 98 S. Main St. in Zionsville. Exact opening/reopening dates for these two sites have not yet been announced.

— Though the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed its plans, Dallas-based restaurant/entertainment chain Dave & Buster's says it still plans to open its new Greenwood Park Mall location this year.

The Greenwood site, which will occupy 34,450 square feet in a space that formerly housed a J.C. Penney Home Store, was [originally to have opened](#) on April 27.

A Dave & Buster's representative tells IBJ the site is still set to open this year, though the company hasn't announced an opening date. This will be the area's second location for the chain, which opened in Castleton in 2009.

— Gold Leaf Savory & Sweet, a new restaurant/wine bar/coffee shop operated by chef Kristine Bockman, opened this week at 1901 E. 46th St.

Bockman, who owns the restaurant with husband John-Christian Bockman, had [planned to open](#) in April until COVID-19 disrupted those plans. The restaurant, which focuses on affordable items, offers coffee, espresso and grab-and-go items seven days a week, with a selection of small plates served at dinnertime Thursdays through Sundays.

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