

Restaurant News

NATIONAL COVERAGE REGIONAL FOCUS \$5.95

Zoup!s on in Waterloo

WATERLOO—Soup's on in Waterloo as American fast-casual chain Zoup! opens its first Canadian location, scheduled for April 2011.

The lease on the location at Waterloo's 75 King Street South was recently signed by franchisee Daryl Hunter.

The company, which opened its first store in 1998, will be expanding into Canada in what founder and managing partner Eric Ersher calls a "disciplined and deliberate move." He told *ORN* in February that he is interested in developing single and multi-unit franchises from London to the GTA region.

He is looking to open two more locations of Zoup! in 2011 and three in 2012.

The chain has 30 stores throughout Detroit and eight states throughout the midwest and northeast United States.

Ersher said that the company selected Waterloo as its first site because "we tend to do really well in high-density, white-collar, daytime locations."

Ersher and his business partner's experience in the soup business originates with their wholesale spice business.

Continued on page 6



U.S. soup chain expands to Waterloo



Each order is served with fresh bread, baked daily on-site. The menu also includes made-to-order salads and sandwiches.

There are no plans to deviate from the U.S. model with the franchise in Waterloo in either the menu or the size of the location, which will be around 2,000 square feet.

Ersher stressed that he wants to create a sense of home with each location.

"When we were researching, soup seemed to elicit ideas of comfort and family," he said. Customers are encouraged to sample the soups before purchasing.

The company also created a company culture called Zoup!isms, outlining guiding principles that form the basis of Zoup!'s operating philosophy.

"Zoup!isms provide a framework for decision-making and provide a strong brand image," Ersher explained in a release.

Top left: A Zoup! location in Downers Grove, IL.

Bottom right: Chicken pot pie soup, one of the comfort food flavours of the brand.

Continued from cover

The business partners manufactured and distributed spice blends, mixes and eventually some soups to small restaurant chains. "In those days, it seemed as if soup was an afterthought. The consensus was clear that finding good soup was difficult," he said.

In order to develop Zoup!'s hundreds of proprietary soup recipes, the company hired a chef "who did nothing for days but make soup," said Ersher. "Then on the weekends, we'd taste them."

The company also used weekly focus groups and formal evaluations of each potential recipe, a process that took two years.

Each location offers 12 rotating daily varieties, including at least one low-fat (under

three grams of fat), vegetarian, dairy-free and spicy recipe.

Items targeted towards gluten-free diners and other dietary restrictions are also included, which Ersher calls a "growing market that we intend to continue to serve in the future."

Flavours will include chicken pot pie, lobster bisque, mulligatawny, cheeseburger royale and ginger butternut squash.

