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## NY's Energy Kitchen Planning Big Chicago Expansion

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[Energy Kitchen in New York]

[Anthony Leone](#)

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Remember when America went crazy for Subway after Jared Fogle lost oodles of weight by eating their lower-calorie sandwiches? While [a new report shows](#) that 76 percent of people seeking healthy choices at fast food hit up Subway, a new fast-casual trend may emerge as New York's [Energy Kitchen](#) is planning a massive U.S. expansion with a big rollout in Chicago. No, they aren't recruiting the Subway Guy, but they do have a big gun in their pocket: VitaminWater co-founder Mike Repole, who sold that company to Coca-Cola for \$4.1 billion, is a major investor and figure at the company.

Now Energy Kitchen, which was founded by Anthony Leone in 2003 when he became frustrated he couldn't find the food he wanted to eat in New York, has a plan to open upwards of 30 restaurants and add about 600 jobs to the Chicago area. Currently, the company has 10 stores only in the New York area, but has plans in place to open 75 shops on the East Coast and expand west, with the goal of opening 1,000 stores in the next 10 years.

Currently no locations have been finalized in Chicago, but Leone said they're talking to many local developers and are close to closing a deal. "We're going to choose the developer carefully and wisely," he said. "First step is to pick the developer and then find the real estate. The minimum deal is a three-store deal, but we have people who are looking to buy the whole market." Since nothing has been signed, Leone declined to say who they are meeting with.

Energy Kitchen will likely land in neighborhoods like River North, Lincoln Park and the Loop first—well-populated areas with people who have disposable income. The concept should attract those who already lead a healthier lifestyle and others who want to be more fit and lose weight. Nothing on the menu at Energy Kitchen is more than 500 calories and it's not just cottage cheese and fruit. The menu has a variety of choices and "we do it without sacrificing taste," Leone said.

Energy Kitchen offers breakfast, lunch and dinner with the focus on healthy, good-tasting food that doesn't weigh you down with unnecessary calories, since people should have an average of 2000 calories a day, according to the company's website. Menu options include a veggie egg wrap (315 calories), turkey egg wrap (399 calories), bison burger (399 calories), turkey burger (339 calories), seared tuna salad (276 calories), chicken marinara (370 calories), Tex Mex bison wrap (481 calories) and more.

Energy Kitchen currently works with giant food distributor Sysco and plans to continue that relationship as it grows. When asked whether sourcing food locally would be more in line with the company's healthy outlook, Leone said they need their food to remain consistent, whether you dine in New York, Florida or Chicago.

"We have a ton of proprietary products and have worked really hard on sourcing [items like] bison, acai, ostrich," he said. "All stores will get food from Sysco to keep things consistent. If we could find a local option that meets our standards and criteria, we can do that, by all means."

Regardless of where the food is sourced, it seems that people continue to flock to Energy Kitchen because of the healthier choices. It has even attracted many celebrities who swear by it.

"All of our food is really really good. We wouldn't be around for so long if our food wasn't healthy," Leone said. "This is a lifestyle for [diners]. They don't go back to the fast food."