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Houston-based Russo's pizzeria coming soon to South Florida



**R&R
ROUNDUP**

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Anthony Russo, who opened his first New York-style pizzeria in Houston in 1992, continues to grow his Italian restaurant empire with his first entry into the South Florida market.

Russo's Coal-Fired Pizzeria, a second restaurant concept he launched in 2008, is expected to open in September at 14910 Pines

Blvd., in the same strip center as Whole Foods Market.

Russo has more than 30 pizzeria locations, mostly in Texas, and has begun franchising the concept.

Pembroke Pines resident Karla Thomas, 26, is the franchisee. She is in the process of transforming the 3,300-square-foot endcap space, according to Russo, who has four other coal-fired restaurants in Houston.

Russo said he's not worried that so many coal-fired pizza concepts, including Fort Lauderdale-based Anthony's Coal Fired Pizzeria, are expanding.



The Russo's Coal-Fired Pizzeria location in Dallas is one of its more than 30 locations nationwide.

"Everyone is doing pizza, but they are not doing it right," Russo said. "Our concept is more sophisticated and upscale. We have more specialty items. Everything we make is from scratch."

There will be a fresh mozzarella bar, as well as a wine bar.

Russo has been scoping out restaurant sites in South Florida. He has a franchisee looking

at Coral Gables' Miracle Mile, and he has been looking in West Palm Beach.

The fact that South Florida has a lot of transplanted New Yorkers played a big role in his decision to expand here.

The company is also building its first freestanding 5,800-square-foot restaurant in Arkansas, and has franchisees looking for locations in New Jersey and Austin, Texas.

He also has been developing international restaurants including one set to open by the end of the year in Abu Dhabi and another in Qatar next spring.

"We like that market because it's hard to get good Italian food," Russo said.

LUCA BELLA COMING TO AVENTURA

Mickey Maltese, former owner of Matteo's Italian Restaurant in Hallandale Beach, is taking over the former Chef Allen's space in Aventura. He plans to open Luca Bella, a family-style Italian restaurant in Concorde Plaza, on the north side of Loehmann's Fashion Island.

The 4,000-square-foot restaurant will be

ON THE WEB

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able to seat 200. Dishes will be priced from \$11.95 to \$42.95.

COTTON ON ADDS MIAMI LOCATION

Cotton On has expanded its South Florida presence, adding a store at Miami International Mall.

The Cotton On Group, a retail clothing company, began in 1990 with one store in Geelong, Victoria, Australia. Today, it has more than 600 stores worldwide, including three in South Florida.

Other stores coming to Miami International Mall include: perfume and cosmetics store Sephora; Venezuelan fast-food chain Arturo's; jewelry store Pandora; and clothing, shoes and accessories store Camille La Vie.

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