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Salad Creations to Open Soon

Salata's success in Preston Center boosting expansion

By Cassie Clark

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Staff Writer

Salad bars have come a long way from the small selections of lettuce and croutons at the end of the cafeteria line.

Two new modern salad bars have come to town, targeting healthy-minded Park Cities customers, and have gained fast followings.

The first, Salata, allows customers to pick and chose their own ingredients as an employee mixes their salad — no tongs required. Salata's Preston Center location opened in September, and is an experiment of sorts to see if the concept would work outside of Houston, where it began.

"I really wanted to open up in the University Park, Highland Park area," said Salata owner Michael Mina. "[Park Cities customers] are very loyal, they're very health conscious, and everybody knows everybody."

"Since this was our first location [outside Houston], it took a little time to develop it," said Salata founder Berge Simonian. "Anytime you open a new business, you go through a struggling period where people don't know you. They don't understand the concept."

But after eight months of operation, the Dallas location has done well thanks to Park Cities customers, which Mina said account for about 85 percent of their sales. Mina said he hasn't spent any money on advertising, because word-of-mouth advertising through the Park Cities has brought in plenty of business.

"We are thrilled to be in the Park Cities area," Simonian said, adding that the success locally has given the green light to several more locations throughout the state, including Austin.

Salata isn't the only restaurant capitalizing on the concept of ordering a salad the same way you would a sub sandwich or hand-made burrito.

In two weeks, Salad Creations will open along Central Expressway near Knox Street, offering a similar salad-making method. Salad Creations developers hope to appeal to Park Cities residents by offering to deliver the salad to their door, like a pizza.

"Somebody can call up at 7 p.m. and order a salad to be delivered," said developer James Baune. The Knox location will deliver within a 10-mile radius, Baune said.

Both restaurants say they plan to do big business with a growing number of health-conscious Park Cities residents and Southern Methodist University students.

They're not alone. The National Restaurant Association reports that this year, 76 percent of American adults are trying to eat more healthfully when they dine out, compared with two years ago. The association also reports that quick-service food operators expect delivery options to become more popular with customers this year.

University Park resident Cathy Galvin said she braves Preston Center traffic jams about three times a week to eat at Salata.

"I like all the choices, and it's healthier," she said.

Baune said Salad Creations is looking to open in Snider Plaza sometime soon.

E-mail cassie@peoplenewspapers.com