

SUNSHINE INDUSTRIES

Shorty's looks at franchising

•SHORTY'S, FROM 4

Beach and will select a fifth location within six months.

Whether Shorty's builds new or retrofits an existing site, at least 5,000 to 6,000 square feet of space are needed per store. And there must be at least 10 miles between two Shorty's.

"We pull customers from a much greater area than lots of restaurants," says Vasturo, "and we don't want to cannibalize each other."

Vasturo said Shorty's is "looking for joint investments and will go where we can get the best deal. As for franchises, an initial franchise is on the table for discussion. We are very careful; a franchise must duplicate the atmosphere of the existing stores."

CASUAL DINING

The atmosphere at all Shorty's locations is akin to a summer camp mess tent with long, wooden picnic tables on concrete floors. Utensils are plastic. Napkins are rolls of paper towels. At each place setting an open brown bag awaits the deposit of gnawed ribs and chicken bones.

"This is a good time for Shorty's to expand and consider franchising," says Richard Lackey, a former Miamian now based in West Palm Beach who specializes in restaurant real estate. He's also chairman of the board of the Council of International Restaurant Real Estate Brokers.

"The barbecue category and down-home ambience is very popular all over the country," he says. "At one time barbecue was thought to be very regional — pork in North Carolina with a mustard-based sauce, beef in Texas with a ketchup-based sauce. What is occurring now is regional chains are starting to go national. The timing is appropriate for Shorty's to expand."

But Lackey, who says he ate at Shorty's on South Dixie Highway for 20 years or more when he lived in Miami, says there are difficulties in any franchising effort.

"In order to successfully franchise various factors are necessary," he points out. "The concept has to be a proven concept; you need a concept that's not easily copied or replicated; you have to have the infrastructure in place as a franchisor, that is you have to have the manuals on starting



CHEAP EATS

What will \$3.49 buy you at Shorty's Bar-B-Q? Plenty. On a recent visit, I ordered the chicken lunch special for that price and got enough for three meals. The order came with a quarter of a chicken (white meat 50 cents extra), a mound of fries, a side of cole slaw and a slab of garlic bread. Beverage is extra.

I brought the leftovers home for another meal and the bread was great for breakfast after a couple of minutes under the broiler.

"This is cheaper than any lunch special at Burger King," remarks server Teresa McGrath who has worked at Shorty's for 11 years. "And it tastes better, too."

—JO WERNE



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHORTY'S BAR-B-Q

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS: As a tribute to when the original store burned down in 1972, the company's logo is the simplistic 1951 log cabin, above, only up in flames.

up, marketing, cooking, hiring in place. And it has to have legs — room to travel as a concept."

HUMBLE SETTING

The rustic log cabin building that houses the Kendall restaurant seems out of place in an area of shiny new office buildings and shopping malls. Yet Shorty's — named for Shorty Allen who came down from Georgia as a young man to open a barbecue joint — is still a popular destination for people who savor slow-cooked ribs and chicken basted with homemade barbecue sauce. (Shorty's is now bottling and selling the sauce in the restaurants and will soon offer it on www.shortys.com.)

Shorty's caters to a diverse clientele. You will see a FedEx driver sitting next to a college student, a businessman next to a mechanic, grandparents giving their grandkids a treat. Brazilians love the place and arrive in buses straight from the airport. University of Miami alumni who moved away send e-mails requesting bottles of barbecue sauce.

The rustic motif is carried out with wagon wheels and ox yokes hanging from the ceiling. Servers wear jeans and plaid shirts. On the walls are pictures of Shorty's when it had

screens; windows were installed about 10 years ago. As a tribute to when the original store burned down in 1972, the company's logo is the 1951 log cabin on fire.

"One of the reasons for the success of Shorty's is the ability to retain good employees and good managers," says Vasturo. "Servers know their customers' names. There's a comfort level."

DEDICATED EMPLOYEES

Employees, who number around 300 including corporate staff, wear seniority pins — 15, 20, even over 30 years of service for some waitresses. Chuck Housen, 58, has been working at Shorty's for 23 years. Now vice president, he began at the restaurant as an assistant manager, a job he thought he'd keep for six months and then move on.

"It turned out to be a good fit for me," he says. "Shorty [now 96 and living in Stuart] had a great concept. When he sold it in 1980, the guys I work for were smart enough to follow his concept and not reinvent the wheel. The consistency of it, of having the same people working here is remarkable. The guy making cole slaw has been making it for 20 years. In Miami, that's an anomaly."

SUNSHINE BRIEFS

HOTELS

Design change could mean plan change for W Hotel

The W Hotel won approval for its new Miami Beach home, but will the luxury chain actually come?

Developer David Edelstein, who signed W to run the condo-hotel complex he wants to build where the Holiday Inn now stands on 22nd Street, asked the city's Preservation Board for permission to build two towers on the oceanfront site. But residents of the adjoining Roney condominium tower objected, and Edelstein agreed in the midst of a March 8 hearing to a single, much wider tower there.

The board approved the design that day, but Roney lawyer Kent Harrison Robbins says Edelstein told him he wasn't sure W would agree to the new plans. Asked to comment, an Edelstein spokeswoman released a statement saying, "At this time, we are analyzing the implications of the approved design."

Edelstein's partner, Jorge Perez of the Related Group, said Friday he was traveling and could not provide an update on the project. A W spokeswoman did not return phone calls seeking comment.

—DOUGLAS HANKS III

TELECOM

AT&T WINS IMSS CONTRACT

AT&T has won a three-year contract to provide secure networking transmission for Image Management Systems and Support, a Fort Lauderdale company that specializes in integrating medical imaging systems.

IMSS helps hospitals, laboratories and doctors to have a secure online method of storing and transmitting digital medical images and reports. AT&T will create a virtual network for IMSS and host its data on Web servers based at its Arizona Internet Data Center.

—HERALD STAFF

TELEVISION

MIAMI-DADE TV GETS TELLY AWARD

Miami-Dade TV has won a bronze Telly award for its revamped *Down to Earth* environmental TV series. The prize was in the TV Education category.

The 30-minute show, which has aired on the county's cable channel since 1996, features new graphics, sound and a slicker look introduced by Marivi Iglesias, the new producer.

The Telly award was given to the episode *Yard Care 101*, which gave tips on garden beautification and environmental health.

—HERALD STAFF

MEDIA

CEO PUBLISHING BUYS LEGAL GUIDE

The South Florida Legal Guide, an annual directory of lawyers and law firms, has been acquired by Miami's CEO Publishing Group, publisher of South Florida CEO magazine.

"With our resources, we will be able to significantly increase circulation and marketing capabilities and deliver tremendous added value to our readers and advertisers," said Jacob A. Safdeye, chief executive of CEO Publishing.

Now in its sixth year, the Legal Guide will print its 2006 edition in October with an expected circulation of 30,000 copies.

—HERALD STAFF

PAY TV

HBO MAKES BRAZIL DEAL

HBO's premium channels are now being distributed in Brazil on NET Servicos, the country's major pay TV provider.

The deal gives HBO almost 100 percent distribution of channels such as Cinemax, HBO Family, HBO Plus and Max Prime in Brazil, said HBO Latin American Group, which has offices in Sunrise.

—HERALD STAFF

