

# A feast for the guys

TWIN PEAKS DOESN'T RELY ENTIRELY ON FOOD TO DRAW ITS CLIENTELE

By Misty Milioto Reagin

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simpler than what Randy DeWitt and Scott Gordon had in mind: a Hooters-style “breastaurant” employing minimally dressed waitresses serving up eats and beer in a mountain sports-lodge setting. And surely, that naming convention would be hard to top: Twin Peaks.

Addison, Texas–based Twin Peaks, which opened its first unit in 2005 in Lewisville, Texas, operates 13 restaurants across its home state plus New Mexico and Oklahoma. Management plans to roll out 10 more this year, in Texas and in Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee.

“Based on the exceptional success we are experiencing with both existing and new restaurants, we are convinced that now is the time to be even more aggressive in our efforts to take the Twin Peaks concept into new markets,” DeWitt said.

That success could be tied to experience. DeWitt and Gordon also own Front Burner Restaurants, along with partner Jack Gibbons. Twin Peaks shares parent Front Burner with Ojos Locos Sports Cantina, Red Dog Right Kitchen Den Patio, The Ranch at Las Colinas and Whiskey Cake Kitchen & Bar.

DeWitt’s idea of using bikini-clad waitresses as lures struck him as he was operating a fishing-themed restaurant.

“Randy DeWitt owned a restaurant chain called Rockfish, and he started looking at the segment of an all-female-staffed restaurant and saw the potential for the high profit margins in an untapped segment of the industry,” said Shannon Glaser, the company’s director of franchise development. “He took a Rockfish restaurant in Lewisville which had a fly-fishing, cabin theme, and he converted it into a Twin Peaks, with a hunting-lodge theme. So it was a very easy conversion.”

The idea was to create an atmosphere where men would feel at home. The casual-dining sports bar features hunting trophies and lots of TVs tuned to sports shows. There are those friendly and bodacious waitresses too — “dressed” in Daisy Duke–inspired halter tops and barely-there khaki shorts. Twin Peaks offers an affordable menu



of burgers, chicken-fried steak, meat-loaf, wings and similar guy-friendly fare. Most items cost under \$10. “We also promise a frosty-cold mug with 29-degree beer every single time,” said

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Meggie Miller, the chain’s director of marketing. “We aim to deliver a high-quality experience for a high-caliber guest. We’re very detail-oriented, and we feel like it’s those details that set us apart from our competition.”

Management likes freestanding locations or open-air center end caps, and between 5,000 and 8,000 square

feet of space, plus parking and a patio. The ideal market boasts a population of 50,000 within a five-mile radius, and household income should be at least \$60,000 a year. An area with a high number of single adults is desirable too, along with plenty of upscale apartments and midscale business hotels, plus a heavy daytime population of 100,000 or more.

For co-tenants, Twin Peaks is sweet on Best Buy, Bass Pro Shops, Home Depot and the like. “We target areas that attract male guests, because that’s our core customer,” Miller said. “Obviously, we want female guests in our restaurants too, but if we find a location that has those types of retailers around, our guest is also going to be beneficial to them. Our guests frequent us often, and they’re looking for a good time.”

About half the chain’s units are corporate-owned, and the rest are franchised, though most of the future expansion will be accomplished through franchising. Franchise candidates for a single restaurant must have \$500,000 in liquid assets and a net worth of \$1.5

million. Those looking to own three or more franchises are required to have \$1.5 million in liquid assets and a net worth of \$3 million.

The chain requires that at least one equity partner have five years’ experience with multi-unit restaurant operations and development. The capital investment ranges from about \$590,000 to \$1.9 million, and the franchise fee of \$50,000 per unit is included in the initial investment. Franchisees can expect to pay royalty fees of 5 percent per unit. The corporate office provides market-planning and site-location assistance, as well as design and construction consultants. “The ideal Twin Peaks franchisee is someone who already has a successful track record of operating franchises and is looking to expand their portfolio with a proven concept,” said DeWitt.

Twin Peaks has prospered despite the economy. Last year its restaurants posted some \$3 million each, on average. “Our concept seems to not only survive in a down economy, but it actually thrives, especially compared to competing casual-dining restaurants,” said Miller.

And yet, aggressively as it is climbing, the chain seems to be nowhere near the summit. Twin Peaks seems to have found a winning way to reel in the guys — and this could mean big dividends still to come for itself, its franchisees and shopping center owners. **SC**

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