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ZAXBY'S HATCHES FIRST OHIO LOCATION TODAY IN COLUMBUS

OSU Area to Get First Taste of Chain's Hand-Breaded, Prepared-at-Order Chicken

COLUMBUS, Ohio (April 14, 2008) — Zaxby's, a longtime Southeast favorite for chicken fingers and Buffalo wings and one of the nation's fastest-growing restaurant chains, is spreading its wings to the Buckeye State. The 426-unit restaurant chain is laying the foundation for growth in the Columbus area with its first location near the Ohio State University campus. The new Zaxby's will open today at 2112 N. High St. and will operate from 10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Sunday. This opening is the second of two new market entries for the rapidly growing chain this month, with the other in Texas.

"We've been fortunate to have guests who are fanatical about our food who have helped us achieve tremendous growth throughout the Southeast," said Zach McLeroy, Zaxby's co-founder and CEO. "We believe Ohio is ripe with opportunity for Zaxby's and that Ohioans will feel that same excitement about our food."

"Our fast-casual concept is perfect for people who are looking for a freshly prepared, delicious meal at a price point that won't put a big dent in their wallets," added McLeroy. Guests order and pick up their meal at the counter and eat in a dining room similar in style to a casual dining restaurant with comfortable booths and tables. "Our team members provide warm and friendly service that guests want to come back for again and again. And in these unsteady economic times, guests like that they can sit down in a great environment and don't have to tip a wait staff."

Zaxby's success is rooted in a simple operating philosophy developed by its founders that has matured into the company's mission statement — "consistently create encore experiences that enrich lives one person at a time." That statement is not only the driving force behind the company's pursuit to provide fresh, delicious food and excellent customer service, it's also what helps the company create a fun work atmosphere for employees.

Menu & Restaurant Design

Zaxby's differs from its competitors at other chicken restaurants because its menu items are prepared at order and its chicken fingers, a menu staple, are hand-breaded in the restaurant. Zaxby's most popular items are its hand-breaded Chicken Fingerz and Jumbo Buffalo Wings, smothered in a choice of eight sauces with zesty names like Wimpy, Tongue Torch, Nuclear and Insane. The menu also offers innovative Zappetizers — Onion Rings, Tater Chips (home-style potato chips) and Spicy Fried Mushrooms, as well as a variety of Party Platterz perfect for tailgating or special occasions.

Additionally, Zaxby's offers four salads, or Zalads: The House, The Blue, The Caesar and The Chicken Salad Zalad. All of Zaxby's Zalads offer more chicken and unique ingredients, such as French-fried onions, fresh veggies and juicy tomatoes, and are larger than most salads offered elsewhere. Each is prepared with chicken, three kinds of lettuce, and a variety of unique, fresh toppings. All Zalads are assembled at the time the order is placed, versus being pre-made and stored in a cooler.

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Not only is this Zaxby's first location in Ohio, but it's company's only "in-line" location, which means it's not a stand-alone restaurant. Guests will notice interior floor-to-ceiling brick walls complemented by an eclectic mix of photography and interior and exterior signage. The restaurant is 3,640 square feet and can comfortably seat 94 guests. Zaxby's also provides phone-in services to meet the needs of customers on the go.

"The entire Columbus restaurant team is excited with the way the new restaurant looks and feels," said District Manager Daniel Knowlton. "I think people who have never before heard of Zaxby's or indulged in the indescribably good food are in for quite a pleasant surprise. We've had a few employee training sessions where we invited area students and residents, and we appreciate the warm welcome they've given us."

Ohio Growth Areas

While this is the first location in Ohio, there is already another location in the works in north Columbus, near Lewis Center. And while the first few locations will be corporate-owned, franchise-licensing opportunities are available to help fuel growth of the brand in the state. In addition to the Columbus area, the company is looking at Cincinnati and Dayton for future development. Interested entrepreneurs can visit zaxbysfranchising.com for more information.

"We are confident that once area residents and entrepreneurs experience our food and service, they will want to bring a Zaxby's to their own communities as well," McLeroy said. "We have many successful licensees who started out as Zaxby's guests who just loved the food."

The Zaxby's system is 80 percent franchisee-owned, with the rest corporate-owned. Restaurants typically have 30 – 50 team members employed in management, kitchen and cashier positions.

Zaxby's Stats

Zaxby's now operates its 426 restaurants throughout 12 mostly Southern states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Its largest market is Atlanta, with more than 60 locations in the metro area.

Zaxby's is headquartered in Athens, Ga. The company opened its first restaurant in Statesboro, Ga., in March 1990, and by December 2005 observed its 300th opening in Dallas, Ga. In 2007 Zaxby's opened its 400th location in Macon, Ga.

How it all started

Zaxby's founders Zach McLeroy and Tony Townley looked around their community and saw plenty of fast food or sit-down dining options. Feeling something was missing, they decided to provide the freshest chicken fingers and Buffalo wings in town. That hatched a simple idea to create a fun atmosphere where food quality is of the utmost importance. In 1990, they opened the first Zaxby's in Statesboro, Ga. The concept, one of the early "quick-casual" restaurants, proved successful.

McLeroy and Townley opened four more restaurants, and in 1994, they began to franchise the brand. The food and service were so popular, the Athens, Ga.-based chain has boomed to more than 420 units in 12 states and continues to grow. For more information visit www.zaxbys.com.

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