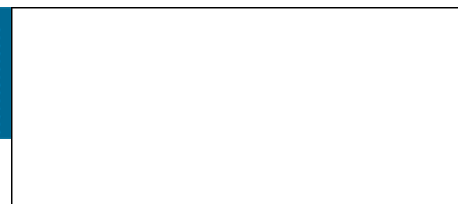


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## Phillips going after quick-serve market

Baltimore Business Journal - by [Keith T. Reed](#) Staff

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**Phillips** Foods is expanding in yet another direction, this time eyeing the quick-serve restaurant market.

The company, which runs its \$148 million retail operation out of a Baltimore plant, plans to open the first in a chain of new fast-food style kiosks later this fall at the Potomac Mills mall in Prince William, Va.

The quick-serve restaurant concept could number as many as 1,000 nationwide in a few years, and is

designed to eventually draw the bulk of Phillips' restaurant revenue, said Mark Sneed, the company's president.

"We see this as possibly becoming the future," Sneed said. "We would like to have a family of a thousand Phillips quick-serve restaurants."

Washington, D.C.-based Phillips is most famous for its chain of dine-in seafood restaurants, but its seafood retail and wholesale business is now the largest part of the company.

Plans are for Phillips (<http://www.phillipsfoods.com>) to open between three and five units over the next two years.

Sneed said the company's plans are to open each new restaurant in a location that has a different set of demographics from the previous ones.

That strategy, he said, would allow the company to do the market research necessary to tweak the restaurants' menu and pricing before an eventual mass rollout.

"As we understand what people in different areas would want from something like this, we can start to open them faster," Sneed said.

Sneed did not disclose specific menu items or prices for the new restaurants, but said they would offer limited selections of the company's seafood products -- including its popular crab cakes -- at prices lower than that of its full-service restaurants.

The concept is likely to find a big market, said Joe Spinelli, a principal at Restaurant Consultants Inc. in College Park.

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"I think there's a big need for that," Spinelli said. "People want the seafood but they don't want to pay big prices for it. If they do it right, they should be real successful based on their background."

Still, Phillips will face challenges. The chain will have to be creative in coming up with a menu that distinguishes itself from other fast-food fish chains like Arthur Treacher's Fish & Chips and Long John Silver's, Spinelli said.

But its prices will have to remain low enough to be affordable to most consumers, he said.

"Their price-points and locations are going to be critical," Spinelli said. "I've seen some operations go from a large facility into quick-serve, and it didn't work because they were just better at running a large restaurant."

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