

Specialty Retailers

Richard's Foodporium offers franchises

BY ANNA WOLFE

VENICE, Fla.—Natural and specialty food retailer Richard's Foodporium™ is now offering franchises to expand its name and boost its store count.

At the Franchise and Business Opportunities Expo in Tampa Sept. 12-13, Richard's Foodporium, based here, exhibited to market its franchise concept. Owner John Rorer is first targeting the Naples, Fort Myers and

Road to growth leads retailer to franchising

BY ANNA WOLFE

VENICE, Fla.—Back in 1997, John Rorer and his two business partners, bought Richard's Whole Foods retail business. Over the years they expanded the natural food retail concept to 11 locations, then in 2005, Rorer bought out his business partners.

After becoming the sole owner, Rorer, who managed a natural food co-op in the 1980s, decided Richard's needed some changes to better position it for future growth. New branding was created including a redesigned log. Rorer also worked on changes to the back end—updating systems and operations. With 11 stores, it was time to create a management team for the natural food chain; he hired a marketing director and retail operations manager. "The stores were operating independently. Everyone was doing their own thing," he said. "This would not work for long-term growth."

At the same time Rorer took stock of his inventory. "I got rid of the deadwood and overstocks and tweaked the product mix."

Then the first store was remodeled. "The new décor package had quite a wow factor. People started coming into the store saying 'I wish I had one of these stores in my area. Do you franchise?'"

"Up to that point, I said I didn't want to franchise," Rorer said. "I just wanted to do my own thing. I had a vision."

Orlando areas. And he said he will be picky about who he sells franchises to, taking into consideration how the person fits into the overall Richard's organization.

"I'm not going to sign up just anybody," Rorer said. At his 11 stores, "the store managers are like family. I'm very honest and personal, and I try to maintain that type of relationship."

Potential franchise operators need to be actively involved in the store and should have at least \$200,000 in liquid capital.

Until recently, Richard's Foodporium was known throughout Sarasota and Manatee counties as Richard's Whole Foods.

To date, Richard's

has 11 stores with the average store size around 1,800-2,500 square feet. Each store will be a little different, but the base concept is one-third bulk foods, one-third grocery and one-third supplements.

"There's no fresh deli or produce," said Rorer. "We got rid of produce in our stores." For Richard's produce was a "money loser. You've got to have a larger store to make them (produce departments) profitable," he said. "We focus on what we can be the best at—being a neighborhood natural food and

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John Rorer inside one of the Richard's Foodporium locations.

Pastoral promotes Chicago's confections via gift set

BY ANNA WOLFE

CHICAGO—Supporting local confections makers, Pastoral Artisan Cheese Bread and Wine began offering a gift box showcasing many locally made sweets last month.

Available online at www.pastoralartisan.com, the Sweet Home Chicago Collection features the handmade creations of some of Chicago's finest up-and-coming female artisan confectioners. With a suggested retail of \$34.99, the collection includes Whimsical Candy's La Dee Dahs chocolate nougat wrapped caramels, a hand-dipped milk chocolate toffee bar from Sweet Margy,

a trio of artisan truffles from Katherine-Anne Confections along with French salted caramels from Das Caramelini.

Mail-order has been a growing part of Pastoral's business. This year, it is doing fulfillment for Williams-Sonoma's holiday cheese program, said Greg O'Neill, who co-owns the store with Ken Miller. They're also marketing their own holiday cheese sets and gifts.

All this coincides with the specialty retailer's opening of a third store here in the Chicago French Market this month.

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Gourmet Catalog conference focuses on recovery, regrowth

ATLANTA—With the theme Regroup, Recover, Regrow, Gourmet Catalog Buying Group's seventh annual Start the Year Member conference is Jan. 8-9 at Americasmart Atlanta here.

The buying group is committed to helping their retail members "recover their retail footing and move toward renewed success in the new year," according to a prepared statement.

Open only to store and vendor members, the annual conference focuses on networking, new product introductions, sales

demonstrations and learning opportunities for the buying group's retail members. Highlights include small-group discussions, a networking lunch, a buffet supper, a cocktail party and an expanded Vendor Showcase.

The Gourmet Catalog event is well-timed so that retail buyers can also take advantage of the first show of the year—The Atlanta Gift & Home Furnishings Market —Jan. 8-12 here.

Executives from the group's vendor members will preview their new products at the Vendor Showcase, a private trade show for

Gourmet Catalog members. Extended to five hours in 2010, the showcase offers stores and vendors valuable face time to discuss products and sales strategies.

"The Vendor Showcase provides store and vendor members with the opportunity to interact, while reviewing important new introductions," said Janis Johnson, founder and president of Gourmet Catalog, in a prepared statement. "Top selling products and displays also are featured in this private, relaxed environment where retailers and

RICHARD'S FOODPORIUM

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specialty food retailer."

Its small footprint is viable against larger chains, he said. "Earth Fare and Whole Foods can go into an area, and we can operate fine around them," he said. "We're not a full basket store. For lack of a better term, we're a natural food and specialty food convenience market."

In 1979, Richard Downey had a vision to open up a chain of health food stores that would offer high quality and affordable natural foods. In 1997 John Rorer and his former business partners bought the six-store Richard's chain. Over the next eight

years, they grew Richard's Whole Foods to the 11 locations it has today. In 2005 Rorer decided to buy out his two partners.

As he was tweaking his natural and organic retail concept, Rorer decided a name change would be a good idea to avoid confusion with the Austin, Texas-based natural foods store Whole Foods Market.

Rorer began brainstorming for new names that aptly described the company's mission—and created the moniker "Richard's Foodporium." Rorer defines Foodporium as a "nostalgic shopping experience that provides a wide variety of natural and specialty foods at affordable prices."

In 2008, Richard's gross revenue grew to over \$11 million, according to its franchise Web site, www.richardsfranchising.com. **GN**



PASTORAL

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(See related story on page 1.) The Chicago French Market, O'Neill said, will be similar to the San Francisco's Ferry Building and a Parisian market. "This will be true market shopping like Chicago has never had before," he said.



When opening inside the Chicago French

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