

‘Floribbean’ concept working towards opening restaurant in St. Johns County

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By Alex Wilson



A Central Florida-based restaurant chain known for its waterfront tiki bars is looking to make its way to St. Johns County as part of a statewide expansion strategy.

Whiskey Joe’s Bar & Grill is working towards opening a location in St. Johns’ Beachwalk development, one of 20 locations the concept is hoping to build along coastal Florida over the next five years.

The concept, which describes itself as serving “Floribbean cuisine and tiki-inspired cocktails,” doesn’t have a concrete opening date set, but executives within Specialty Restaurants Corporation – the concept’s parent company – said the restaurant could open by February 2021 if all goes well.

“The key ingredient for the concept is access to water, a beach, fire pits and creating a casual atmosphere,” said John Tallichet, CEO of Specialty Restaurants. “With that, we’re very much a family-oriented concept.”

The roughly 6,000 square-foot restaurant will feature an additional 2,500 square-foot patio and an undetermined amount of beach front space on Beachwalk's Crystal Lagoon. It will seat approximately 250 people and employ around 120 full- and part-time staff. Build-out costs are being estimated at \$6 million.

Tallichet said that despite the concept's name – the name derives from a story about a man named Whiskey Joe who had a penchant for creating cocktails with his friends – Whiskey Joe's features a lot of rum-based cocktails and craft beers on its menu.

"The name Whiskey Joe's should conjure up a vacation away from your daily problems," Tallichet said. "You don't have to go far to relax and be with friends."

As far as food goes, Tallichet said the concept is chef-driven and locally sources its products when available. Average check costs run about \$50 per person and the menu features items such as burgers, tacos, alligator nuggets and scallops.

"It [the concept] is very much focused on quality food, we have quite a selection," Tallichet said. "There's always something for somebody, and the price points are very competitive."

The expansion into Northeast Florida is just one of several restaurants in the works, and Tallichet said the company is targeting numerous locations on both of Florida's coasts – he specified that coastal areas fit into the concept's general style.

"When you're sitting there at the tiki bar, it needs to be a site that you feel like you're in Key West, Hawaii or the Caribbean," Tallichet said. "You need to be somewhere where you feel like you're not a block away."