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New fast casual restaurant opens at King of Prussia Town Center

UPPER MERION >> As you enter the b.good fast casual eatery at King of Prussia Town Center, the signs that you're about to "be good" to yourself with clean, healthy eating are everywhere.

Maybe catching your eye right off the bat is the open cooler stocked with vibrantly colored fruits and veggies, readily available to find their way into your salad or sandwich.

Look around a bit more and take in the names of the regional growers, like Tricking Springs Creamery and Wellshire Farms, that are more than part of the earthy décor — they tell the story of where your fresh food came from.

And then there's the warm and inviting 54-seat interior that shows the chain's sense of sustainability by using reclaimed wood and repurposed materials.

The King of Prussia b.good is the fourth to be launched in just two years by owner Debra Lutz, a former marketing guru who fell in love with founders Anthony Ackil and Jon Olinto's concept of offering "real.food.fast.," as the chain's tagline touts, at a franchise convention in New York City.

"Marketing wasn't as exciting for me anymore and I had always wanted to open my own business, so I decided to take that passion and pursue this. I knew it was going to be something in food because I've always been very interested in different food concepts, whether it's in a restaurant or at a supermarket, and seeing what's going to succeed and what's going to fail, and what customer preferences are going to be," Lutz said. "I looked at 50 different concepts and this one rose to the top... there was nothing else even close."

When childhood friends Ackil and Olinto's passion for "real food," with its roots in Ackil's Uncle Faris' home cooking that was frequently served with the advice to "be good" — giving birth years later to the business' name — expanded beyond its urban Boston beginnings into the franchise world, Lutz was one of the first entrepreneurs to jump on board.

With successful locations in Wynnwood, Marlton and Mount Laurel in operation, Lutz knew that b.good would be a top-notch fit for the developing outdoor lifestyle shopping center in King of Prussia, where it was one of the first restaurants to make its debut this past summer.

"Business has been strong and I really had a lot of confidence in the concept and believing that people would really enjoy it," Lutz said. "When I think about the Philly market, King of Prussia is the top destination for great food. It's such a high growth area right now and everything seemed to be based at the mall, so it's great to see something in addition to the mall now."

Lutz described the quick service eatery as being in between fast food and an upscale dining experience.

“From a price point we’re going to cost a little more than going to Chick-fil-A. Our burgers are \$7.49, but you’re getting grass-fed Angus beef that is locally sourced and ground in our kitchen every day. It’s really the freshest way to do burgers.”

Although by industry standards b.good may fall into the “better burger” division, the menu goes well beyond burgers — which are available in such variations as the Cousin Oliver (lettuce, tomato, onions and chef Tony’s homemade pickles) and the West-Side (avocado, cilantro, fresh salsa, chipotle puree, lime) — by offering grilled chicken sandwiches, kale and grain bowls, veggie burgers, hand-cut fries, seasonal salads, smoothies and shakes.

Customers who are avoiding both sugary beverages and artificial sweeteners may be happy to know that the fountain diet soda is sweetened with all natural stevia, courtesy of New Hope Premium Fountain.

“We really try to cater to a lot of dietary needs, like nut and dairy allergies, and have gluten-free items,” noted Lutz, who uses farms and suppliers located within 110 miles of her restaurants, such as Philadelphia-based Wild Flour Bakery, an Upper Merion Farmers’ Market staple, which makes the popular, award-winning challah burger rolls.

“We get our corn and other produce from wherever it is freshest, whether it’s Lancaster County or New Jersey,” Lutz explained. “Corporate will help identify farms and then approve it from a quality standpoint, but it’s up to me to find the local sources, which is really nice because it enables us to control some of the supply.”

With a staff of around 25 employees, Lutz said she expects to be hiring additional workers.

“Most of the applicants came from Philadelphia, but I would love to hire more local people,” she noted.

B.good at King of Prussia Town Center, 150 Main St., King of Prussia, is open 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday.