



Founder Loc Le ... Set to launch three more restaurants in Omaha and Lincoln.

## Jimmy's Egg restaurant opens in market with West Omaha location

by Michelle Leach

Loc Le keeps finding himself back in Omaha — and in some respects the restaurateur boasting several concepts and nearly 50 stores nationwide never left. This time around, Le is debuting regional chain Jimmy's Egg in the metro — and is set to launch at least three more stores and completely new food concepts in both Omaha and Lincoln.

Le said he first had the desire to open a restaurant in Omaha five or six years ago while he was in town for his nephew's wedding and was looking for a place to eat breakfast.

Now, he is spreading the Oklahoma City-based breakfast and lunch creation — which touts fresh, made-to-order meals — to Omaha. But for Le the undertaking, represented by its first area location near 168th and Maple, is about more than exposing Omahans to a wider breakfast se-

lection; it's about giving back to what was the Vietnamese refugee's first home in his new country.

Le's background is the stuff of now legendary stories. After escaping communism during the fall of Saigon, Le and his family came to Omaha where he worked as a car mechanic at Union Pacific for three years until 1979, at which time he was transferred to Santa Fe Railroad in Oklahoma City.

The leap from railroad man to business owner wasn't much of a leap at all, as Le's father was a successful businessman in Vietnam. The family built substantial wealth in their native country, but had to start from scratch when they left for America.

The first Jimmy's Egg location, a 50-seater, made its debut in Oklahoma City on North May Avenue. This restaurant has served as a springboard — prompting the launch of 14 such stores in Oklahoma City and a local brand, according to Le.

In addition to its presence in Oklahoma's biggest metro area, Le said there are more than 48 franchise locations scattered throughout the Midwest, including sizable metro areas like Dallas, Houston and Wichita, Kan.

"We own a lot of restaurants besides Jimmy's Egg," Le said, noting other concepts — like a restaurant chain that specializes in chicken meals.

The entrepreneur has already identified a second Omaha location near 80th and Dodge, and he said a third location in Lincoln could be home to a totally new concept for the market, though he's not sure yet of what this concept will be.

Le does perceive Omaha as a growing market — strong enough to sustain a completely new type of restaurant offering.

"We'd like to set up a base [in Omaha] where we could set up different types of restaurants," he said.

These would be a mix of different types, including those establishments considered "high-end." A specific type of restaurant Le is considering is an up-market Mexican concept.

"This is an under-exploited market," Le explained.

The 80th and Dodge Jimmy's Egg location is slated to open in February, bringing with it 20 to 25 employees. He said this is the standard head count at each Jimmy's Egg restaurant, and even the wait staff is known to stick around.

Earlier this year, Le told regional food industry trade Sunbelt Foodservice that Jimmy's Egg employees average 10 years with the business, and that it's not unusual for wait staff to remain with the company for upwards of 20 years.

To assure each new store gets off to a good start, Le said six key employees travel to the new store, and help with the planning for three weeks.

Another key to cracking the challenging restaurant business for Jimmy's Egg has been a consistent menu, not swayed by trends of gimmicks, according to Le. He said everything from biscuits and bread is made fresh, and gravy is seasoned by hand. Le said another distinction with regard to product is its wide range of omelets — more than 100 options are available for those who enjoy this particular breakfast staple.



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