

New shop to bring cheeses, meats to vacant storefront

Written by CAROL POMEDAY

Wednesday, 24 August 2011 18:58

Say Cheese to move into former McDonald's site on Royal Avenue

Say Cheese is what Paul Walsh hopes people will be saying soon about his new business venture in the Village of Belgium.

Walsh is opening a cheese store, named Say Cheese, in the Royal Avenue Market complex in space vacated by McDonald's Restaurant when it moved last year to How-Dea Mini Mart.

The store will feature cheese from Gibbsville Cheese Co. in Gibbsville and sausage, bacon, ham and fresh-frozen meats from Miesfeld's Meats in Sheboygan.

There will also be a deli and custard or soft-serve ice cream with a variety of fruit and candy additions available.

"We want to be the home of the \$1 ice cream cone," Walsh said. "The equipment we have can make custard and soft-serve so we will switch between the two until we find out what people want."

The store will have 150 types of cheese, the majority from Gibbsville, and speciality cheeses from other Wisconsin cheesemakers, he said.

"We'll have fresh cheese curds on Tuesdays because that's when Gibbsville makes them," Walsh said. "We're hoping to have fresh cheese curds on Fridays also."

The owners of Gibbsville Cheese and Miesfeld's are excited about the Belgium location with visibility on I-43, Walsh said.

"If you're looking for an opportunity to purchase Wisconsin cheese, there isn't a cheese store north of Milwaukee off I-43," Walsh noted. "We're in the heartland of the dairy industry and not to have our product along the highway is foolish."

Say Cheese will be a true outlet store experience with lower prices than grocery stores and other retail outlets, he said, but it won't be filled with trinkets like many cheese stores.

With grocery stores focusing on their own and national cheese brands, Walsh said, Wisconsin cheesemakers are looking for high-visibility outlets for their products.

He hopes to fill that need with the Belgium store.

"My goal is to have three cheese stores, starting with the Belgium store," said Walsh, who lives in Kiel.

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“I grew up on a dairy farm in Sheboygan Falls and have roots in Oostburg. I have a deep love for dairy farmers and I know the area. It’s a great place.”

Walsh said Royal Avenue Market is getting numerous inquiries about his store.

“Whenever I’m in town, I get people telling me they can’t wait for the store to open,” he said. “That shows me we made the right decision.”

Walsh said he expects the cheese outlet to open in late September. Coolers are scheduled to arrive shortly after Labor Day.

The village’s Plan Commission uananimously approved large, lighted signs for the store on Tuesday.