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Del Taco debuts new restaurant design

New prototype and logo part of brand image update

August 8, 2011 | By [Lisa Jennings](#)

Editor's Note: A previous version of this story has been updated to include new information about the number of Del Taco locations opened this year.

Del Taco is unveiling a new prototype restaurant design and logo this week that aims to evolve its brand image, the quick-service operator said Monday.

A new restaurant in McKinney, Texas, scheduled to open Wednesday, will be the first to feature the new design both inside and out. The company has been testing elements of it at various stores since last fall.

John Cappasola, chief brand officer for the Lake Forest, Calif.-based Del Taco, said the goal was to "evolve the brand without losing sight of what brought us here."

A quick-service hybrid offering both a full Mexican menu and burgers and fries, Del Taco is positioned as a value player. With the new design, the chain aims to emphasize certain brand attributes that contribute to the value message, such as quality and freshness, Cappasola said.

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For instance, interior designs include wall phrases such as “chicken grilled here,” “cheddar hand-grated here,” and “beans slow cooked here.”

Cappasola said Del Taco’s loyal fans are aware of the “made-to-order-fresh” emphasis, but there is not broad awareness of it.

“We simply need to work harder at getting credit for what we already do for our customers every day,” he said.

In addition to a new color scheme, new flooring and seating options, and the updated logo, the new design also includes the test of a salsa bar, which is a first for Del Taco.

The salsa bar will feature two types of salsa in addition to signature sauces such as the Del Inferno, Del Scorcho and mild sauce.

Outside, the design aims to make Del Taco stand out on the street, Cappasola said.

The new prototype has a curved roof that evokes the new logo’s rolling hills, he said.

At around 2,100 to 2,200 square feet, the new design also offers more flexibility in location. Del Taco has traditionally sought standalone real estate opportunities, but the new design will fit end-cap locations with a drive thru, for example.

Down the road, Del Taco may also look at a smaller, non-traditional format to expand its “menu of venue” options.

Last year, Del Taco reworked its building design to reduce costs by about 30 percent. The new prototype keeps build-out costs to the same reduced level, Cappasola said.

So far, guest reaction to the various elements of the new design has been positive, but it’s too soon to estimate the impact on the whole new design on sales, he said.

With 525 units, about 55 percent of which are company owned, Del Taco has seen positive sales trends over the past 18 months, Cappasola said.

The chain has added seven locations so far this year, five franchise and two company-owned, with another seven to eight planned before the end of the year, including five franchise and two or three company units.

The new prototype design was developed by San Francisco-based brand strategy and design firm Tesser Inc.

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