

Staff being trained in Toronto

P.F. Chang's China Bistro Montreal countdown is on

By Mike Cohen
The Suburban

TORONTO- The countdown is on for the long awaited debut of the P.F. Chang's China Bistro (www.pfchangs.com) restaurant chain in Montreal, with franchises set to open at the Blue Bonnets plaza in April and at Carrefour Laval in June.

Montrealer Michael Aronovici, the president and owner of Interaction Restaurants Group Inc, a restaurant management and holding company that has been operating in the industry for over 20 years, opened the first Canadian P.F. Chang's in Toronto last summer at Cadillac Fairview's newly redeveloped Shops at Don Mills. The first Montreal locale at the Smartcentre Shopping Centre adjacent to the former Blue Bonnets - presently the home of Walmart and Baton Rouge - is under construction and will open on April 15. Meanwhile, Carrefour Laval will be next on June 17, located next to Crate & Barrel and The Keg.

The chain intends to expand throughout Canada. P.F. Chang's has more than 200

restaurants in the United States and over 18 internationally. The menu offers cuisine inspired from five regions of China (Mongolian, Sichuan, Beijing, Shanghai and Hunan) along with unique desserts and signature drinks while also delivering impeccable service. The restaurant caters to different dietary and cultural needs, offering also a vast selection of gluten free and vegetarian dishes.

Toronto has become the training ground for Montreal. Operating partner for the Blue Bonnets location Louie Mercuri and three of his managers have rented a house and spent the past several months on site in order to learn the P.F. Chang's system inside out. They will all be in Montreal for the spring opening. Five chefs are on site at the chain's California headquarters.

"It has been a great experience," says Martin Picard, who will be one of the managers for the Blue Bonnets location. Besides Mercuri, he has been joined in Toronto by Julie Daunais and Emile Haykal. Culinary partner Kristijan Konjevic and sous chefs Steven Hawking, Eric Bertrand Delaunay, and Robert Diblasio are presently training in California.

The Suburban visited the Toronto location on a Tuesday evening and it was filled to capacity. Like all other locales, this one combines influences of Chinese and American cultures. A panoramic, hand-painted mural depicting 12th century China is visible from the main dining room and commands attention as the restaurant's centerpiece, while several terracotta warriors stand guard. The menu features a much appreciated calorie count next to each item, with staples such as won ton and egg drop soups, the signature chicken lettuce wraps, Mongolian beef, crispy honey shrimp and double pan-fried noodles.

Prior to the recent Toronto debut, Albany, New York had the closest P.F. Chang's franchise at the popular Colonie Center next door



Future Montreal P.F. Chang's manager Martin Picard with his Toronto counterpart Connor Wolff.

to the Regal Cinemas stadium seating venue. Operating Partner Bethany Potter says she sees many Montrealers, who stop over in Albany to do some shopping or on the way to or back from the New York City area or beyond. It is also not a long drive if you are vacationing in Lake George or Saratoga.

Please see this Friday's Suburban Magazine for a more detailed feature about the famous chain. ■

Being slightly overweight is not such a bad thing



Bernard Mendelman
Write Where I Belong

"I'm going on a diet and I'm going to shed a few kilos."

It's the first resolution I make every New Year's Eve and it's the first one I break. This year I didn't even have to wait to succumb until I was at an all you can eat buffet restaurant or attending an affair where you walked from food station to food station loading your plate up with succulent hors d'oeuvres.

I broke my diet on Jan. 13, when I heard about a new study which shows that being overweight or even mildly obese, as measured by body mass index, doesn't make you more likely to die than a person of normal weight. It really makes you slightly less likely to die. Researchers at the National Center for Health Statistics, part of the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention examined the results of 97 cases. Most of the studies were less than 10 years old. They included almost three million adults from around the world, including the United States, Canada, China, Taiwan, Brazil, India and Mexico. They found that people who are considered overweight or slightly obese were five to six percent less likely to die from all causes than people of normal weight. The report says small amounts of excess fat may provide needed energy reserves to fight off certain illnesses and offer beneficial effects for recovering from some types of traumatic injuries. The study was also firm in saying that folks shouldn't pack on the pounds in hopes to be a little healthier. They reiterated that their study was simply documenting statistical and medical findings. Nevertheless, that was good news for paunchy guys like me. Reading this report in a newspaper while lunching at a deli, I immediately sprung into action, called back my waitress and exclaimed, "Change that order of a lean smoked meat sandwich to one of medium on the fat side and

add a juicy kamatzel to go with it."

This month there was also good news for gals who were a bit on the zaftig side. Israel passed a law banning models that were too skinny. The law requires models to prove they've held a Body Max Index of at least 18.5 for three months before a fashion shoot or show. A BMI of 25-29 is considered overweight, while a BMI of 18 -24.9 is considered normal weight. For example, a model who is 5'8" tall can weigh no less than 119 pounds. The law also requires those who retouch a model's photo so she looks even slimmer must indicate that they have manipulated those images.

Carrying a few extra pounds could actually someday save your life.

Fat protects you against injury. Many elderly people die from falls. Chubbier people have more padding to protect their bones should they take a tumble, thus lowering the risk of a serious fracture. Doctors also pay more attention to heavier patients for disease symptoms or risk factors, treating these patients more aggressively, thereby reducing death threats. By prescribing drugs that reduce cholesterol and blood pressure, they have added extra years to overweight people. Thin people are cold all the time and have purple lips from shivering, but those who have a few extra pounds stay warmer in frigid weather and in addition save a few bucks on their heating bills. Dogs and babies snuggle up to those of us who are a little overweight because we're soft and warm. Bony people are not huggable, neither are wrinkled skinny women. Fat seems to hide the wrinkles on women. If you go a hunger strike, like Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence did, you can live of your fat for a long time. You can be 30 pounds overweight and if you lose just five, everyone will complement you how good you look.

Doctors and nutrition experts have been telling us for years that fat kills us. With this new study, is there a fat chance that they could have been wrong?

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POINTS FROM THE PRO'S



ADVERTISING FEATURE

Yoga and meditation for heart health

Yoga and meditation, being a 5,000 year old tradition, is now well respected and regarded in the Western world as a holistic approach to health and wellness. Evidence shows stress contributes to the etiology of heart disease, cancer, stroke and other chronic conditions and diseases. As stress is implicated in numerous diseases, it is a priority to include a focus on stress management and reduction of negative emotional states.

Yoga and meditation build awareness. The more aware you are, the easier it is to break free of destructive emotions like anger or hostility. Thus, it increases your ability to step back from the drama of your own life and to remain steady while facing life's situations.

According to the Canadian and American Heart Foundation, coronary heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in Canada and the United States. Stress is considered a major contributing factor in heart disease

and both yoga and meditation are widely known for their ability to reduce stress and promote a calm relaxed state.

Breathing has a strong influence on heart rhythm through the inner connections in the central nervous system. Slow deep breathing, which is practiced in yoga and meditation, slows the heart rate, regulates the heart rhythm, oxygenates the blood and induces a feeling of calm and well-being.

Owing to its many positive effects, direct and indirect, on the cardiovascular system, yoga assumes a pivotal role in heart care.

Starting a yoga and meditation practice is the first step to taking your state of health into your own hands.

Yoga Gym is located at 5475 Pare Street. For more information call Joanne Nowa at 514-928-1981 or consult www.yogagymmontreal.ca

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Famous P.F. Chang's China Bistro coming to Carrefour Laval

By Mike Cohen
The Suburban

The already restaurant rich City of Laval will soon be getting another big name dining establishment to join the ranks of Elixor, Baton Rouge, Portovino and Le Keg. On June 17 the P.F. Chang's China Bistro (www.pfchangs.com) restaurant chain will open at the Carrefour Laval.

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"Many Canadians have expressed to us, both in person and over social media, how much they love P.F. Chang's, and wished it was closer to home," explains Aronovici. "Given this existing fan base, a commitment to fresh, Chinese-fusion flavour combinations in a distinctive dining setting, we have no doubt that this bistro experience will resonate with Canada's sophisticated dining population." ■



AVOID A DISASTER

For most people, the purchase of a home is a lifetime investment. So are the maintenance costs. Like most pro-active people, you want to protect your investment the best way possible.

HOW?

By acting in a **PREVENTIVE** manner. Why wait for a misfortune to happen and then find yourself uttering the famous "I should have. . ."

In what state are your drains & sewer?

It is highly possible that your drainpipes have never been inspected. Did you know that tree roots and other residue can block them and cause a monster **flood** in your basement and that you can lose a lot of money even if you are insured? More so, there are no insurance policies that cover the *discomfort of a flood, the travel souvenirs, and the family pictures.*

Are the **backup** valves functioning properly? How can you know, if they have never been inspected. They may be defective, rusted or simply missing. They can be the source of an upcoming tragedy. A more or less significant rainstorm can cause a serious flood.

What is the role and importance of a French drain?

The French drain, when blocked, can cause considerable damage to your building structure. Nevertheless, very few people take the precaution of having it inspected.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Ice that remains on your house and garage roof is a shifty enemy.

The weight of the ice can not only shorten the lifetime of your roof, but also seriously affect the structure of your home if not removed. Have you ever thought of **STEAM DE-ICING**, which has been adapted to private residences, multi-dwellings (condos and apartments), as well as commercial and industrial buildings?

How well do you know your home insurance policy clauses?

Do you believe it is important to know exactly what your insurance policy covers in case of **DISASTER**? What can you claim and to what maximum amount? What is the amount of the deductible you will need to pay in case of a disaster? The time may have come to inquire to your respective insurance agent or broker.

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- Aiviq (Walrus's Glacier)
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