



Check this: Burger biz hits Walmart

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Tampa-based fast-food chain Checkers Drive-In Restaurants, known for double drive-thru locations with no interior seats, is expanding without a core piece of its business model, not to mention its name.

That would be the car.

The chain, in fact, recently signed a deal with Twin Towers [Trading Site](#) Management to open and manage three Checkers locations, sans drive-thru, in Walmarts. Two of those locations, to open later this month, will be in North Carolina, the firm says. The third, scheduled for early 2014, will be in Mississippi. Checkers, moreover, recently opened other locations in Super Walmarts, one in Oldsmar and another in Haymarket, Va. Those locations are separate from the Twin Towers deal, Checkers Vice President of Franchise Development Jennifer Durham says.

“It’s an exciting growth opportunity because there’s a great amount of similarity between the customers,” Durham tells Coffee Talk. “(Walmart’s) consumers and ours are both hard-working and value oriented.”

Twin Towers, according to a release, has brought food services to 1,850 Walmart stores nationwide since 2005. The company, with a main office in New Jersey and a Florida headquarters in Manatee County, has worked with Subway, Sonic and Papa John’s, among other national brands. “The wonderful thing about partnering with Walmart,” Twin Towers Vice President George Leviton says in a release, “is that you’re guaranteed pedestrian traffic of 65,000 and above.”

The firm is so confident in the Checkers-Walmart marriage that it retained the rights to the three locations — it typically leases the space to franchisees. Leviton says Twin Towers wants “to demonstrate to future franchisees around the country that opening Checkers inside Walmart is a profitable and exciting opportunity.”

Durham says Checkers, with nearly 800 locations nationwide, and more than 140 in Florida, seeks to grow its franchise base beyond the Walmart deal with Twin Towers. Checkers, owned by New York-based Wellspring Capital, which bought it in 2006 for about \$188 million in a public-to-private deal, is offering some incentives to prospective franchisees, including a royalty reduction program.

Checkers, adds Durham, also provides perspective franchisees with a refined clarity of purpose — an important element in the competitive fast-food industry. That mission centers on value-based food and drinks. “We really understand our guests,” Durham says. “A healthy focus is on if you only have \$5 in your pocket, you won’t leave here unsatisfied.”

- See more at: <http://www.businessobserverfl.com/section/detail/thursdays-cup-check-this-burger-biz-hits-walmart/#sthash.XalcCVTU.dpuf>