

# Nation's Restaurant News



million deal in October.

## **BurgerFi, OPES agree to \$100M deal that takes brand public** 125-unit fast-casual concept expects to close agreement in October Ron Ruggless | Jun 30, 2020

BurgerFi International LLC and OPES Acquisition Corp. have entered into a \$100 million deal that will take the better-burger brand to the public markets, the companies said Tuesday.

Miami-based OPES and Palm Beach, Fla.-based BurgerFi, which has about 125 units, expect the deal, announced earlier in June, to close in October and that the combined company, BurgerFi International Inc., will trade on the Nasdaq exchanged with the ticker symbol BFI.

“The company presents a tremendous investment opportunity for OPES in what we believe will be a very attractive public company,” said Ophir Sternberg, chairman and CEO of OPES as well as founder and CEO of Lionheart Capital, in an investor call Tuesday.

Charlie Guzzetta, BurgerFi president, said the brand has come a long way since its first location in 2011 at Lauderdale-by-the-Sea, Fla. And the next phase of growth will tap into the brand’s points of difference, such

as digital menu boards, diverse menu, vegetarian and vegan offerings and customization, he said.

Besides traditional expansion, Guzzetta said BurgerFi is targeting non-traditional venues for growth, including airports, transportation hubs, travel plazas, higher-education campuses, sporting venues and military bases.

“There is significant untapped potential that exists in these premier non-traditional venues,” Guzzetta said, “and we have every intention of capitalizing on these opportunities.” The company has strategic partnerships with on-site giants like Aramark and HMS Host for some such venues, with a location at Lauderdale-Hollywood airport in Florida that has produced more than \$3 million in annual sales.

BurgerFi also has an agreement with the U.S. Air Force to open units on bases domestically and abroad.

The company has also worked with REEF Technology to offer delivery-only BurgerFi locations, Guzzetta said. “Tapping into these ghost kitchens through our partnership with REEF will allow us to use existing infrastructure to create new growth opportunities while building brand recognition and integrity,” he said.

Guzzetta said the company remains committed to having 25 delivery-only kitchens operating by the end of 2021 with such new markets as Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Nashville, Minneapolis, Seattle and other major cities.

Bryan McGuire, BurgerFi’s chief financial officer, said the brand expects to expand in its home state of Florida in 2021 and the Southeast, Mid-Atlanta and Eastern Seaboard in 2022 and 2023.

McGuire said the company forecasts revenues of \$31 million in 2020 and to \$59 million in 2021 with expansion plans.

According to Nation’s Restaurant News’ Top 200 research, BurgerFi’s U.S. systemwide sales were \$143.6 million for the 2019 fiscal year ended in December, up 6.1% from \$135.3 million in the preceding year.

The company had 117 domestic units in 2019, including 20 company-owned and 97 franchised. That was up 8.3% from 108 domestic units in 2018.