

New Lynn burger spot putting on the fixings

By Thor Jourgensen / The Daily Item | Posted: Tuesday, February 10, 2015 3:00 am

LYNN — Richard F. Sullivan is ready to set Lynn on fire with his new burger restaurant scheduled to open in less than a month, and to prove his point he made sure R.F. O’Sullivan’s includes a fireplace encased in a window where Sutton Street meets Central Avenue.

“I’ve always loved two-sided fireplaces, so I put one in here,” he said.

Sullivan, a Swampscott resident, has pegged the end of this month or early March as the opening date for his new restaurant. With its marine mahogany exterior walls varnished to a golden-red glow and the restaurant’s interior almost finished, Sullivan is looking forward to becoming the city’s latest culinary addition.

“It’s a great location. I hear people say Lynn is moving, and I have the same feeling about the city,” he said.

With a capacity of 88 customers, R.F. O’Sullivan’s will offer 30 to 40 different types of burgers, as well as custom-made burgers, with the menu taking a cue from Sullivan’s Somerville eatery — R.F. O’Sullivan and Son. He also plans to feature 50 to 60 “craft” beers.

Sullivan’s Somerville restaurant was formerly called O. Henry’s. Sullivan started working there as a bartender in 1975, building on the restaurant skills he learned growing up on Long Island in New York. He bought the O. Henry property in 1991 at a time when people were telling him that a business investment in now-popular Somerville was “crazy.”

“I made the best burger. I made sure the meat was fresh and that quality and consistency were key,” he said.

The same hunch that led him to invest in Somerville prompted Sullivan last year to offer Lynn city officials a bid to revitalize 143 Central Ave., the site of a former bar that became city property in a 2013 tax taking.

“It was an intense process — they went through my whole history,” Sullivan said.



R.F. O'Sullivan's

Richard F. Sullivan shows off the two-sided fireplace in his new burger restaurant, R.F. O’Sullivan’s, on Central Avenue in Lynn that is scheduled to open in less than a month.

He paid \$150,000 for the building and began renovation work last year with Nahant-based JP Construction undertaking the exterior wood paneling and interior work that included a marble slab floor and custom-built bar and booth tables.

The building's former bar rail will be part of R.F. O'Sullivan's new 20-seat bar. Tin ceiling panels Sullivan found in the building's basement became the template for the pub's ceiling. The natural gas-powered fireplace built into stone-lined wall could become R.F. O'Sullivan's signature feature, but Sullivan does not think it will eclipse the popularity of his burgers.

With names like "Black Jack" and "Black and Blue," the burgers are served with hand-cut fries, with an average entree costing about \$10, Sullivan said. O'Sullivan's will be open seven days a week.

"The North Shore needs a pub style burger specialty atmosphere," he said. (His favorite burger is "raw as can be" slathered with coleslaw atop of a burnt bun.)

Sullivan has hired 15 employees to work in his new restaurant and plans to have his son, Richard II, help manage the Lynn establishment upon graduation from Merrimack College next year. His daughter, Sinead, will manage the Somerville restaurant, where she is currently assistant manager.

Sullivan said R.F. O'Sullivan and Son in Somerville currently has an hour-and-a-half wait for seatings, and North Shore customers can't wait to bite into a burger in the Lynn restaurant. They are bound to run into him on Central Avenue.

"I'll be here a lot," he said.

Economic Development and Industrial Corporation Executive Director James Cowdell said when Sullivan approached city officials about opening a Lynn restaurant, "we basically rolled out the red carpet."

"We're very excited: They've been successful in Somerville and they will be successful in Lynn," he said.

Sullivan praised city officials and his new neighbors with welcoming him to Lynn. He said Asian Gardens owner Ming Tang gave him a gold cat statue for good luck. It sits on a shelf next to R.F. O'Sullivan's bar.

"It was nice of her to think of me and welcome me to the neighborhood," Sullivan said.