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Yogen Früz coming to upstate cities

By **Traci Gregory**

Journal Staff

ROCHESTER — It's Rochester first, then the rest of upstate New York.

That's the plan George Traikos and his wife and business partner, Katia Traikos, have as the region's master franchisees for Yogen Früz, a Canada-based

chain of frozen yogurt shops. The couple own YF of Upstate New York, Inc.

"My plans are to open 100 stores within the next five to six years," George Traikos says. But he'll start smaller. "We want to have, by next summer, five to six stores."

His target communities are Rochester, where he wants

to open 15 stores eventually, Syracuse, and Buffalo. Once his stores there are established, then he'll branch out through the 53 counties that are part of his exclusive territory. The territory spans everything north of the metro New York City and Westchester County area.

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YOGURT: *First New York location opens today*

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Traikos also owns the Traikos Real Estate Group (www.traikos.us), a development company in South Florida. His projects include numerous development projects in Miami-Dade, Fla., and the redevelopment of the Rochester Academy Building.

"We were looking to do something in retail," he says of his business ventures. He read about Yogen Früz (www.yogenFrüz.com), which is owned by CoolBrands International, Inc. (www.coolbrandsinc.com) (TSX: COB), in *BusinessWeek* in March, and says he was intrigued by the concept.

Being of Greek heritage, Traikos says he's well aware of the health benefits of yogurt and likes that Yogen Früz contains 100 percent yogurt. Many frozen yogurt products, he says, do not contain all yogurt and don't preserve the health benefits of yogurt.

Traikos decided to meet with Yogen Früz officials and investigate franchise options as the Canadian company looks to expand into the United States.

"We liked them a lot and love the product," Traikos says.

His first location, in Eastview Mall in Rochester opens Nov. 28, he says.

The store will employ anywhere from one to seven people depending on sales, he says. He declined to provide sales projections.

A typical Yogen Früz location is in a mall — but not in the food court —

and averages 400 to 600 square feet. Traikos is spending between \$180,000 and \$200,000, including the \$25,000 franchise fee, to open his Rochester location. Costs can range as high as \$450,000, he says, depending on the market and real-estate options.

As part of his franchise-development plan, Traikos says he'll target the "better malls" in communities across Upstate before moving to secondary malls and shopping centers.

Yogen Früz, headquartered in Markham, Ontario, has approximately 246 Canadian franchises and 381 foreign franchises. U.S. locations are open in Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, with franchises pending in New York, Hawaii, Virginia, Maryland, Georgia, Florida, and Texas.

Parent company, CoolBrands International (www.coolbrandsinc.com), reported \$170,000 in net income for the fiscal third quarter of 2008 ending May 31 and \$1.7 million for the year-to-date — the most recent financial information available.

Brothers Michael and Aaron Serruya were 19 and 20 when they started their first Yogen Früz store in 1986 in Toronto. They began franchising later that year.

The company also owns I Can't Believe It's Yogurt!, Bresler's Ice Cream and Yogurt, Swensen's Ice Cream, and Java Coast Fine Coffees. □

Contact **Gregory** at tgregory@cnybj.com