

Cary Attar buys cafes, plans gourmet takeout

By DAI HUNYH Copyright Houston Chronicle 2008

Back in the day, Cary Attar was the highest-paid delivery boy in Houston. He was the general manager of Central Market, but his sideline job was as the store's delivery boy.

"I was delivering food to neighbors in The Woodlands," said the Lebanese-Hungarian descendant.

Now fast-forward. The whole experience gave him an idea - to open a gourmet food store, a hybrid of New York's Dean & DeLuca and Eatzi's, the Dallas-based bakery and gourmet-takeout market whose Galleria-area location abruptly closed in November 2006.

"I saw a need for something like this in The Woodlands," Attar said. "So I jumped in with both feet."

Named in honor of son Hudson's great-great-great-grandparents, Hubbell & Hudson Bistro & Market is slated to open in October. In the meantime, Attar has his hands full, having recently purchased the Black Walnut cafes in Houston, The Woodlands and Sugar Land from owner George Pallota.

"Black Walnut Cafe and Hubbell & Hudson will be separate entities," Attar said. "However, we might sell an (H&H) brand of pancake mixes and other packaged foods at Black Walnut Cafe. I used to go to the Black Walnut all the time and loved the food there. It's scratch cookery, so there really isn't much (that needs changing) other than tweaking some existing items and implementing a new breakfast menu. Our executive chef has created a wonderful cayenne-citrus eggs Benedict, and french toast made with brioche and compound butter."

Attar hired Edel Goncalves to oversee the menu at Black Walnut and Hubbell & Hudson. Goncalves was executive chef at Central Market after leaving Rouge.

The 30,000-square-foot Hubbell & Hudson is located at 24 Waterway, near Lake Robbins. Along with a bakery (former Eatzi's corporate pastry chef Patrick Rebiere is at the helm), the gourmet store will feature specialty packaged foods from around the world.

Attar also founded Fox & Obel, Chicago's premier gourmet market.