

LOCAL DISCOVERY | ALGONQUIN

IN THE GREEN

Algonquin resident finds fresh niche in soup and salad market

BY JULIE MULLEN
For The Courier News

Despite reports that Americans are becoming increasingly overweight from "super-sizing" their fast-food meals, a portion of consumers seem to be growing more conscious of the number of calories, fat and preservatives they eat.

Those seeking fresh, preservative-free foods have spawned more restaurants that tout fresh cooking.

Now, Algonquin residents have yet another option for fast, albeit healthier, dining.

DicedFRESH at 132 S. Randall Road, in front of Joe Caputo and Sons Fruit Market, recently opened its doors, offering a vast variety of fresh soups and salads to its customers who can eat on the premises or take their goods to go.

The choices are endless to keep things from getting boring, said owner Terry Ramsett.

For salads, customers choose from four kinds of lettuce and from as many of the 59 toppings as they want for just \$6.99. There are 21 dressing options, too. Employees behind the counter put it all together for guests.

Also on the menu are sandwich wraps, two types of chili and four soup varieties each day. There's even a baked potato bar for those not worried



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL SMART | Staff Photographer

Rachel Strong-Ramsett prepares a salad at Algonquin's DicedFRESH, which she co-owns with her husband, Terry.

about carbs. All entrees, including the soup and salad combo, run \$6 to \$8.

Ramsett, who previously owned a share of Deli Time — a Chicago-based food service chain catering to corporations — said he had been

churning in his mind the idea for a soup and salad bar for quite some time.

Living in Algonquin, there was no better place to make the concept a reality than the bustling Randall Road corridor.

"Randall Road sees 50,000 cars a day," Ramsett said. "Plus, we're located at the corner of Algonquin and Randall roads. You can't get better than that."

“It is a lot at once, but I believe that it's the way God meant it to be.”

Terry Ramsett, owner

As if an owner of a new business isn't busy enough, Ramsett has his hands in two places at the same time. But he didn't quite plan it that way.

While dicedFRESH opened a little later than Ramsett expected, his other new Algonquin business, Double Jacks Sports and Burger Bar, is opening sooner than planned — on Thursday.

The bar and grill, which Ramsett co-owns with Joe Condo, will be just south of the Algonquin Commons shopping mall in the new Esplanade Center.

"It is a lot at once, but I believe that it's the way God meant it to be," he said.

Rather than feel overwhelmed, Ramsett — who owns dicedFRESH with his wife, Rachel Strong-Ramsett

— is looking to perhaps develop more of his fresh-looking green and yellow eateries.

"I fully intend on building this into a chain," Ramsett said. "I've already had a customer who wanted to buy a franchise."

Despite the speed at which he plans to grow, Ramsett's concept was well-studied. After researching other fast-food places that sell salads, Ramsett discovered that a large amount of sales were attributed to the fresh menu items that are becoming more and more popular.

"I read a lot and found out that fast-food places were selling a lot of salads, and that the sub places selling salads had the same sales increase," Ramsett said. "I thought, 'This has to be a niche in itself.'"



DicedFRESH offers a healthy alternative to fast food with soups, salads and wraps.

DicedFRESH

■ **Address:** 132 S. Randall Road, Algonquin

■ **Phone:** (847) 458-SOUP (7687)

■ **Owners:** Terry Ramsett and Rachel Strong-Ramsett

■ **Business:** Quick-serve restaurant featuring soup and salad

■ **Hours:** 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday; 11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Sunday