

Schussler has more themed menus in store

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The man who brought a rain forest jungle to diners at the Mall of America says he has a deal in place to launch a slew of themed restaurants, thanks to a recent partner he hired.



If the deal holds together it would be the first major launch in years for Steve Schussler, the businessman who launched the Rainforest Cafe restaurant chain before selling it to Houston-based Landry's restaurants in 2000.

He said Friday that he's hired Chicago-based Levy Restaurants to develop food and menus for the themed restaurants he hopes to open in coming years. The deal, which includes previously announced development partner RED Development, of Kansas City, Mo., calls for 34 restaurant openings over the next 5½ years, using ideas that Schussler developed at his "laboratory," the Golden Valley warehouse he filled with Chinese artifacts, Harley-Davidson motorcycles, robotic dinosaurs and other set pieces for his restaurant ideas.

The partnership so far has plans to open two restaurants next year in Kansas City, Kan., and three more the next year in Reno, Nev., he said.

He added that negotiations continue with the Mall of America for a new restaurant he hopes to open there, a barbecue place called American Roadhouse.

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