



It's hot 500 Degrees to be exact. Now burger joint laid out by owners of Rouge. P3

## Rouge duo says 500 Degrees is red hot

PETER VAN ALLEN  
STAFF WRITER

The owners of the restaurant Rouge have opened a second eatery — this time with burgers — at the forefront.

500 Degrees, which opened March 23 at 1504 Sansom St., is just 1,100 square feet and features limited indoor seating. It will specialize in burgers, french fries and shakes — prepared and sold in a room the size of a few office cubicles.

The idea for the restaurant started at a Rittenhouse Row Festival last spring. Rouge had a booth selling a smaller version of its signature burger.

"It was a home run. It was surprising. We sold 400 burgers in one day, in a couple of hours, really. The line was flabbergasting. I was shocked. [Metro Commercial Real Estate President] Steve Gartner was there. He said, 'You should be opening a burger joint.' That was one year ago," said Rob Wasserman, who owns both Rouge and 500 Degrees with his wife Maggie.

Gartner said this week he was convinced the "mini-versions of the Rouge burgers" warranted their own place.

"And then we went on a search for the ideal spot," he said.

It's been two years since the Wassermans threw themselves into the restaurant business, buying the then-insolvent Rouge, which was started and had been run by Maggie's father, restaurateur Neil Stein.

While the Wassermans wouldn't discuss specifics, they said the subsequent success of Rouge enabled them to get bank financing for the second restaurant — although their original thought was to open a Rouge-like restaurant in Washington, D.C.

"It's been good. [Rouge] gave us the flexibility to try something new," said Wasserman, adding: "We're still looking in D.C."



Rob and Maggie Wasserman have modernized the old-style burger joint concept.



from the old-style burger joint. The result is a long counter, open kitchen, modern lighting, concrete floor. At 1,100 square feet total, it is less than half the size of Rouge.

Some of the same staffers overseeing Rouge will also lead 500 Degrees, including Executive Chef Matt Zagorski and General Manager Robert Pearce.

500 Degrees is an investment "in the six figures," Wasserman said, declining to be specific. It is being financed with a combination of personal funds and bank lending.

"[Lenders] saw what we did with Rouge. We were thrown into the fire there. The market right now is interesting. Retailers are having a hard time. What has been moving is restaurants," said Wasserman. "Real estate prices have driven down."

Degrees is successful in Center City couple may consider other loca-

## PHILLY CHIT CHAT

A SOCIAL DIARY about the people, places, trends, news, arts & events

### 500 DEGREES BURGER IS NOW OPENED - The First Day at 1504 Sansom Street

TUESDAY I didn't see the really super duper long line for opening day of 500 Degrees as I had to buy my Lady Gaga tickets for the 9/14/10 show and didn't arrive until 1PM, but when I did get there the line was impressive, and it had started to rain, but that didn't stop the folks from enjoying a few of the specials on opening day of 500 Degrees, (Five Hundred Degrees or that little symbol I can't find on my keyboard.)



phillychitchat.com

Mar 23, 2010

# MAIN LINE TODAY

## Shake, Burger and Fry

BY DAWN E. WARDEN

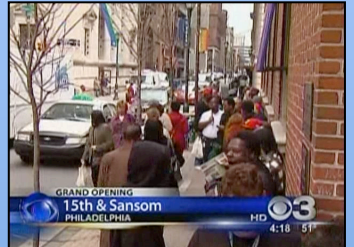


Philly is getting a new burger joint and, from all the hype, it sounds like it's going to be a good one. The best part is the concept: burgers, fries, shakes. 500 Degrees offers succinct and to-the-point comfort food that hails from another popular — albeit far more elite — burger hot spot called Rouge on Rittenhouse Square. Today, **March 24**, is the big opening day, and the first 100 people can enjoy an 11 a.m. free-burger stampede.

We burger-lovers to the west of the city are pretty upset that husband-and-wife owners Maggie and Rob Wasserman didn't come out of the gate with a suburban version. However, if the burgers live up to the media blitz, the hair-raising ride up the Schuylkill should be worth it. I'm just glad to hear that, unlike at Five Guys and Elevation Burger, the 5.5-ounce all-beef burgers here will be cooked to five different temperatures of preparation. And they're designed to outsmart typical fast-food burgers in thickness also, not just in the patty, but in the roll — using Challah rolls from Wild Flour Bakery, which apparently is set to deliver twice a day. The shakes are made with Bassetts Ice Cream, one of the first Philly eats I tried when I visited as a college junior.

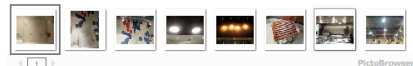
That's all I have for now on that. I can't write any more till I taste one. :) It's on the calendar for next week, though, don't you worry! But I know where YOU are going this weekend. And if you do, I want to hear all about it: [dwarden@mainlinetoday.com](mailto:dwarden@mainlinetoday.com).

Hours: 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Sunday-Thursday; 11 a.m.-3 a.m. Friday-Saturday. 1504 Sansom St., Philadelphia; (215) 568-5000. For 500 Degrees' Facebook page, [click here](#).



Quick peek at 500°  
10:54 AM posted by Drew Lazor

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When there's less than a week left before opening, restaurants tend to enter what we like to call "hyper scramble mode" — this is the time when ordinary men and women can achieve extraordinary feats of speed and strength to work out all the kinks before a grand debut. 500° (1504 Sansom St.), the quick-serve burger joint from Rouge owners Rob and Maggie Wasserman, is deep in hyper scramble, as evidenced by the flurry of hardcore activity going on inside earlier this morning.