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Caribou Coffee to Test Out Car-Friendly 'Cabin' Model

Chain Joins Chipotle, Others Trying Drive-Thru Focused Concepts



Caribou Coffee's drive-thru "cabin" planned to be 550 square feet in size and have no inside seating outside Minneapolis. Photo: City of Burnsville

The North Woods-themed coffee chain Caribou Coffee is piloting a drive-thru only concept in Minneapolis' south suburbs, a reflection of the growing trend toward on-the-go food and drink service nationwide.

Unlike Caribou's existing locations, which typically have deep, leather-bound chairs in front of a roaring fireplace, the proposed 550-square-foot "cabin" would have no interior seating, though it may have a small outdoor patio with 16 or so seats, according to a development application on file with the city of [Burnsville](#), a city of about 61,000 that sits 17 miles directly south of downtown Minneapolis.

The new Caribou Cabin in Burnsville is designed to go up on a two-acre spot at 2351 County Road 42 W., which is the primary commercial corridor in Dakota County. Another pilot store is planned for the small town of Jordan, an exurb with about 5,500 people, that is about 40 miles south and west of the Twin Cities' urban core. It would stand at 225 Triangle Lane, just off Highway 169, a major route for daily commuters.

The proposals in both cities were submitted by Eden Prairie-based Interstate Development Corp. and have been approved by their respective city governments.

Though the biggest city in its home market, Minneapolis, is [poised to ban drive-thrus altogether](#), Caribou is in good company. Many national food and drink retailers [are moving to the drive-thru only format](#), including Caribou's Seattle-based rival Starbucks as well as other [brands that were previously sit-down only](#), such as Chipotle and Panera Bread. The trend is being driven by consumers who are largely moving away from using dining rooms in national chains in favor of pick-up and delivery.

This is the second new Caribou model that is being road tested at the moment. In April, the company unveiled a new store in another Minneapolis suburb, Edina, that kept the inside seating but had a new layout and a new food and drink menu, including ice cream, according to the fast food trade publication QSR.

Caribou Coffee was founded in the Twin Cities 1992. In 2012, it was acquired by the Luxembourg-based giant JAB Holding Co. At the time, it was a national chain with more than 600 locations in 22 states as well as Washington D.C. and 10 international markets, and was second in size only to Starbucks.

It has since lost ground, both in terms of physical locations and domestic market share, and is now one of an ever-increasing number of U.S. breakfast and coffee businesses that JAB has in its stable, including Peet's Coffee, Krispy Kreme, Panera, Pret a Manger and Einstein Bagels, among others. In addition to having a large portfolio of food and drink businesses, JAB also owns a long list of household name brands in fashion, cosmetics,

cleaning products, health and hygiene like Calvin Klein, Marc Jacobs, Covergirl, Lysol, Mucinex and Durex condoms.

The parent company has recently been roiled by C-suite shake ups and a troubling past, including news reports of the complicated history of the current generation of the family that controls it, the Reimanns, who are the grandchildren of a Jewish man killed in the Holocaust and the children of the long-time head of the company, who was an ardent supporter of Adolf Hilter. The family has acknowledged the report, which it is investigating itself and plans to publicly disclose, and promised to donate millions of dollars to charity.