



Greg Jones of Xplore Serves up Answers

Description

Recently I had the opportunity to exchange emails with Hot Springs Village restaurateur, Greg Jones, about his business expansion. Mr. Jones recently signed three contracts with the Hot Springs Village Property Owners' Association and has assumed the operation of three golf course restaurants. After experiencing success with the Beehive, Xplore Lakeside and Artfully Baked and Brewed, Greg decided to double the number of his facilities. He has added Xplore Desoto, Xplore Granada and Xplore Isabella to his lineup. (My questions/statements are in black and Greg's responses are in purple.)

Interview with Greg Jones – April 10, 2021

Greg, simultaneously opening three restaurants is a huge undertaking. We appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to again share with Hot Springs Village People.

Restaurant Schedule (Hours/Days)

Are Xplore Desoto, Xplore Granada, and Xplore Isabella currently open?

We expect to be open within the week. Desoto opened for limited service April 9.

If not, what are the anticipated open dates?

All will be open pending food/drink deliveries by April 16. Limited lunch services for next 2 weeks until kitchen is fully trained.

Have you decided on hours of operation for each restaurant?

Initially, we will be open during golf course hours. We expect to open by 8 AM and expect to be open until early evening depending on the weather for the next few weeks until we can establish our regular operating hours.

Also, are all the restaurants serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner?

Initially, we will have a take-and-go breakfast at Desoto and Granada consisting of breakfast burritos, bacon/egg biscuits, mixed pastries, fruit, juices, coffee.

Isabella will be offering a full traditional hot breakfast and great smash burgers for lunch. Breakfast and lunch will be available all day.

Desoto and Granada, once fully operational, will offer various lunch meals including burgers, bratwursts, chicken sandwiches, salads, and a variety of Boars Head deli sandwiches. We will be expanding the menu over the next few weeks.

We plan to restart the Sunday brunches at Desoto and Granada as soon as practical. Desoto will have its first Sunday Brunch on Mothers Day benefiting the Ouachita Family Services Center Women's Domestic Violence Shelter.

We are currently investigating the appropriate dinner services for all 3 golf courses and have enlisted community support to help us determine what would be the correct days/hours/cuisines for the 3 locations. I expect to have those focus groups in about 2 weeks.

We will have websites for all three locations within the next couple of weeks that will allow everyone to keep up with any new developments/menus/cuisines/specials. You can also subscribe to our weekly newsletter by sending a subscription request to info@xplorelakeside.com.

Will you stagger the days your restaurants are open?

Likely they will all have similar hours. All will be open for some sort of food/drink service every day the golf course is open.

Do you have "grand openings" planned and if so, can you share with us some of what that will involve?

No plans yet, but sounds like a great idea.

Menu/Food

Have you decided on menus for each restaurant?

Only at a high level. Desoto and Granada will have similar menus and Isabella will be focused on breakfast and burgers primarily.

Will any of the venues serve vegan dishes? Paleo? Gluten-free? Home-style cooking? Keto? Thai? Vietnamese? Mediterranean?

Since we do use all fresh ingredients, we can cater to specific diets as necessary. On cuisines, we have not made any decisions on those yet but we will not compete with any other restaurants in the Village on their cuisine.

Will Saturday or Sunday brunch be offered at any of the new restaurants?

Yes, Desoto and Granada will resume Sunday brunch as soon as practical. See above answer.

Will you have a roundtable in order to obtain ideas from Villagers?

We are already recruiting members for the focus group. Have many that are already volunteering to help. You can send an email to greg@xplorelakeside.com to get on the mailing list.

Will you source local produce when possible?

We already partner with Ouachita Family Farms in Amity, AR for much of our produce at the other restaurants. I expect to expand that partnership.

Have you considered offering take and bake casseroles?

Take and bake meals would require a different type of food license. We can investigate if that would be feasible but I know the grocery stores already have a fairly wide selection.

Entertainment

If serving dinner, do you anticipate offering entertainment some evenings at any of the facilities?

Yes, I do think we would program some special events with entertainment.

If so, will this be a regular occurrence or happen more rarely?

This will depend on demand and is something to discuss with the focus groups.

Types of restaurants

Will any of the new restaurants be designated more “upscale?”

Not specifically. We will continue our tradition of using only fresh ingredients, no prepared foods, no microwaves that has made us successful at our other locations.

What do you feel will be the difference in the new Xplore restaurants compared to the same facilities in the past?

We will certainly have consistent hours, a consistent level of service, and a focus on the customer, not ourselves. We will work in partnership with the golf department to make sure golfers have a great experience.

Staff

We have heard that staffing in the Village can be difficult to obtain. Have you had luck in staffing the restaurants?

We have almost 50 employees currently and are continuing to hire. It is difficult and we are a bit selective.



Drake Bielert, Hot Springs Village Executive Chef at Xplore

How many POA restaurant workers have signed on to the new Xplore restaurants?

Most chose to take the government unemployment benefits but some of the best chose to join our team.

Will one chef oversee all three restaurants?

We have several chefs in our company that are all cross-trained for each of our 6 locations. Our Executive Chef oversees this culinary team but each operates in his/her own primary restaurant.

Service

Is there a possibility of home delivery, curbside delivery, or drive-thru service being offered now or in the future?

We do curbside and home delivery currently at Xplore and Beehive. The buildings are not really suited for drive-thru. I expect we will do similar programs at the new locations. All will have online ordering. This will allow golfers to place orders in advance of reaching the clubhouse so we can have their orders ready when they arrive.

Is there a possibility of buffet dining, either now or in the future?

Will be doing a brunch buffet.

Will any of the restaurants be child-friendly with special children menus and high chairs?

All are child-friendly like our other locations. We have kid-friendly items and menus at all locations.

Will Villagers be able to use the money on their POA card to pay for meals at the New Xplore restaurants?

Unfortunately not, but you will be able to use any Xplore gift cards at any Xplore restaurant location. We have an independent system that would not be able to process POA cards.

Will smoking be allowed or disallowed on the patios?

We will have a designated smoking area on the patio but want to be able to offer patio dining to our non-smoking customers also.

Who do you anticipate serving? Currently, there is a rumor circulating that the new restaurants will only serve golfers. Is there any truth to this rumor?

That's one of the craziest rumors I have heard. We will serve anyone that comes to our restaurants.

Expansion

Is there a possibility of Xplore assuming management of any other POA restaurants? (Wayside, Magellan, Balboa, and Coronado)

None planned at this time.

Additional Comments

What is your arrangement with the POA for the restaurants?

I am leasing these restaurant facilities in a similar way to the other non-POA restaurants. I receive no subsidy and we are not financially associated with the POA. We cover all costs of operation.

Is there a message you would like to give to the community?

Please be patient. Our lease started on April 5. We are committed to creating a great dining experience at each of these facilities but it won't happen overnight. You have my commitment to do everything possible to make this happen and to provide residents and visitors the best possible experience at our facilities.

Thank you, Greg, for taking time out of your busy day to share with the community. We are looking forward to great experiences at all of your restaurants.

By Cheryl Dowden, April 10, 2021

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Xplore is Hiring

**If you or someone you know is looking for a job in the hospitality industry, Xplore is hiring!
They are hiring for the following positions:**

- **Servers**
- **Line/Prep Cooks**
- **Dishwashers**
- **Host/Hostess**
- **Bartenders**

Stop by any location to fill out an application or check our job postings and apply at [indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com).

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