

Organic To Go comes to Washington-area

By Melissa Frederick
Examiner Staff Writer

A West Coast-based chain of organic food retailers has bought out another chain of lunch cafes in downtown D.C.

Organic To Go's purchase of High Noon from Badlucci's Food Lover's Market gives the Seattle-based retailer its first presence on the East Coast.

Financial details of the acquisition were not disclosed.

Under the agreement, which Organic To Go said will generate \$6 million for the company annually, the firm will take over three D.C.-based High Noon locations, as well as one in Arlington.

Organic To Go does both lunch and catering with all natural products.

The chain's practice is to open one hub location that is charged with food production and catering for all its

outlets, delivering food in the middle of the night to the other locations.

"Education breeds the consumption of organic, and what we've learned over time is that when you move over to a highly educated market, they have become more focused on the quality of food that you consume," Chief Executive Officer Jason Brown said. The company sees potential for expansion in D.C. beyond the four stores, according to Brown.

Organic To Go dishes are available at more than 170 locations on the West Coast, including airport cafes, stores and universities.

High Noon is the company's eighth acquisition since 2005.

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Herb Sorensen, global scientific director of Shopper Insights for TNS North America, predicted Organic To Go's expansion in the East will be successful if it sticks to affluent cities and environmentally conscious neighborhoods such as university towns.

"I wouldn't think of D.C. as the first place to try on the East Coast, but I'm confident D.C. is an adequate market," Sorensen said.

"The people that are buying this for the most part have disposable income where it doesn't matter if organic works or not — it's with the added cost for the image."

melissa.frederick@dce Examiner.com

