

New Casey's test restaurant

MILTON—Prime Restaurants is testing a “class-to-mass” concept here with a prototype unit in its Casey's casual dining chain. The company is using this new store to determine if a classier look, along with a healthier dining menu, will increase sales.

The 34th Casey's location opened Dec. 6 with a new colour scheme, signage and exterior banners. The 5,200-square-foot space also features an increased bar area. “We want Casey's to be affordable luxury,” explained Casey's Grill & Bar vice-president Grant Cobb.

The restaurants have traditionally featured hardwood and tile, but carpet has been laid in the new restaurant to warm it up. An open kitchen is also new to the design by Cricket Design Company.

The healthier menu was launched in Feb., 2006 to “reinforce Casey's classic menu items, which had gotten us through the first 25 years of business,” Cobb said. Items coined as “twists” were added the menu, such as a spinach and artichoke dip, shrimp dim sum, grilled mahi mahi and jambalaya pasta.

The chain's vice-president also noted that they're playing with a larger prototype, which will open in September 2007 on the south shore of Montreal, “to allow us to expand across Canada into larger markets and smaller markets.”

Casey's has renovated seven of its current restaurants over 13 months and Cobb said he sees sales growth of 15 per cent or greater in these restaurants. Prime plans to renovate an additional six Casey's across Canada in 2007.