

# Potomac News



## Expanding business

Haymarket resident's fast-growing hamburger chain had humble beginnings in Manassas **A9**

# What's a Good burger?

## Expanding chain has roots in Manassas

By **JOSH EISERIKE**  
jeiserike@potomacnews.com

**T**he secret to the perfect hamburger? Just make sure the grill is preheated, said Shawn R. Foster:

"And don't play with it," Foster said. "It's not a football."

He should know. Foster is CEO and president of Foster's Grille, a fast-growing burger chain that began in Manassas in June 1999.

Foster now owns seven corporate locations in the region, with 47 franchise locations from New York to Florida, and an anticipated 15 to 20 more openings this year.

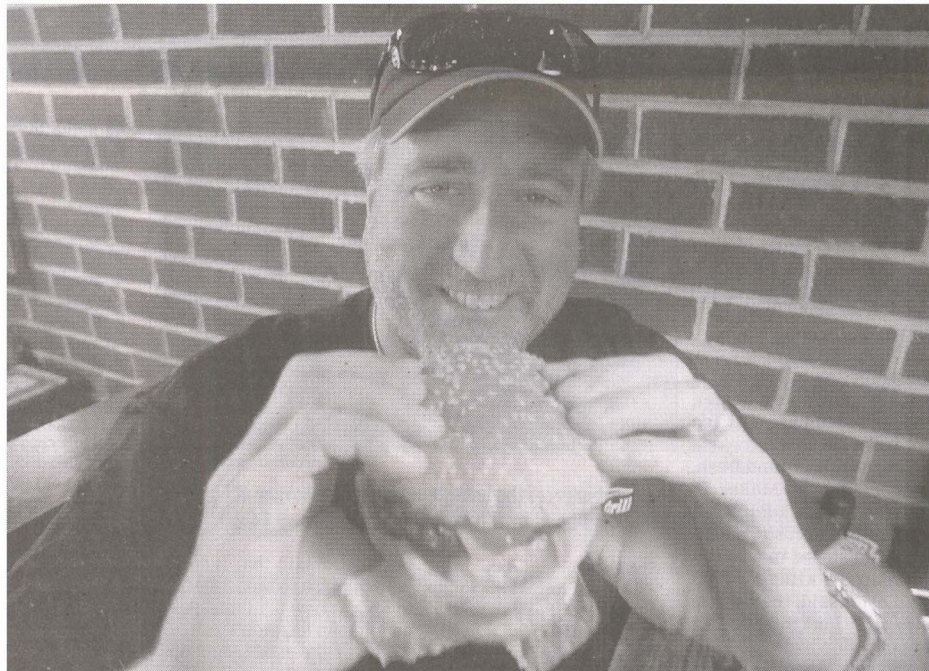
"I never thought there'd be more than one," Foster said.

He opened the first Manassas restaurant on the suggestion of his wife Nancy Foster that he go into the food business on his own.

"We're doing an aggressive control-growth pattern," said Foster. "The name and the quality of the product is more important to me than collecting a check each month."

Foster, originally from Buffalo, N.Y., graduated from the Culinary Institute of America in 1986.

He was a chef for the Palm Restaurants, a Washington, D.C. based chain of steak houses. He



Jason Hornick/News & Messenger

**Haymarket resident and founder of Foster's Grille Shawn Foster holds a half-pound burger at the Haymarket Foster's Grille. Foster's franchise had humble beginnings in Manassas.**

worked for locations in East Hampton, N.Y., Chicago, Las Vegas and Atlanta before ending up in Washington.

"Everything I did for my own company, I helped develop for theirs," Foster said.

"We just decided to go with the all-American burger," he said. "I think the burger is a staple in the American diet."

He says the key to Foster burgers — as should be with any burger

## Want a bite?

**FOSTER'S GRILLE: HOME OF THE CHARBURGER**

**Prince William County locations:**

**Haymarket:**

» 4418 Costello Way

**Manassas:**

» 7817 Sudley Road

» 9417 West Street

**Warrenton:**

» 20 Broadview Ave.

**Bristow:**

» Bristow Shopping Center, 10266 Bristow Center Dr.

**More info:** Visit [Fostersgrille.com](http://Fostersgrille.com).

**Want to run one?** Contact Thomas

G. Palazzo at [tpalazzo@fostersgrille.com](mailto:tpalazzo@fostersgrille.com).

# BURGER

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is the use of fresh, quality ingredients, a hot, clean grill, seasoning the burger, and letting it sit for about four to five minutes on each side.

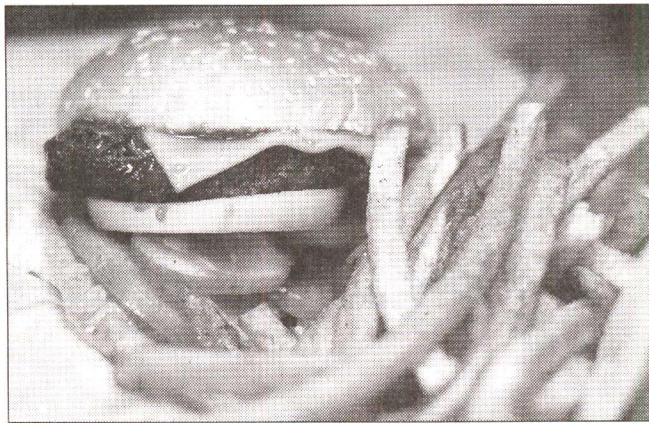
“Every ingredient we use, except for the ice cream, is never frozen,” said Foster, who also owns Catfish Lewie’s in Haymarket.

The meat is ground fresh, daily by Burger Maker in Carlstadt, N.J., delivered twice a week to Foster’s locations, and stored in a refrigerator in the kitchen. This way, Foster said, the meat is never more than three or four days old.

“We keep it simple, we do it well, we keep it consistent,” Thomas G. Palazzo, Foster’s vice president of franchise development, said.

“I love his burger, I love his wings,” said Palazzo, who says he typically eats there twice a week.

Palazzo said many of the franchises are owned by old



Jason Hornick/News & Messenger

**The charburger is the half-pound signature burger at Foster’s Grille, developed by Haymarket resident Shawn Foster.**

customers.

“That’s a testament to the philosophy of Foster’s restaurant,” he said.

Despite the sports bar atmosphere, it’s more of a family friendly restaurant, with video games for kids and tables in long rows, ideal for sports teams.

A family of four can eat for about \$35, Foster’s Vice President of Operations Mike Cerny said.

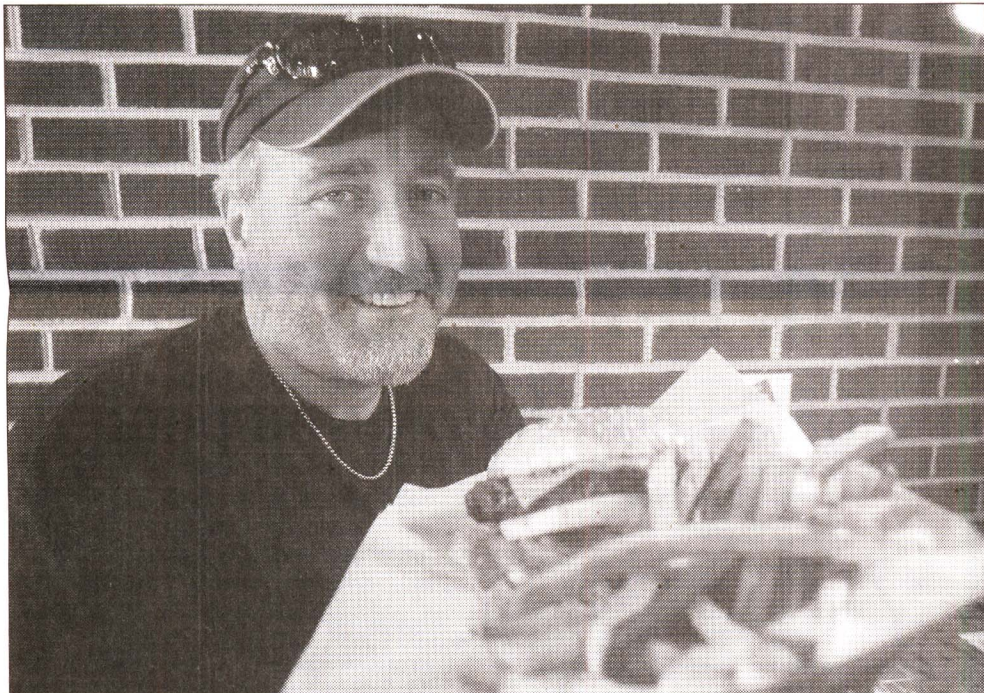
Cerny declined to disclose the value of the organization,

but Foster said that it costs between \$250,000 and \$400,000 to open a new franchise, depending on location.

“All of the establishments are non-smoking, no matter what state it is,” said Cerny, adding that it takes about 10 to 12 minutes for customers to get their food after ordering.

“We’ll feed you very well, don’t worry,” Foster said.

*Staff writer Josh Eiserike can be reached at 703-878-8072.*



Jason Hornick/News & Messenger

**Haymarket resident and founder of Foster’s Grille Shawn Foster holds up a basket with a half-pound burger and fries at the Haymarket Foster’s Grille.**