



## Foster's has a cookout feel

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Charburgers à la Foster's Grille are cooking in Culpeper. This Northern-Virginia based restaurant chain has received consistently favorable reviews for its half-pound hamburgers, hotdogs and hand-cut fries, served in a neighborhood-style grille decorated with Americana.

Foster's Grille tries to recreate the ambiance of a family cookout in a kid-friendly atmosphere where adults can enjoy a thick burger and a beer while the little ones sip fresh-squeezed lemonade and ponder several options on the children's menu.

In Culpeper, Megan Granados and her husband, Octavio, researched franchise opportunities and decided the Foster's Grille concept was the way to go for their first restaurant venture. They opened in May at 602 Sperryville Pike and have already cultivated a crowd of lunchtime regulars.

"You come in the door, go to the counter and we have a notebook with our menu on it where you write your name on it and circle whatever you want, with toppings," Megan Granados said. The menu also features grilled and fried chicken sandwiches, a veggie burger, salads, deli sandwiches, Buffalo wings and hot dogs. The old-fashioned milkshakes are made to order.

"Actually, everything's made to order," Granados said. "This is not fast food."

Three big-screen televisions broadcast sporting events from different corners of the restaurant. Overhead, a racecar shell hangs from the ceiling. Videogames along one wall hum patiently, waiting for children to plunk quarters into them. The restaurant tables are all topped with advertising for local companies. "Their business cards make up the laminated tabletops, which brings that neighborhood feel to the place," Granados said.

The rapidly expanding chain, which is based in Haymarket, has 18 restaurants in six states, with plans underway to open at least as many more eateries. Granados says she and her husband want to establish their current location, then will consider acquiring another Foster's franchise. Before getting into the restaurant business, she was an event planner for the town of Leesburg. Her husband is a land surveyor in Fairfax.

"This is something I've always wanted to do," she said. "I love the fast pace and meeting new people. I'm really comfortable here; it's part of my personality. When I first looked into it, I called (founder) Shawn Foster, who was from Manassas. I asked his advice about opening a restaurant and he said, 'don't do it.' He said if he could do it all over again, he would buy a franchise. A little later, he began franchising his own restaurants."

The dinner business in Culpeper has been a little slow during the summer, she said, though the restaurant has already become a hit with many locals.

"We have a steady lunch crowd and a ton of regulars, already," she said. "We strive to be a family-friendly neighborhood style grille. Little League teams feel welcome here. We have our regulars, we know your name."