

## Virginia BBQ opens restaurant in Pennington Commons

A Virginia BBQ franchise has opened in the Pennington Commons Shopping Center across Route 589 from the Ocean Pines South Gate.

The new franchise owners/operators are Nancy Poret and her fiancée, Lee Keefer. They live off Beauchamp Road just north of Ocean Pines.

"We're very excited about opening a new restaurant in the Ocean Pines area, bringing a type of cuisine not available in our neighborhood previously," she said. "And from what I'm hearing, people stopping me in the parking when they see the sign on my truck, a lot of people are really looking forward to us being in business."

Virginia BBQ has joined Asian and seafood restaurants, as well as a sub shop and ice-cream shop, in Pennington Commons, expanding the variety of restaurant options available in the greater Ocean Pines area.

Ms. Poret has been in the food business off and on over the years, working for others, and it's been a long-held dream to work for herself by opening her own restaurant. This she is accomplishing with fiancée, Lee, who will be heading up the kitchen, and friends and family who will be helping with the "soft



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opening" before a grand opening later in the season.

The two entrepreneurs investigated a number of other possible franchise opportunities before settling on Virginia BBQ, which operates 15 or 16 other restaurants through franchises in the mid-Atlantic area.

"We had settled on BBQ because it's not offered anywhere in the Ocean Pines area, but we liked Virginia BBQ best of all the BBQ options. It was relatively economical to buy the franchise, and they were very responsive on our first inquiry, as if they really wanted us to

join their family, and they make opening a new restaurant very easy. They provide training, the basic layout of the store, signage, décor, what type of equipment, menus, everything you need to start. And there's some flexibility on the menu to cater to local tastes or your own interest," she said.

The new restaurant includes 2,200 square feet of space and seating for 56 people at a time.

"Ours will be the biggest of all the Virginia BBQs," she said.

The menu is almost identical to other Virginia BBQ restaurants in the chain,

with three varieties of BBQ (Virginia, North Carolina and Texan) available in chicken, beef and pork, in sizes ranging from smaller portions for light eaters to quantities suitable for group catering. Half rack or full rack ribs are also menu staples, and Ms. Poret seems most proud of a menu addition that Virginia BBQ's corporate office approved with no problem.

"That would be our catfish platters, two four-ounce filets served with sides of southern shredded slaw, roasted red potato salad, baked beans and corn muffins," she said.

The sides menu also includes French fries, seasoned collard greens, hush puppies, whipped Idaho potatoes and mac and cheese.

"You're especially going to like the potato salad which is very light on the mayo but generous with the potatoes," she said.

"All our sides are authentic and freshly made, and all of our meats are wood-smoked using 'secret' recipes."

Ms. Poret says the restaurant right from the start will be open seven days a week, with hours from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and to 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.