

# Will Southerners give up Krispy Kreme for a Dunkin' doughnut?

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FRANKLIN, Tenn. — When asked how he got his own Dunkin' Donut store, Joe Rando holds up the afternoon cup of coffee he's just poured for himself.

"Lifelong Dunkin' fanatic," he said.

When the Maine native moved South with his former company to the Nashville area a couple years ago, he found he had to do without his favorite treat.

"I sort of woke up one morning and said, 'There aren't any Dunkin' Donuts here. Why is that?' So I made a phone call," Rando said.

From its first store in Quincy, Mass., Dunkin' Donuts has become the quintessential Northeastern doughnut shop, with working-class credentials and obsessed customers.

But now the Canton, Mass.-based chain plans to expand south and west across the country, and that begs the

question: Will Southerners, with their long-standing love of Krispy Kreme's sugar-glaze, find room for another doughnut?

Rando is in charge of 12 Nashville-area stores that will serve as a prototype for the company's expansion, testing everything from new products to store appearance.

Dunkin' Donuts currently has about 4,400 stores in 36 U.S. states, but the majority are in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic region.

In Massachusetts, there are 1,042 stores, while neighboring Rhode Island has 159 shops. (There are another 1,700 international Dunkin' Donuts stores in 29 countries.)

Company executives hope to triple the total number of U.S. stores by 2020.

"Our objective is to take the brand national," Dunkin' Donuts brand officer Robert Rodriguez said. "We have been a very successful super-

regional chain."

But parent Dunkin' Brands Inc. is invading the South with a different sort of doughnut — thicker and cakier than the traditional Southern treat from Krispy Kreme, which is lighter, sugar-glazed and served hot.

Executives at both companies say their doughnuts have a universal appeal, but Rando says there's no middle ground.

"It's like the Red Sox and the Yankees — you like one or the other," he said.

Stan Parker, senior vice president of marketing for North Carolina-based Krispy Kreme, said many Southerners have grown up with their doughnuts and think of a trip to Krispy Kreme as more than just breakfast or a snack.

"For many people, Krispy Kreme has been part of their lives for a long time," he said.

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