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Grooming for guys: Facials and a cigar

Carrs Barbers Club creates haven for men, expands to second location.

BY CHRISTINE SELANDI BALMANN | STAFF WRITER

WINTER PARK — Edward Magnay wanted to create a destination for men where getting a haircut wasn't a cumbersome chore — nor the focus of women's glares.

And so in February, the Englishman opened an old-fashioned barbershop called Carrs Barbers Club in Celebration's town center. The place treats men the way salons pamper women — just with less estrogen and a whole lot more testosterone.

Six months and quite a few haircuts later, Magnay has opened his second Carrs location — this time on Park Avenue.

"I'm giving guys their own environment where they can feel comfortable," says Magnay, 31.

Cigars and open razors

Apparently, men feel sort of awkward walking into a traditional women's salon, with its virgin lavender scent, feminine overtones and shrewish menu of services, like four-layer facials and zen shiatsu massages.

Guys want pampering, but on their own terms, says Magnay.

And those terms include a guys-only, leather couch playhouse with cigars and open razors.

"It's a guy thing," he says. "The lilac walls and day spa experience ... it didn't work for me."

Magnay, who moved to the states last year, imported the upscale barbershop idea from England, where his best friend, Ray Carr, owns and operates the original Barbers Club in a small town in New Castle. Magnay says he was looking for opportunity when he moved. He opened the first Carrs in Celebration within months of his arrival.

It took off famously, cutting and shaving between 250 and 400 customers a week. Today, the location is licensed to Davids Investments in Celebration, headed by Tony Davids, who formerly owned the English tea room Sherlock's of Celebration.

Franchise opportunity

Magnay, who owned clubs and restaurants in England, is self-financing his venture and says each Carrs location was opened for less \$100,000.

At present, he's drafting plans to make Carrs a franchise and is looking for area developers to take on five to 10 cities in the next six months. Magnay says owners can expect to make their investment back within a year, although he would not disclose detailed financial information or which cities he's interested in.

At Carrs, a standard haircut is \$17 and a shave is \$27. Magnay is relying on the popularity of men's grooming to give business a boost.

In 2003, about \$5 billion was spent on men's grooming products. That number is expected to reach \$6 billion by 2008, according to a MarketResearch.com report.

The birth of the metrosexual and the direct marketing of body lotions, hand creams, hair gels and razors to men also help boost the industry.

Men may not use bath bombs or salt scrubs, but they definitely buy after-shave and antiperspirant.

"This is coming out of the death of the old school barbershop," says Sasha Rash, board president of Scottsdale, Ariz.-based The Salon Association.

Carrs Barbers Club

Established: 2003

Leadership: Owner

Edward Magnay, 31

Locations: 715 Bloom

St. Celebration; 346

S. Park Ave., Winter Park

Services: Signature shave: \$27.50;

signature haircut: \$17.25; premier

haircut: \$29.25; premier shave: \$34.50;

classic facial cleanse: \$26.75

Contact: (321) 939-6629 Celebration;

(407) 628-6445 Winter Park



Make room for men

Meanwhile, Carrs in Winter Park is everything masculine. Cherry wood paneling and deep red paint slide up the walls. Two dark, leather couches and a small television fill the small waiting area, which floods with natural light from Park Avenue.

Four barber chairs facing ornately framed mirrors line the elongated, 1,000-square-foot space.

For sale are cigars, beer glasses, coffee mugs, tumblers and gift certificates, popular among the window-shopper women buying for their men.

Robert Gamez, a professional golfer on the PGA tour, also is attaching his name to the venture, giving positive endorsements of the chain.

Though he doesn't have a financial stake in the company yet, Gamez says he loved the idea when Magnay pitched it to him on the Celebration golf course. If more stores are successful, Gamez may look to become a franchisee.

"We need a place for men to go, and this fits in there," he says.

During the new store's first month, Magnay is giving away haircuts in exchange for a donation to Gamez's charity of choice — the Florida Hospital Foundation.

Carrs is an unusual shop on its own, but it shares at least one tradition with its salon counterparts.

Says Coral Gables beauty consultant Bryan Duroco: "Don't be fooled by its appearance. It's still a place for them to go and gossip."

PHOTOS BY DAVID LINDBERG

Barber Delphin Rodriguez, 19, cuts and shaves client Mike Augello, 25. Augello never had a traditional shave before.

