

# Pub chain imports genuine Irish scene

PETER VAN ALLEN  
STAFF WRITER

## No. 26 | Kildare's Irish Pub

**D**ave Magrogan doesn't take short cuts. His company, Kildare's Irish Pub, claims to offer "an authentic Irish experience" in each of his five pubs, and Magrogan is set on delivering. Each interior of the pubs was built in Ireland and sent by shipping container. The pubs are packed with Irish artifacts. Key staff members, including chefs, are sent to Ireland to learn about traditional Irish hospitality and service. In the King of Prussia restaurant, Irish craftsmen were brought in to hand-thatch the ceiling "rooftop."

"We have Irish designers. Each pub is different. We're never going to be a Bennigan's. What drives it is the authenticity," said Magrogan, who travels to Ireland twice a year. "Our goal is to please the customer with a great, authentic experience."

Kildare's Irish Pub ranked No. 26 on the Philadelphia 100 list of the region's fastest-growing companies with sales growth of 310 percent, from \$2.8 million in 2003 to \$8.5 million in 2004 and \$11.5 million last year. The company had 320 employees at year's end.

The company forecasts \$14.5 million in sales this year, with 350 employees on the payroll, Magrogan said.

Kildare's pubs are located in West Chester, King of Prussia, Manayunk, Media and Philadelphia, at Headhouse Square. A new restaurant, Doc Magrogan's Oyster House, opened in West Chester on Oct. 14.

Magrogan, 34, is a third-generation Irish Catholic and grew up in Brookhaven.

Starting at age 12, he washed dishes in the Lobster Pot in Media.

"By age 16, I was a steam chef doing 150 lobsters a night. And I was only about 5-foot, 1-inch then," Magrogan said.

He worked his way up through the restaurant business, not just as dishwasher and cook, but as a bartender, waiter and manager.

Known by friends as "Doc," Magrogan also has a doctorate in chiropractic health from Life University in Atlanta and took a pre-medical program of study at West Chester University, where he has his undergraduate degree.

In 2003, he opened his first Kildare's, in West Chester.

Since then, Kildare's has gone gangbusters. Last year, Kildare's opened two locations, in Media and on Headhouse Square on South 2nd Street in Philadelphia.

Kildare's offers a variety of menu items, created by Executive Chef Stephanie Goldberg.

Goldberg has trained in Ireland and offers standards like shepherd's pie, bangers and mash, Guinness beef stew and the boxty, a potato pancake with various fillings. The kitchen offers Irish-smoked salmon, beer-battered fish with chips and Jameson Irish Whiskey wings, as well as untraditional fare like grilled tuna with sun-dried tomato pesto.

Entrees range from \$12.95 to \$22.95.

Other restaurants are on the horizon.

By early summer, Magrogan plans to open two new Kildare's pubs, one in the area around Montage Mountain Ski Resort in the Poconos, near Scranton and the second in the Valley Square at Bucks County shopping center in Warrington.

"In Valley Square, we're an anchor along with P.F. Chang's, which I think gives an idea of how far the Kildare's brand has come in a short time," Magrogan said.

Two blocks from the original Kildare's in West Chester, Magrogan opened Doc Magrogan's Oyster House earlier this month.

"It's a different concept. It will be a classic 1920's Boston seafood house," said Magrogan before the opening. "It's going to be completely different — McCormick & Schmick's meets casual dining. There'll be wood-paneled walls and items priced from \$4.95 to \$29.95."

The \$1.7 million restaurant is furnished with Irish antiques,



Founder Dave Magrogan uses Irish designers, training and artifacts.

classic photos, antique fixtures, ornate vintage lighting and 100-year-old floors.

Menu items include New England Lobster Bake, Doc's Famous Crab Cakes, and fish with dark rum.

Throughout much of the planning of the seafood house, Magrogan didn't have a name in mind. But his Irish design team routinely returned plans that referred to the project as "Doc Magrogan's," so the name stuck. To add some management heft, Magrogan brought on as managing partner Tom "Twiggy" Mitchell, former owner of the West Chester Fish Market, a nearby seafood restaurant.

A second Doc Magrogan's may follow next year in Philadelphia, on or near 7th Street. Other Kildare's pubs could emerge on the I-95 corridor.

With Kildare's in expansion mode, it was necessary to build an extensive leadership structure.

"You treat the guests right and keep employees happy. You have managed costs and fixed costs. But you also have to have a good management team," Magrogan said.

Top managers Magrogan brought on include Chief Operating Officer Paul Lauriello, who brought experience in opening restaurants, including Devon Seafood Grill on Rittenhouse Square and Olive Garden in Cherry Hill; Managing Partner Dave McGuinn, an Outback Steakhouse veteran who deals with labor relations, among other tasks; Vice President of Marketing Patrick McBride, who helps create Kildare's advertising; Chief Operating Officer Mary Anne Bogie and Controller Dan Pettigrew.

Magrogan also brought on Elena Grande to oversee catering, special events and "other brands," including a moving company Magrogan started called Two Men and a Truck.

Each restaurant, in turn, has four managers.

"I'm the visionary, I come up with the great ideas. These are the people that run the business," Magrogan said. "I'm not a micromanager. I take a lot of time to hire people and let them go."

### UP CLOSE

**COMPANY:** Kildare's Irish Pub  
**CEO:** William David "Dave" Magrogan  
**YEAR FOUNDED:** 2003  
**STARTUP CAPITAL:** \$1.5 million  
**2005 SALES:** \$11.5 million  
**2005 EMPLOYEES:** 320  
**2003-2005 GROWTH RATE:** 310 percent