

**Aug. 20, 2007**

## **Law & Order star opens new restaurant in Sandy**

By Debbi Taylor  
*The Enterprise*

In between shooting promos for the Tribeca Film Festival and studying 15-20 pages of script before the next filming of the NBC television series *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, in New York City, Vincent D'Onofrio flew to Utah for a day last week to help open Rib City in Sandy.

The new restaurant, located at 2071 E. 9400 S., is D'Onofrio's first venture into the restaurant business, which he co-owns with his sister and brother-in-law Toni and Ron Jorgensen.

"Our plan is to open five Rib City restaurants in Utah," said D'Onofrio, who plays Det. Robert Goren on *Criminal Intent*. "We're having fun so far and the food is good."

For the Jorgensens, the Sandy location is their second Rib City franchise. They opened their first Rib City in American Fork about 18 months ago, and its success prompted them to expand the concept along the Wasatch Front.

"We were at a family get-together in Florida and I told Toni we should open another one together," D'Onofrio said.

While Toni and Ron will be doing most of the work in operating the Sandy restaurant, D'Onofrio said that he will be the "Billboard" to attract attention to it.

"I'll be like Mickey Mouse," D'Onofrio said. "I can help people be aware of it and some will come in and try it because I'm involved. It's up to them to decide they like it and come back."

He won't however, be cooking or serving food in the restaurant any time soon.

"She [Toni] has to do it because I'm out doing films and television. I'm here to support things and I'll be here every once in a while with my kids." D'Onofrio said. "We grew up in the restaurant business and I was not a good waiter -- I was a good bus boy and I used to wash dishes at Denny's."

He may, however, run an order out to an unsuspecting customer waiting curbside for their food when he is in town.

With business increasing 30 percent in the past year at the American Fork Rib City, gaining a loyal following of repeat customers is not something the trio is worried about.

"We have a family that comes in every week in American Fork wearing our t-shirts," Toni Jorgensen said, adding that local celebrities, such as Kerri Cronk of Fox 13 news and Jazz basketball coach Jerry Sloan are frequent patrons of the restaurant.

"We selected Sandy because it was an area that needed a barbecue place on the east side of the valley," she said. "It's a very clean town that has a lot of people and is not far from the ski resorts."

The group is looking at a possible third location in Saratoga Springs.

Rib City was founded in Ft. Myers, Fla. in 1989 by Jerry Pastore, who decided to open his own restaurant with a full menu based on his barbecue creations that were popular with family and friends. He later partnered with Florida restaurateurs Paul and Craig Peden, who now own the chain, which currently has 26 restaurants in five states. Of those, half are company-owned and half are franchises.

"We're a small family chain that has the feel of a 'Mom and Pop' but we have a franchise behind us that helps us out a lot," Toni said. "They've been through all the ups and downs and have learned what to do to make this a success."

Menu items at Rib City are based on Southern Florida "wet" barbecue, meaning that the meats are cooked with barbecue sauces and not seasoned rubs. Meats, of which the majority of are sliced, not pulled, are slow cooked in an outdoor smoker that can cook 1,300 pounds of meat per day.

"We are best known for our baby back ribs," Toni said. "We have the smokers going all day long. We have a full American menu with something for everybody, from hot dogs to whole hogs."

The Sandy restaurant seats 89 people and has 25 employees. It is open seven days a week for lunch and dinner. The restaurant also provides catering services for small and large parties, a service that D'Onofrio is planning on using next summer on the set of a "Western" movie he is planning on shooting and directing in Utah.

D'Onofrio said he chose Utah not only because of his ties to the state, but because "there is a really good film commission here," he said. "And I know where I'll get my food from."