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## Family sells Pittsburgh Chop House; Damon's likely taking spot

Pittsburgh Business Times - by [Tim Schooley](#)

The Fleck family, who at one time operated 20 **Red Bull Inn** restaurants throughout the region, has sold off their Robinson property, in which they operated **Pittsburgh Chop House**, ending its less than three-year run.

The property has been sold to Ed Dunlap, who has a growing stable of restaurants that operate under the umbrella **Culinary Concepts of Pittsburgh**, according to Ron Sofranko, who brokered the sale, which closed last week. Dunlap owns the local franchise territory for Damon's Grill, and the restaurant is expected to be converted to a Damon's and reopen in a few months.

Dan Fleck said health issues in the family, projections of continued weakness in the economy and a willing buyer convinced them to sell.

"I think we were performing as well as the economy would permit. Obviously, it's not the plushiest of times," Fleck said. "They made an offer that made sense."

Fleck and his sister, Janice Bioni, opened Pittsburgh Chop House in fall 2007 after closing the Red Bull Inn that had operated in the Campbells Run Road location since the 1970s.

They opened the steakhouse restaurant with keen attention to local flavor, with 200 caricatures of Pittsburgh celebrities, six area beers on tap and even a soundtrack of local musicians, including Donnie Iris and George Benson.

Sofranko, who began quietly marketing the property in August, said Pittsburgh Chop House had quality food and great ambience, but he believes the higher prices that came with them were not the right formula for price-sensitive diners chastened by the recession.

"It was bad timing and the wrong type of menu that really hurt him," Sofranko said. He said it could be a strong location for Damon's.

Terri Sokoloff, a principal of the Ross-based restaurant services firm **Specialty Group**, said she believes Pittsburgh Chop House also was hampered by the wide array of development and competing restaurants in the area, including a Ditka's in nearby Robinson Plaza.

"I think there's a lot of competition out there, and I don't think it's the strongest location," she said, adding that Pittsburgh also has its share of upscale steakhouses. "There's some great steakhouses in this town."

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