April 24, 2012

Chefs' Warehouse

(CHEF-NASDAQ)

Stock Rating: Outperform Industry Rating: Market Perform

1Q12 Preview: Strong January and February Industry Data Should Support 1Q – Even If Trends Weakened in March

Event

CHEF reports its 1Q12 earnings on May 3 after the market closes with a call at 5 p.m. ET. Our \$0.14 EPS estimate is \$0.02 less than consensus. We believe the company will continue to see momentum on the top line as the core strength of the business remains unchanged and is likely helped by the nicer-than-expected weather. FY2012 is somewhat of a transitory year (with one-time cost pressures related to diesel, SOX compliance and a higher tax rate) so we prefer to value CHEF on our F20Y13 estimates. Our \$26 estimate values CHEF at a FY2013 EV/EBITDAR of 11.4x, which we believe is fair given the strong top-line growth, leading market share in a fragmented industry, and strong ROIC. On the call, we will be looking for color on case volume trends, unique customer counts, the cadence of sales throughout the quarter and into 2Q – given some noise that sales weakened in March and further weakened into April - and an update on the move to the new Bronx facility.

Impact

Neutral.

Forecasts

Our 1Q12 and FY2012 EPS estimates remain at \$0.14 and \$0.96, respectively. Consensus is \$0.16 and \$0.95.

Valuation

CHEF is trading at a FY2013 EV/EBITDAR of 10.4x and a P/E of 19.9x.

Recommendation

We maintain our **OUTPERFORM** rating.

Food Retail

Karen Short

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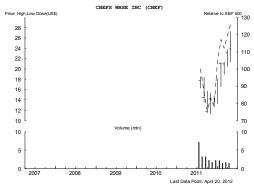
Ryan J. Gilligan, CFA

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Securities Info

Price (23-Apr)	\$23.25	Target Price	\$26
52-Wk High/Low	\$27/\$11	Dividend	
Mkt Cap (mm)	\$486	Yield	
Shs O/S (mm, BASIC)	20.9	Float O/S (mm)	10.8
Options O/S (mm)	45.7	ADVol (30-day, 000s)	85

Price Performance



Valuation/Financial Data

Valuation// intalicial Data								
(FY-Dec.)	2010A	2011A	2012E	2013E				
EPS Pro Forma	\$0.76	\$0.77	\$0.96	\$1.17				
P/E			24.2x	19.9x				
First Call Cons.			\$0.95	\$1.13				
EPS GAAP	\$0.76	\$0.77	\$0.96	\$1.17				
FCF	na	na	na	na				
P/FCF			na	na				
EBITDA (\$mm)	\$24	\$30	\$38	\$45				
EV/EBITDA			13.8x	11.6x				
Rev. (\$mm)	\$330	\$400	\$457	\$507				
EV/Rev			1.1x	1.0x				
Quarterly EPS	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q				
2011A	\$0.13	\$0.20	\$0.19	\$0.26				
2012E	\$0.14	\$0.26	\$0.25	\$0.31				
Quarterly EBITDA	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q				
2011A	\$4.7	\$7.6	\$7.5	\$10.2				
2012E	\$5.9	\$10.1	\$9.8	\$12.1				
Balance Sheet Data (30-Dec)								
Net Debt (\$mm)	\$35	TotalDeb	t/EBITDA	1.2x				
Total Debt (\$mm)	\$46	EBITDA	/IntExp	na				
N (D) (()	EO E0/	Price/Book		20.6x				
Net Debt/Cap.	50.5%	Price/Bo	UK	20.08				

Source: BMO Capital Markets estimates, Bloomberg, Thomson Reuters, and IHS Global Insight.

Save the Date

May 15-16, 2012

BMO Capital Markets

2012 FARM TO MARKET CONFERENCE, NYC

For a list of participating companies, please go to: http://www.bmocm.com/conferences/farmtomarket2012/fmparticipating For more details, please contact your BMO Capital Markets representative.

Key Points

Exhibit 1. CHEF Current Valuation

Chefs' Warehouse Current Valuation							
·	2012E	2013E					
Net Income	\$19.98	\$24.35					
EPS	\$0.96	\$1.17					
EBITDA	\$38	\$45					
EBITDAR	\$47	\$54					
Net Forward Debt	\$25	\$6					
# Shares	21	21					
Current Stock Price	\$23.25	\$23.25					
Market Cap	\$485	\$485					
EV	\$509	\$491					
P/E	24.2x	19.9x					
EV/EBITDA	13.4x	10.9x					
EPS Growth	23.8%	21.9%					

Source: Company reports, BMO Capital Markets estimates.

Areas of focus for the conference call:

- Cadence of sales throughout 1Q in light of some industry data pointing to weakening sales in March.
- Sales trends into 2Q12.
- Updated guidance for FY2012.
- The breakdown of total sales growth into organic growth, and the impact due to acquisitions and inflation. In addition, some color on trends on unique customers.
- FY2012 capex allocation the company's 10-K indicated capex would be in the \$12.2 million range in FY2012.
- Update on the new facility that is expected to replace the two existing Bronx facilities.
- Some color on the state of the consumer and, as a result, the health of the restaurant operators that CHEF serves.
- Color on top-line trends and the correlation with rising and falling gas prices.
- Some thoughts on how the changing dynamics of the restaurant industry (smaller plate sizes, high growth in tapas-style restaurants, as an example) affect CHEF's approach to increasing market share.
- Update on the rollout of engineered labor standards to the company's facilities. Previously, management indicated that the rollout would be complete for all facilities except Miami and Portland by the conclusion of 1Q12.

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Some color on inflation trends and the company's ability to pass on cost increases to its customers.

- Trends in case volumes and revenues per case.
- Management's thoughts on the opportunity for new market entries specifically, how
 many markets can the company ultimately enter and an outline of the criteria
 management uses to evaluate potential markets.

Our 1Q12 EPS estimate remains at \$0.14 vs. consensus of \$0.16. Our estimate assumes total sales increase 19.0% to \$98.7 million, driven by 9% organic sales growth, and we assume gross margins expand 50bp to 26.3%. We forecast operating expenses (excluding D&A) grow 20.8% to \$20.2 million, or a 30bp increase as a percentage of sales to 20.4%, leading to a 31bp improvement in operating margins to 5.3%, or \$5.2 million. This gets us to EBITDA of \$5.9 million, a 20bp expansion in margin to 5.9%. We assume interest expense of \$0.2 million, a 41.0% tax rate and 20.8 million shares outstanding, which gets us to EPS of \$0.14 – a 12.2% increase from 1Q11.

In FY2012, our estimate for EPS is \$0.96. Consensus EPS is \$0.95. Our EBITDA estimate is \$38 million. Our estimate assumes total sales increase 13.2% to \$453.2 million (vs. consensus of \$459.0 million), with gross margins improving 49bp to 26.8%. We forecast operating expenses (excluding D&A) grow 11.9% to \$84.3 million, a 21bp year over year improvement in margin – leading to a 65bp improvement in operating margins to 7.7%, or \$34.7 million. This gets us to EBITDA of \$38 million, a 70bp improvement in margin to 8.2%. We assume interest expense of \$0.8 million, a 41.0% tax rate and 20.8 million shares outstanding, which gets us to EPS of \$0.96.

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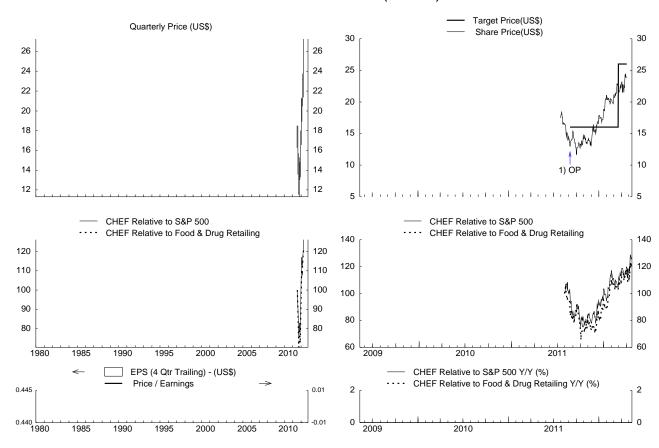
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Revenues	52 weeks 12/25/2009 2009 \$199.76 \$71.31 \$1.92 \$56.06 \$57.98 \$13.33 \$15.25 \$2.82 \$0.66 \$11.17 \$2.21 \$8.96	52 weeks 12/24/2010 2010 \$330.12 \$330.12 \$224.34 \$85.78 \$2.10 \$62.10 \$64.21 \$21.57 \$23.68 \$4.04 \$0.91 \$18.44 \$2.57 \$15.87	3/25/2011 1Q11 \$82.90 \$61.50 \$21.40 \$0.60 \$16.70 \$17.30 \$4.10 \$0.40 \$0.00 \$4.10 \$1.50	6/24/2011 2Q11 \$99.26 \$73.00 \$26.26 \$0.39 \$18.66 \$19.05 \$7.20 \$7.60 \$0.42	3Q11 \$101.68 \$75.05 \$26.63 \$0.43 \$19.14 \$19.57 \$7.06 \$7.491 \$0.51	4Q11 \$116.51 \$85.50 \$31.01 \$0.51 \$20.81 \$21.32 \$9.70 \$10.207	53 weeks 12/30/2011 2011E \$400.35 \$295.05 \$105.30 \$1.93 \$75.31 \$77.24 \$28.06 \$29.99 \$1.85	1Q12E \$99.48 \$73.20 \$26.28 \$0.61 \$20.34 \$20.95 \$5.33 \$5.94	2Q12E \$119.11 \$86.89 \$32.22 \$0.61 \$22.15 \$22.76 \$9.46 \$10.07	3Q12E \$115.92 \$84.86 \$31.05 \$0.61 \$21.24 \$21.85 \$9.20 \$9.81 \$0.40	4Q12E \$122.61 \$89.24 \$33.37 \$0.61 \$21.28 \$11.48 \$12.09	\$457.11 \$334.19 \$122.92 \$2.44 \$85.01 \$87.45 \$35.47 \$37.91	\$507.39 \$369.68 \$137.71 \$2.44 \$92.59 \$95.03 \$42.69 \$45.13
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Operating Income \$5.96 \$10.00 EBITDA \$7.90 \$11.99 Interest \$3.52 \$3.24 Gain on Settlement \$1.10 \$1.10 Gaim/Loss on Interest Rate Swap \$5.062 -\$1.12 Other \$2.92 \$5.65 Income Before Tax \$2.92 \$5.65 Taxes \$0.79 \$3.45 Net Income \$2.14 \$2.20 Tax Rate 26.9% 61.1% Diluted EPS \$0.10 \$0.11 Diluted 20.77 20.77	\$13.33 \$15.25 \$2.82 \$0.66 \$11.17 \$2.21 \$8.96	\$21.57 \$23.68 \$4.04 \$0.91 \$18.44 \$2.57	\$4.10 \$4.70 \$0.40 \$0.40 \$0.00 \$4.10	\$7.20 \$7.60 \$0.42	\$7.06 \$7.491 \$0.51	\$9.70 \$10.207	\$28.06 \$29.99	\$5.33 \$5.94	\$9.46 \$10.07	\$9.20 \$9.81	\$11.48	\$35.47	\$42.69
EBITDA \$7.90 \$11.99 Interest \$3.52 \$3.24 Gain on Settlement \$1.10 Gain/Loss on Interest Rate Swap \$-\$0.62 Other Income Before Tax \$2.92 \$5.65 Taxes \$0.79 \$3.45 Net Income \$2.14 \$2.20 Tax Rate \$26.9% 61.1% Diluted EPS \$0.10 \$0.11 Diluted \$2.77 \$2.77	\$15.25 \$2.82 \$0.66 \$11.17 \$2.21 \$8.96	\$23.68 \$4.04 \$0.91 \$18.44 \$2.57	\$4.70 \$0.40 \$0.40 \$0.00 \$4.10	\$7.60 \$0.42	\$7.491 \$0.51	\$10.207	\$29.99	\$5.94	\$10.07	\$9.81			
Interest	\$2.82 \$0.66 \$11.17 \$2.21 \$8.96	\$4.04 \$0.91 \$18.44 \$2.57	\$0.40 \$0.40 \$0.00 \$4.10	\$0.42	\$0.51						\$12.09	\$37.91	\$45.12
Gain on Settlement \$1.10 -\$0.62 -\$1.12 Other -\$0.62 -\$1.12 -\$1.12 Income Before Tax \$2.92 \$5.65 -\$3.45 Net Income \$2.14 \$2.20 Tax Rate 26.9% 61.1% Diluted EPS \$0.10 \$0.11 Diluted 20.77 20.77	\$0.66 \$11.17 \$2.21 \$8.96	\$0.91 \$18.44 \$2.57	\$0.40 \$0.00 \$4.10			\$0.53	\$1.85	\$0.40	\$0.40	\$0.40			φ 4 υ.13
Gain/Loss on Interest Rate Swap	\$11.17 \$2.21 \$8.96	\$18.44 \$2.57	\$0.00 \$4.10	\$0.00	\$0.00				ψ0.10	φυ. 4 υ	\$0.40	\$1.60	\$1.48
Income Before Tax	\$2.21 \$8.96	\$2.57	\$4.10			\$0.00	\$0.40	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.07
Taxes \$0.79 \$3.45 Net Income \$2.14 \$2.20 Tax Rate 26.9% 61.1% Diluted EPS \$0.10 \$0.11 Diluted 20.77 20.77	\$2.21 \$8.96	\$2.57		\$6.79	\$6.56	\$0.00 \$9.17	\$26.61	\$4.93	\$9.06	\$8.80	\$11.08	\$33.87	\$41.28
Net Income \$2.14 \$2.20 Tax Rate 26.9% 61.1% Diluted EPS \$0.10 \$0.11 Diluted 20.77 20.77	\$8.96			\$2.69	\$6.56 \$2.56	\$9.17 \$3.76	\$26.61 \$10.50	\$4.93 \$2.02	\$9.06 \$3.71	\$8.80 \$3.61	\$11.08 \$4.54	\$33.87 \$13.89	\$41.28 \$16.92
Diluted EPS \$0.10 \$0.11 Diluted 20.77 20.77	19.8%		\$2.60	\$4.10	\$4.00	\$5.70	\$16.11	\$2.02	\$5.34	\$5.19	\$6.54	\$19.98	\$24.35
Diluted EPS \$0.10 \$0.11 Diluted 20.77 20.77	19.8%			7	*****	******	, ,,,,,,,	7	*****		*****	7	
Diluted 20.77 20.77		13.9%	36.6%	39.6%	39.0%	41.0%	39.5%	41.0%	41.0%	41.0%	41.0%	41.0%	41.0%
	\$0.43	\$0.76	\$0.13	\$0.20	\$0.19	\$0.26	\$0.77	\$0.14	\$0.26	\$0.25	\$0.31	\$0.96	\$1.17
0 FD0	20.77	20.77	20.67	20.83	20.83	20.84	20.79	20.84	20.84	20.84	20.84	20.84	20.84
Consensus EPS						\$0.25	\$0.77	\$0.16	\$0.26	\$0.25	\$0.30	\$0.95	\$1.12
Growth													l
Sales 10.0%	-3.8%	21.8%	18.4%	18.7%	19.7%	27.2%	21.3%	20.0%	20.0%	14.0%	14.0%	14.2%	11.0%
Organic Sales growth 4.2%	-6.2%	10.9%	10.9%	13.0%	10.6%	8.8%	11.4%	9%	9%	9%	9%		8%
Inflation - contribution to sales n/a	-0.6%	7.8%	4.9%	3.3%	2.7%	1.1%	2.2%	1%	1%	1%	1%		3%
Acquisitions - contribution to sales 5.8%	3.0%	3.1%	3.0%	2.0%	6.4%	10.0%	5.7%	10%	10%	4%	4%		0%
Impact of extra week - contribution to sales						7.2%	2.0%						ı
Operating Expenses (Ex. D&A) 1.5%	-3.9%	10.8%	15.3%	19.3%	24.3%	25.5%	21.3%	21.8%	18.7%	11.0%	2.3%	12.9%	8.9%
Operating Expenses (Incl. D&A)	-3.9%	10.7%	15.7%	18.1%	23.8%	23.2%	20.3%	21.1%	19.5%	11.7%	2.7%	13.2%	8.7%
Operating Income 67.9%	33.3%	61.8%	35.3%	24.1%	12.9%	49.6%	30.1%	30.0%	31.3%	30.3%	18.4%	26.4%	20.3%
EBITDA 51.7%	27.2%	55.3%	34.5%	20.4%	12.5%	41.5%	26.7%	26.3%	32.5%	31.0%	18.4%	26.4%	19.0%
Net Income 2.8%	308.1%	77.1%	69.0%	-8.7%	-9.3%	-0.6%	1.5%	12.0%	30.4%	29.9%	20.9%	24.1%	21.9%
EPS	308.1%	77.1%					1.4%					23.8%	21.9%
Margins													ı
Gross 25.5% 25.0%	26.3%	26.0%	25.8%	26.45%	26.19%	26.62%	26.30%	26.41%	27.05%	26.79%	27.22%	26.89%	27.1%
D&A 0.8% 0.7%	0.7%	0.6%	0.7%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Operating Expenses (Ex. D&A)		18.8%	20.1%	18.8%	18.8%	17.9%	18.8%	20.4%	18.6%	18.3%	17.4%	18.6%	18.2%
Operating Expenses (Incl. D&A) 23.2% 21.4%	21.4%	19.4%	20.9%	19.2%	19.2%	18.3%	19.3%	21.1%	19.1%	18.8%	17.9%	19.1%	18.7%
Operating Income 2.3% 3.6%	4.9%	6.5%	4.9%	7.3%	6.9%	8.3%	7.0%	5.4%	7.9%	7.9%	9.4%	7.8%	8.4%
EBITDA 3.1% 4.3%	5.6%	7.2%	5.7%	7.7%	7.4%	8.8%	7.5%	6.0%	8.5%	8.5%	9.9%	8.3%	8.9%
Tax 26.9% 61.1% Net 0.8% 0.8%	19.8% 3.3%	13.9% 4.8%	36.6% 3.1%	39.6% 4.1%	39.0% 3.9%	41.0% 4.6%	39.5% 4.0%	41.0% 2.9%	41.0% 4.5%	41.0% 4.5%	41.0% 5.3%	41.0% 4.4%	41.0% 4.8%
Change in Margins	2.270	5,0		,	2.070			,					
Gross -55bp	134bp	-32bp	12bp	21bp	21bp	64bp	32bp	60bp	60bp	60bp	60bp	59bp	25bp
D&A -5bp	Obp	-7bp	6bp	-20bp	-6bp	-36bp	-15bp	-11bp	12bp	10bp	6bp	5bp	-5bp
Operating Expenses (Ex. D&A)	000		-55bp	10bp	69bp	-24bp	0bp	30bp	-20bp	-50bp	-50bp	-21bp	-35bp
Operating Expenses (Lx. D&A) -178bp	-2bp	-194bp	-49bp	-11bp	63bp	-60bp	-16bp	19bp	-8bp	-40bp	-44bp	-16bp	-40bp
Operating Expenses (Inci. Bax) Operating Income 122bp	137bp	162bp	62bp	31bp	-42bp	124bp	47bp	41bp	68bp	100bp	104bp	75bp	65bp
EBITDA 117bp	137bp	155bp	68bp	11bp	-42bp	88bp	32bp	30bp	80bp	110bp	110bp	80bp	60bp
Net -5bp	253bp	150bp	94bp	-124bp	-476p	-130bp	-78bp	CODP	36bp			CODP	

Source: Company reports, BMO Capital Markets estimates.

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CHEFS WHSE INC (CHEF)



CHEF - Rating as of 28-Jul-11 = NR

	Date	Rating Change	Share Price	
1	6-Sep-11	NR to OP	\$13.56	

Last Daily Data Point: April 20, 2012

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Important Disclosures

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Methodology: Our target price values CHEF at an FY13 EV/EBITDAR of 11.4x.

Risks: Key risks to our CHEF price target include increased competition from traditional broadline operators or consolidation among other regional specialty distributors, deterioration in the national or New York economy as it relates to discretionary spending at restaurants, the success and completion of future acquisitions at fair prices, significant increases in raw material costs, and tainted product or product recall which could tarnish the company's image.

Distribution of Ratings (March 31, 2012)

Rating		BMOCM US	BMOCM US	BMOCM US	BMOCM	BMOCM	Starmine
Category	BMO Rating	Universe*	IB Clients**	IB Clients***	Universe****	IB Clients****	Universe
Buy	Outperform	37.2%	12.1%	52.1%	39.2%	48.3%	54.6%
Hold	Market Perform	60.0%	7.0%	47.9%	57.6%	51.0%	40.1%
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(S) = speculative investment;

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