February 29, 2012

Chefs' Warehouse

(CHEF-NASDAQ)

Stock Rating: Outperform Industry Rating: Market Perform

Food Retail

Karen Short

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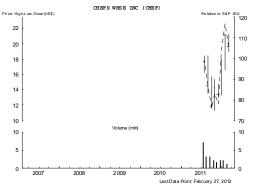
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Securities Info

Price (28-Feb)	\$20.22	Target Price	\$16
52-Wk High/Low	\$21/\$11	Dividend	-
Mkt Cap (mm)	\$421	Yield	-
Shs O/S (mm, BASIC)	20.8	Float O/S (mm)	9.2
Options O/S (mm)	45.3	ADVol (30-day, 000s)	78

Price Performance



Valuation/Financial Data

(FY-Dec.)	2010A	2011E	2012E	2013E					
EPS Pro Forma	\$0.76	\$0.77	\$0.99	\$1.16					
P/E		26.3x	20.4x	17.4x					
First Call Cons.		\$0.77	\$0.97	\$1.12					
EPS GAAP	\$0.76	\$0.77	\$0.99	\$1.16					
FCF	na	na	na	na					
P/FCF		na	na	na					
EBITDA (\$mm)	\$24	\$30	\$38	\$44					
EV/EBITDA		15.4x	12.0x	10.4x					
Rev. (\$mm)	\$330	\$401	\$443	\$482					
EV/Rev		1.1x	1.0x	0.9x					
Quarterly EPS	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q					
2010A	\$0.07	\$0.22	\$0.21	\$0.26					
2011E	\$0.13A	\$0.20A	\$0.19A	\$0.26					
Quarterly EBITDA	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q					
2010A	\$3.5	\$6.3	\$6.7	\$7.2					
2011E	\$4.7A	\$7.6A	\$7.5A	\$9.8					
Balance Sheet Data (23-Sep)									
Net Debt (\$mm)	\$35	Total Deb	t/EBITDA	1.5x					
Total Debt (\$mm)	\$45	EBITDA/I	ntExp	na					
Net Debt/Cap.	Cap. 54.9% Price/Book								

Notes: All values in US\$.

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

Warm Weather and Favorable Trends Bode Well for 4Q11

Event

Chefs' Warehouse will report 4Q11 results on March 6, with a call A.M.C. Based on the unusually warm weather during 4Q, extremely favorable restaurant industry data points, and a positive presentation at the 14th Annual ICR XChange in January, we believe results this quarter will surprise to the upside and believe the favorable trends have likely continued into 1Q12. We are looking for 4Q11 EPS of \$0.26, \$0.01 above consensus. In FY2012, we are looking for EPS of \$0.99 versus consensus of \$0.97. On the call, we will look for 1) comments on consumer behavior in light of the recent increase in gas prices, 2) color on whether or not 4Q was affected by any lingering costs associated with the Harry Wils integration, 3) color on incremental costs associated with the Provvista Specialty Foods acquisition, 4) the components of top-line growth in 4Q and expectations on the components of growth in FY12, 5) additional details on the potential margin opportunity associated with the implementation of engineered labor standards at the company's facilities, and 6) an update on the transition to the larger facility in the Bronx.

Impact

Neutral.

Forecasts

Our 4Q11 EPS is \$0.26. For FY2012, our EPS estimate is \$0.99. Consensus is \$0.25 and \$0.97, respectively.

Valuation

CHEF is trading at an FY2012 and FY2013 EV/EBITDA of 11.8x and 9.6x, respectively.

Recommendation

We maintain our **OUTPERFORM** rating.

Key Points

Exhibit 1. CHEF Current Valuation

Chefs' Warehouse Current Valuation								
	2012E	2013E						
EPS	\$0.99	\$1.16						
EBITDA	\$38	\$44						
EBITDAR	\$47	\$53						
Net Forward Debt	\$20	-\$3						
# Shares	21	21						
Current Stock Price	\$20.22	\$20.22						
Market Cap	\$427	\$427						
EV	\$447	\$424						
P/E	20.4x	17.4x						
EV/EBITDA	11.8x	9.6x						
EPS Growth	27.9%	17.2%						

Source: Company reports, BMO Capital Markets estimates.

Areas of focus for the conference call:

- Initial guidance for FY2012.
- The breakdown of total sales growth into organic growth, and the impact owing to acquisitions and inflation. Additionally, some color on trends in unique customers.
- Some color on the state of the consumer and, as a result, the health of the restaurant operators that CHEF serves.
- Sales trends into 1Q12.
- Some color on inflation trends and the company's ability to pass on cost increases to its customers.
- An update on the competitive environment.
- Trends in case volumes and revenues per case.
- Update on the roll-out of the warehouse management system to the remaining facilities.
- 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.

In 4Q11, our estimates remain at EPS of \$0.26 and EBITDA of \$9.8 million. Consensus EPS is \$0.25. Our estimate assumes total sales increase 18.0% to \$117.1 million – driven by 9% organic sales growth, and we assume gross margins expand 50bp to 26.5%. We forecast operating expenses (excluding D&A) grow 27.8% to \$21.2 million, no change from last year's margin of 18.1% – leading to a 78bp improvement in operating margins to 7.9%, or \$9.2 million. This gets us to EBITDA of \$9.8 million, a 50bp expansion in margin to 8.4%. We

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assume interest expense of \$0.2 million, a 39.5% tax rate and 21.1 million shares outstanding, which gets us to EPS of \$0.26.

In FY2012, our estimate for EPS remains at \$0.99. Consensus EPS is \$0.97. Our EBITDA estimate is \$38.0 million. Our estimate assumes total sales increase 12.5% to \$442.5 million (vs. consensus of \$441.7 million), with gross margins improving 30bp to 26.6%. We forecast operating expenses (excluding D&A) grow 5.1% to \$79.6 million, a 90bp year-over-year improvement in margin – leading to an 116bp improvement in operating margins to 8.0%, or \$35.5 million. This gets us to EBITDA of \$38.0 million, a 120bp improvement in margin to 8.6%. We assume interest expense of \$1.2 million, a 39.5% tax rate and 21.0 million shares outstanding, which gets us to EPS of \$0.99.

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				Che	efs' Warehous	e Income Sta	tement							
	52 weeks	52 weeks	52 weeks					52 weeks					53 weeks	
	12/28/2007	12/26/2008	12/25/2009	3/26/2010	6/25/2010			12/24/2010	3/25/2011	6/24/2011			12/30/2011	
	2007	2008	2009	1Q10	2Q10	3Q10	4Q10	2010	1Q11	2Q11	3Q11	4Q11E	2011E	2012E
Revenues	\$256.13	\$281.70	\$271.07	\$70.00	\$83.61	\$84.93	\$91.58	\$330.12	\$82.90	\$99.26	\$101.68	\$117.06	\$400.90	\$442.50
Cost of Goods	\$190.79	\$211.39	\$199.76	\$52.02	\$61.67	\$62.86	\$67.79	\$244.34	\$61.50	\$73.00	\$75.05	\$86.07	\$295.62	\$324.97
Gross Profit	\$65.35	\$70.32	\$71.31	\$17.98	\$21.94	\$22.06	\$23.79	\$85.78	\$21.40	\$26.26	\$26.63	\$31.00	\$105.28	\$117.53
D&A	\$1.94	\$1.99	\$1.92	\$0.46	\$0.50	\$0.41	\$0.73	\$2.10	\$0.60	\$0.39	\$0.43	\$0.61	\$2.03	\$2.44
Total Operating Expenses (Ex. D&A)	\$57.45	\$58.33	\$56.06	\$14.49	\$15.64	\$15.40	\$16.57	\$62.10	\$16.70	\$18.66	\$19.14	\$21.19	\$75.69	\$79.56
Total Operating Expenses (Incl. D&A)	\$59.39	\$60.31	\$57.98	\$14.953	\$16.14	\$15.81	\$17.31	\$64.21	\$17.30	\$19.05	\$19.57	\$21.80	\$77.72	\$82.00
Operating Income	\$5.96	\$10.00	\$13.33	\$3.03	\$5.80	\$6.25	\$6.48	\$21.57	\$4.10	\$7.20	\$7.06	\$9.20	\$27.56	\$35.54
EBITDA	\$7.90	\$11.99	\$15.25	\$3.49	\$6.31	\$6.66	\$7.21	\$23.68	\$4.70	\$7.60	\$7.491	\$9.81	\$29.60	\$37.98
l-tt	© 2.50	f0.04	#0.00	60.00	CO 54	CO 47	60.40	64.04	CO 40	E0 40	60.54	60.00	64.50	64.40
Interest Gain on Settlement	\$3.52 \$1.10	\$3.24	\$2.82	\$0.63	\$0.51	\$0.47	\$2.43	\$4.04	\$0.40	\$0.42	\$0.51	\$0.20	\$1.52	\$1.18
Gain/Loss on Interest Rate Swap Other	-\$0.62	-\$1.12	\$0.66	\$0.18	\$0.25	\$0.23	\$0.25	\$0.91	\$0.40 \$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.40	\$0.00
Income Before Tax	\$2.92	\$5.65	\$11.17	\$2.59	\$5.54	\$6.01	\$4.31	\$18.44	\$4.10	\$6.79	\$6.56	\$9.00	\$26.44	\$34.35
Taxes	\$0.79	\$3.45	\$2.21	\$1.05	\$1.05	\$1.60	-\$1.13	\$2.57	\$1.50	\$2.69	\$2.56	\$3.55	\$10.30	\$13.57
Net Income	\$2.14	\$2.20	\$8.96	\$1.54	\$4.49	\$4.41	\$5.44	\$15.87	\$2.60	\$4.10	\$4.00	\$5.44	\$16.14	\$20.78
Tax Rate	26.9%	61.1%	19.8%	40.6%	19.0%	26.6%	-26.3%	13.9%	36.6%	39.6%	39.0%	39.5%	38.9%	39.5%
Diluted EPS	\$0.10	\$0.11	\$0.43	\$0.07	\$0.22	\$0.21	\$0.26	\$0.76	\$0.13	\$0.20	\$0.19	\$0.26	\$0.77	\$0.99
Basic	20.32	20.32	20.32	20.12	20.16	20.45	20.54	20.32	20.12	20.12	20.45	20.54	20.31	20.80
Diluted	20.77	20.77	20.77	20.67	20.67	20.87	20.87	20.77	20.67	20.83	20.83	21.10	20.86	21.00
Consensus EBITDA													\$390.86	\$434.97
Consensus Sales													\$29.73	\$36.88
Consensus EPS													\$0.77	\$0.97
Growth														
Sales		10.0%	-3.8%	17.7%	22.5%	23.7%	22.6%	21.8%	18.4%	18.7%	19.7%	18.0%	21.4%	12.5%
Organic Sales growth		4.2%	-6.2%	10.0%	12.0%	11.0%	10.6%	10.9%	10.9%	13.0%	10.6%	9%		6%
Inflation - contribution to sales		n/a	-0.6%	4.6%	7.5%	9.0%	9.4%	7.8%	4.9%	3.3%	2.7%	3%		4%
Acquisitions - contribution to sales		5.8%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.7%	2.7%	3.1%	3.0%	2.0%	6.4%	6%		3%
Operating Expenses (Ex. D&A)		1.5%	-3.9%					10.8%	15.3%	19.3%	24.3%	27.8%	21.9%	5.1%
Operating Expenses (Incl. D&A)		1.6%	-3.9%					10.7%	15.7%	18.1%	23.8%	25.9%	21.0%	5.5%
Operating Income		67.9%	33.3%					61.8%	35.3%	24.1%	12.9%	41.9%	27.8%	28.9%
EBITDA		51.7%	27.2%					55.3%	34.5%	20.4%	12.5%	35.9%	25.0%	28.3%
Net Income		2.8%	308.1%					77.1%	69.0%	-8.7%	-9.3%	0.1%	1.7%	28.8%
EPS			308.1%					77.1%					1.3%	27.9%
Margins														
Gross	25.5%	25.0%	26.3%	25.7%	26.24%	25.98%	25.98%	26.0%	25.8%	26.45%	26.19%	26.48%	26.26%	26.56%
D&A	0.8%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%	0.5%	0.8%	0.6%	0.7%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%
Operating Expenses (Ex. D&A)				20.7%	18.7%	18.1%	18.1%	18.8%	20.1%	18.8%	18.8%	18.1%	18.9%	18.0%
Operating Expenses (Incl. D&A)	23.2%	21.4%	21.4%	21.4%	19.3%	18.6%	18.9%	19.4%	20.9%	19.2%	19.2%	18.6%	19.4%	18.5%
Operating Income	2.3%	3.6%	4.9%	4.3%	6.9%	7.4%	7.1%	6.5%	4.9%	7.3%	6.9%	7.9%	6.9%	8.0%
EBITDA	3.1%	4.3%	5.6%	5.0%	7.5%	7.8%	7.9%	7.2%	5.7%	7.7%	7.4%	8.4%	7.4%	8.6%
Tax Net	26.9% 0.8%	61.1% 0.8%	19.8% 3.3%	40.6% 2.2%	19.0% 5.4%	26.6% 5.2%	-26.3% 5.9%	13.9% 4.8%	36.6% 3.1%	39.6% 4.1%	39.0% 3.9%	39.5% 4.7%	38.9% 4.0%	39.5% 4.7%
Change in Margine														
Change in Margins Gross		-55bp	134bp					-32bp	12bp	21bp	21bp	50bp	28bp	30bp
D&A		-55bp	0bp	l				-320p -7bp	6bp	-20bp	-6bp	-28bp	-13bp	4bp
Operating Expenses (Ex. D&A)		-opp	оор	1				-7 bp	-55bp	-200p 10bp	-60p 69bp	-28bp 0bp	-13bp 7bp	-90bp
Operating Expenses (Ex. D&A) Operating Expenses (Incl. D&A)		-178bp	-2bp	l				-194bp	-550p -49bp	-11bp	63bp	-28bp	7bр -6bр	-90bp
Operating Expenses (Incl. D&A) Operating Income		-1780p 122bp	-20p 137bp					-194bp 162bp	-49bp 62bp	-11bp 31bp	-42bp	-280p 78bp	-оор 34bp	-860p 116bp
EBITDA		1220p 117bp	137bp	I				155bp	68bp	11bp	-420p -47bp	7 обр 50bp	21bp	120bp

Source: Company reports, BMO Capital Markets estimates.

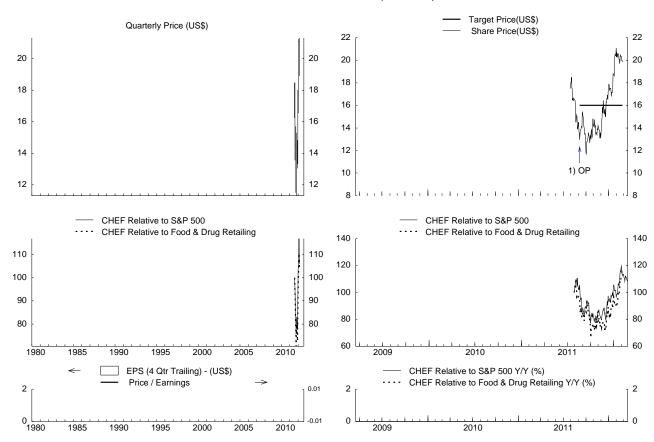
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Chefs' Warehouse Holdings Balance Sheet								
	10/00/07	40/06/00	10/05/00	10/04/10				
	12/28/07 FY2007	12/26/08 FY2008	12/25/09 FY2009	12/24/10 FY2010				
	F12007	F12008	F12009	F12010				
Cash & Equivalents	2,232	1.591	0.88	1.98				
Accounts Receivable (net)	29.865	28.728	30.98	36.20				
Inventory - Net of Reserve	17.819	16.449	15.29	16.44				
Deferred Income Taxes	0.947	1.026	1.48	1.65				
Other Current Assets & Prepaid Expenses	1.567	1.664	2.09	3.61				
Total Current Assets	52.43	49.46	50.71	59.88				
Total Current Assets	52.45	49.40	50.71	59.66				
Net Property, Plant & Equipment	3.87	4.30	4.24	4.23				
Deferred Income Taxes	0.07	1.00		1.20				
Capitalized Financing Fees								
Intangible Assets	2.33	6.80	9.47	12.11				
Deferred Costs	0.35	0.89	0.06	2.36				
Other LT Assets	3.94	3.06	1.45	4.09				
Total Non-current Assets	10.49	15.04	15.23	22.79				
Total Nort Guilent Assets	10.45	10.04	10.20	22.75				
TOTAL ASSETS	62.92	64.50	65.94	82.67				
Current Debt	2.90	2.76	2.79	16.95				
Original issue Discount	2.50	2.70	2.75	10.55				
Accounts Payable	24.41	18.79	19.29	23.56				
Advances, Accrued Expenses	6.31	5.81	6.15	7.16				
Taxes Payable other than Income	0.01	0.01	0.10	7.10				
Income Taxes Payable								
Total Current Liabilities	33.62	27.36	28.23	47.67				
Total Gallon Liabilities	00.02	27.00	20.20					
Long Term Debt, Net of Current Portion	33.082	37.323	29.928	82.58				
Revolver								
Mezz Debt								
Term Note								
Original issue Discount								
Other (Deferred Rent)	1.63	3.04	2.45	1.23				
Total Non-current Liabilities	34.71	40.36	32.37	83.81				
TOTAL LIABILITIES	68.33	67.72	60.60	131.48				
1	,							
SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY	(5.41)	(3.22)	5.33	(48.81)				
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	62.92	64.50	65.94	82.67				

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: February 24, 2012

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Important Disclosures

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Disclosure 1: BMO Capital Markets has undertaken an underwriting liability with respect to this issuer within the past 12 months.

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Disclosure 9: BMO Capital Markets makes a market in this security.

Methodology and Risks to Our Price Target/Valuation

Methodology: Our target price values CHEF at an FY12 EV/EBITDA of 9.4x and P/E of 16.2x.

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 (December 30, 2011)

	Rating		BMOCM US	BMOCM US	BMOCM US	BMOCM	BMOCM	Starmine
	Category	BMO Rating	Universe*	IB Clients**	IB Clients***	Universe****	IB Clients****	Universe
	Buy	Outperform	38.0%	10.3%	40.4%	40.7%	46.2%	56.2%
	Hold	Market Perform	60.3%	9.6%	59.6%	56.3%	52.2%	39.4%
Ī	Sell	Underperform	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%	1.6%	4.4%

Reflects rating distribution of all companies covered by BMO Capital Markets Corp. equity research analysts.

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OP = Outperform - Forecast to outperform the market;

Mkt = Market Perform - Forecast to perform roughly in line with the market;

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(S) = speculative investment;

NR = No rating at this time;

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