



April 7, 2007

Egg McMuffin Genius Dies at 89

Herb Peterson, who invented the ubiquitous Egg McMuffin as a way to introduce breakfast to McDonald's restaurants, has died, a Southern California McDonald's official said, he was 89. Peterson died peacefully at his Santa Barbara home, said Monte Fraker, vice president of operations for McDonald's restaurants in that city. He began his career with McDonald's Corp. as vice president of the company's advertising firm, D'Arcy Advertising, in Chicago. He wrote McDonald's first national advertising slogan, "Where Quality Starts Fresh Every Day." Peterson eventually became a franchisee and was currently co-owner and operator of six McDonald's restaurants in Santa Barbara and Goleta, Fraker said. Peterson came up with idea for the signature McDonald's breakfast item in 1972. He "was very partial to eggs Benedict," Fraker said, and worked on creating something similar. The egg sandwich consisted of an egg that had been formed in a Teflon circle with the yolk broken, topped with a slice of cheese and grilled Canadian bacon. It was served open-faced on a toasted and buttered English muffin. The Egg McMuffin made its debut at a restaurant in Santa Barbara that Peterson co-owned with his son, David Peterson. Fraker said that, although semiretired, Peterson still visited all six of his stores in the Santa Barbara area until last year when his health began to deteriorate. "He would talk to the customers, visit with the employees. He loved McDonald's," Fraker said. Fraker, who said he worked with Peterson for 30 years, said "he was amazing as far as giving back to the community." "He embraced the community and the community embraced him," Fraker said. "We loved the man." Peterson is survived by his wife, son and three daughters.

Source: The Associated Press

Phil Dei Dolori Named Group Managing Director—Europe and Asia at ENODIS

Enodis plc announces the appointment of Phil Dei Dolori to the position of Group Managing Director—Europe and Asia, effective April 22, 2008. His responsibilities will include all business units, functions, and regional sales outside the Americas. Dei Dolori joined Scotsman on September 10, 2007 as Group President, Ice and Beverage Systems, and he will continue to chair a management board for this group to maintain continuity in global ice/beverage strategy. Previously, he served as a senior executive of Middleby Corporation for over 5 years until April 2007. Since joining the foodservice industry in 1984, including 19 years with Blodgett and Pitco Frialator, he has gained extensive experience both in North America and internationally. Dave McCulloch, Chief Executive Officer, commented, "This is a natural progression for Phil given his strong international background. This change also completes the alignment of our operating management team to our public reporting entities with Bob Nerbonne, Phil Dei Dolori and David Frase heading Foodservice—Americas, Foodservice—Europe/Asia, and Food Retail respectively".

Source: Enodis plc

Hobart to Grant \$5,000 for Sustainable Program

The Hobart Center for Foodservice Sustainability announced plans to award a \$5,000 grant to the individual or company judged to have the best-executed foodservice or food retail sustainability project of the year. Hobart is accepting submissions and will announce the recipient of the grant at the 2008 Greenbuild Expo, which takes place Nov. 19-21 in Boston. Applicants can enter by submitting a case study of 10 or fewer pages demonstrating how their program addresses sustainability challenges such as reducing energy/water use; decreasing waste water or solid waste; or implementing Farm-to-Fork programs or other combined programs. All submissions must be received by 5 p.m. EST Aug. 29, and will be judged by the HCFS fellows.

Source FE&S

Village Inn's Parent Company Files For Bankruptcy Protection

Blaming a failing economy, and rising commodity prices, the company that owns both Village Inn restaurants in Sioux City, abruptly closed them. Now, VICORP, Incorporated, has filed for bankruptcy protection. Having cooked its last meals, kitchen equipment is loaded onto a semi parked outside the Village Inn restaurant, on Hamilton Boulevard. That restaurant-- and another in the Lakeport Commons-- have closed for good. "We don't want to close restaurants," said Josh Kern, VICORP, Inc. Vice President of Marketing. The company felt it had to. But, the CEO of Village Inn's parent company said closing a total of 56 restaurants, nationwide, wasn't enough to take care of its debt. Last week, the company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. The closures surprised Economic Development Director, Marty Dougherty. "We don't want to see a business close, obviously," said Dougherty. "But, overall economic growth is strong." Dougherty said both locations should see interest from other companies. "We market Sioux City all the time," Dougherty said. "And, we have interest for our properties on Hamilton Boulevard and elsewhere." But, when it comes to retail stores, the city doesn't get actively involved with the search for suitors. "Generally, the city doesn't do that," Dougherty said. But, it's safe to say that the city cares about the property taxes the businesses pay. City manager Paul Eckert says the Village Inn, on Hamilton, was only two years into a 15-year lease... a lease that generates property taxes for the city. Company officials say, if you still have Village Inn coupons and gift cards, they will still honor them at its remaining locations.

Source: Village Inn Restaurants

Panera Launches New Breakfast Sandwiches

According to a new survey conducted by Braun Research on behalf of Panera Bread, three-quarters of respondents will cut their morning sleep short for a good breakfast. An equal percentage of consumers say freshness and quality ingredients are essential components of a morning meal. To help consumers access healthier breakfast offerings, Panera Bread will begin to offer grilled breakfast sandwiches nationwide in April 2008. The new line of breakfast sandwiches are made fresh daily with a combination of all-natural egg, Vermont white cheddar cheese, Applewood-smoked bacon or all-natural sausage, grilled between two slices of freshly baked Ciabatta.

Source: FastCasual.com

Rohrkemper Succeeds Sullivan as Gold Star CEO

Mike Rohrkemper will replace the retiring John Sullivan as CEO of Gold Star Chili, the company said. Sullivan, who has headed the Cincinnati chili chain since 1990, said that he'll retire on May 1, according to a news release. Rohrkemper joins Gold Star from Kemper and Brown Business Consultants, which provided management consulting to Gold Star, among other clients. "We have great confidence in Mike's

leadership and financial abilities," said Basheer Daoud, director of development for Gold Star. "His previous work experience and knowledge of our business will set the stage for a strong future both creatively and financially." Gold Star, founded in 1965, operates more than 100 restaurants in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana, as well as concessions at Paul Brown Stadium and other venues.

Source: Business Courier of Cincinnati

Little Caesars Grew Faster Than Any Other U.S. Pizza Chain in 2007

Little Caesar Enterprise Inc., the global pizza chain founded by Mike and Marian Ilitch in 1959, continues to be the golden backbone of the Ilitch empire. Last week, the privately held company announced 2007 was its seventh consecutive year of "significant" sales growth and another banner year for adding new franchises. The company doesn't release sales figures or numbers of franchises, but Little Caesars President David Scrivano said "hundreds" of new stores had been built in 36 states and that 2007 sales outstripped the pizza industry average of percent annual growth. "We're doing great in sales growth, believe me, much more than the industry average," Scrivano said. According to recently released estimates from the trade magazine Pizza Today, Little Caesars topped the \$1 billion gross sales mark in 2006, putting it in the 4 spot on the list of 100 largest pizza chains. Pizza Today estimates Little No. Caesars ran 2,300 outlets in 2006. Little Caesars executives say the Detroit-based business grew faster than any other pizza chain in the United States in 2007, even while fast food sales are flat because of rising energy and foods costs coupled with a sluggish economy. Scrivano said the company maxims of keeping its menu inexpensive, franchise owners happy and marketing aggressive are paying off. "For nearly 50 years, Mike and Marian figured out they wanted Little Caesars to feed families for a great price. And really that's the driving point," he said.

Source: The Detroit News

Greenfield World Trade and Neal Asbury Receive International Award

The SBA (Small Business Administration) in Washington D.C. has just announced that Greenfield World Trade and Neal Asbury have won the coveted National Champion Exporter of the Year Award. This is the most prestigious award in the United States for international trade. There is only one National Champion for all 50 United States covering every industry. Greenfield World Trade is the first Florida business and foodservice company to receive this award. To win this award, Greenfield World Trade first had to win the Exporter of the Year Award for Florida. This was announced last February. Then, they were selected as the Region IV Exporter of the Year covering the Southeast United States. The National Champion was then selected from the 10 regional winners. The Exporter of the Year Award for Florida was presented to Greenfield World Trade on April 7th at a trade symposium in Miami by U.S. Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez and SBA Administrator Steve Preston. The National Champion Exporter of the Year Award will be presented April 23rd in Washington D.C. "This is an exciting time to be National Champion as it is a Presidential election year when trade is getting much attention. We will have many opportunities to promote the issues that are important to American exporters such as the pending Free Trade Agreements, Trade Promotion Authority and Intellectual Property Protection" said Neal Asbury, President of Greenfield World Trade

Source: U.S Small Business Administrator/Greenfield World Trade

Unified Brands Welcomes New Members

United Brands named Bob Arthur as its new chain account sales manager. The equipment manufacturer also announced that Michael Williams rejoined the company as director of culinary marketing. A 20-plus-year industry veteran, Arthur most recently worked for The Boelter Company and prior to that, for the Wasserstrom Company, two of the largest equipment and supplies dealerships in the country. Williams, who has more than 27 years of experience in foodservice, most recently served as director of client

purchasing services for US Foodservice Prior to that, he spent four years as the corporate executive chef for Unified Brands, having previously held marketing, product portfolio management and procurement positions with Kraft Foodservice.

Source: FE&S



Wendy's International to Open 60 Restaurants In Monterrey, Mexico City

Wendy's International Inc. said two franchisees will build and operate 60 new stores in Monterrey and Mexico City over the next seven years. The Dublin, Ohio, fast-food retailer said the Mexico City franchise owner is an affiliate of Corpogas S.C. and Grupo Refran will operate the Monterrey franchises. Wendy's said the first of the restaurants is expected to open before the end of the year.

Source: DOW JONES NEWSWIRES

UFood Restaurant Group Announces New Franchise Agreement

UFood Restaurant Group has announced the sale of a multi-unit restaurant development to a franchise developer in the Rocky Mountain States. According to the company, the franchisee has entered into a five and a half year development agreement to open thirty-eight UFood Grills in Colorado, Utah, Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. The agreement gives the developer the right to open in any location deemed viable for the initial exposure of UFood Grill to the consumers in those states. The first locations are expected to open in Salt Lake City and Denver, the company said. George Naddaff, chairman and CEO of UFood Grill, said: "We are excited to bring in an experienced developer to open thirty-eight of our restaurants in the northwest region. This represents the significant progress of UFood Grill's franchising program and the continued success of building a national brand."

Source: Food Business Review OnLine

Ponderosa, Bonanza Promo Targets QSR Customers

Ponderosa and Bonanza steakhouses are aiming their most recent value promotion at fast-food customers. Beginning last week, 38 domestic Bonanzas and 233 domestic Ponderosas are offering a lunch buffet for \$5 and a dinner buffet for \$8 in exchange for any fast-food restaurant receipt. "Bring in any fast food receipt, coupon or even the bag for that matter," said Sheryl Randolph, senior director of marketing for Ponderosa/Bonanza, a division of Metromedia Restaurant Group here. The program runs through June 30 and includes a simulated fast-food receipt on the Ponderosa and Bonanza websites and in freestanding newspaper inserts. "We're offering an all-you-can-eat buffet with fresh food, healthy options and quality ingredients at a value price," Randolph said. "This is an incredible alternative to getting lunch or dinner in a bag at a drive-thru window." The promotion, entitled "The Fight for Your Appetite," includes such catch phrases as "because great tasting meals aren't served in a wrapper" and "fast-food value meals – not much of a value or a meal." Ponderosa and Bonanza's promotion comes as many casual-dining restaurants are

trying to protect their market share from quick-service competitors. Denny's, for example, recently launched an ad campaign that promotes its breakfast platters and warns consumers not to fall for the "fake" breakfasts offered by fast-food restaurants. Metromedia Restaurant Group also owns the Bennigan's, Steak & Ale and The Plano Tavern brands.

Source: Nation Restaurant News

Buffalo Wild Wings Elects New Chairman

Restaurant chain Buffalo Wild Wings Inc. said recently it elected James M. Damian as chairman of the board of directors. Damian is currently a member of the board. He serves as senior vice president of Best Buy Corp.'s experience development group. Damian is succeeding Warren E. Mack, who served as interim chairman from August to February after Kenneth H. Dahlberg retired.

Source: The Associated Press/Forbes.com

Pizza Hut Looks for New Topping of Parents with Young Children

PIZZA Hut, the world's largest pizza restaurant chain, is to reinvent itself as the venue of choice for parents with young children when it undergoes a major rebranding later this year. The fast-food chain will open around 25 new-look restaurants this year as well as refitting the majority of its estate with more child and family-friendly facilities. The move will also see the chain offload 20, mostly high street restaurants, which it now sees as non-core, while the group concentrates on retail and mixed-use parks. Consumers' attitudes towards food have changed dramatically over recent years in the UK. Families are now spending record amounts on eating out and convenience food as a change in lifestyle has left them little time to cook and eat at home. A spokesman for Pizza Hut said: "We are moving more and more into casual dining with a particular focus on families and children. The new restaurants will be very child friendly and we are introducing a range of concepts such as children's menus, activity kits and upgraded children's areas. This is all part of the brand relaunch which will take Pizza Hut to the next level and accommodate their shift into casual dining." Consumption of pizza and pasta, in particular, has grown significantly as a result of the UK's trend towards more convenience food. In the eating-out sector, pasta consumption continues to grow at a steady pace in line with the overall market.

Source: The Scotsman, Edinburgh, Scotland

Ruby Tuesday, Inc. Announces Election of R. Brad Martin to Its Board of Directors

Ruby Tuesday, Inc. announced that R. Brad Martin has been elected to a seat on its Board of Directors and also said that it is expanding the number of Directors from seven to eight, pursuant to its by-laws, which state that the additional director be elected by the Board. Mr. Martin is Chairman of RBM Venture Company, a family investment company, and was formerly Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of Saks Incorporated. He will stand for election by Ruby Tuesday shareholders at the company's annual meeting in October 2008. If elected, he will then be appointed to serve on the Nominating and Governance and the Compensation and Stock Option committees of the Board. "We are pleased to welcome Brad to our Board," said Sandy Beall, Chairman, Chief Executive Officer, President, and Founder of Ruby Tuesday, Inc. "He has the insight and understanding that come from leading a large retail company and building one of the world's premier brands. His experience and vision will add value to our company and brand, as well."

Source: Ruby Tuesday, Inc.



GE Capital Solutions, Franchise Finance Loans \$73.75 Million to Fox & Hound Restaurant Group. Fox & Hound receives funds to acquire Champps Americana

GE Capital Solutions, Franchise Finance committed \$73.75 million to Fox & Hound Restaurant Group to acquire Champps Americana, a national chain of restaurants with a burger, beer, and sports theme. Operating under the brand names Fox & Hound and Bailey's, Fox & Hound Restaurant Group owns entertainment restaurants in 25 states across the nation. "We had the opportunity to continue a relationship with Fox & Hound and provide financing for an acquisition and new store growth," says Paul Cantieri, vice president of GE Capital Solutions, Franchise Finance. "Stepping forward with this large deal displays our commitment to the company and our industry." "This is a key acquisition for Fox & Hound," says Clinton Coleman, vice president, Newcastle Capital Management, a private investment fund with an ownership interest in Fox & Hound. "It really opens the door for continued success and future growth. We're pleased GE Capital Solutions, Franchise Finance stepped up in a turbulent market to help us get this deal done." After the acquisition, with 136 locations, Fox & Hound Restaurant Group offers customers a unique and upscale destination for socializing, eating, and drinking. Each restaurant emphasizes a high energy environment with multiple billiard tables, satellite and cable coverage of a variety of sporting events, and music videos.

Source: GE Capital Solutions/Franchise Finance

Buffalo Wild Wings®, Inc. Announces New Chairman of Its Board of Directors

Buffalo Wild Wings®, Inc. announced the election of current director James M. Damian as Chairman of the Company's Board of Directors, succeeding Warren E. Mack, Interim Chairman from August 23, 2007 to February 16, 2008. Kenneth H. Dahlberg served as Chairman prior to Mr. Mack for four years until his retirement in August.

Mr. Damian stated, "Buffalo Wild Wings is an outstanding company with incredibly talented management and I am excited to be partnering with Sally Smith as we become a strong, united team. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank Ken for the many contributions he made as Chairman and look forward to his guidance as he continues his membership on the Board."

Source: Buffalo Wild Wings, Inc.

Ruby Tuesday Franchisee to Expand in UAE

Causal dining restaurant group Ruby Tuesday has announced that Bin Hendi Hospitality, its franchisee in Dubai, will expand its operation to six of the seven United Arab Emirates. Bin Hendi is planning to develop seven Ruby Tuesday restaurants in Dubai and five in the UAE. Ruby Tuesday currently operates in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In addition to the UAE development, new restaurants are expected to open in Cairo, Kuwait and Bahrain in 2008. Ruby Tuesday said that it has been expanding its franchise presence around the world during the past several years and continues to seek international franchising opportunities.

National Arabic Company for Restaurant Management (NAC), an operating and development partner of Ruby Tuesday, currently operates three Ruby Tuesdays in Kuwait and will open its fourth restaurant in

Cairo. Construction of its fifth restaurant, to be located on Gulf Road in Kuwait city, is scheduled to begin soon. Mohi Din Binhendi, founder and president of Bin Hendi Enterprises, said: "This expansion of Ruby Tuesday in the UAE is a significant step toward our goal to provide high-quality hospitality and restaurant experiences. We will introduce Ruby Tuesday to the UAE when our first two restaurants open in Dubai city this spring."

Source: Food Business Review OnLine

Frauenshuh Company Becomes Midwest's Biggest Dairy Queen Owner

A cluster of Dairy Queen franchises throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa have changed ownership. Albert Lea-based Kraus Foods Midwest, which owned 33 Dairy Queen restaurants, sold them to Fourteen Foods, a company run by the Frauenshuh family, for an undisclosed amount, the Pioneer Press reported. The purchase makes Fourteen Foods the biggest DQ franchise owner in the Midwest, with 50 DQ restaurants. Fourteen Foods said it will combine operations and teams from the two companies, with offices in Minneapolis and Albert Lea. Kraus Foods will operate eight DQ Grill & Chill restaurants in Florida.

Source: Minneapolis / St. Paul Business Journal

High School Culinary Teams Take Top Honors at Statewide Competition Sacramento Kitchen Academy hosts sixth annual event

March 8 and 9, students from La Quinta High School claimed victory at the sixth annual California ProStart® Culinary Competition, organized by the California Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (CRAEF) and the Kitchen Academy in Sacramento. The event, which is separated into two categories of competition, pitted 11 schools from across the state in a battle of skill and knowledge. Teams were awarded points on specific criteria including proper cooking procedures, safety and sanitation, presentation, product taste and teamwork. The first-place winners in the culinary competition were Jennifer Aposhian, Francisco Calderon, Daira Gomez and Paulina Ferro from La Quinta High School in La Quinta. Second-place went to the Pacifica High School team members from Oxnard, Fiona Byrne, Zachary Chenoweth, Bianca Montesinos, Isaac Morales and alternate member Ian Santillano. Third-place winners were Mikayla Carpenter, Jennifer Crouchley, Zavien Fisher and Matt Rocha from San Juan High School in Sacramento.

"These students showed tremendous skill and expertise under pressure and should be proud of this great accomplishment," said Wendy Armour, School-to-Career Manager for CRAEF. "The ProStart® curriculum, along with the support of family, teachers and mentors, is helping produce the next generation of restaurant and foodservice professionals." The La Quinta team will now represent California at the National ProStart® Student Invitational culinary competition, a rigorous battle among students who placed first in their respective states' culinary competitions. State teams will showcase their skills through the preparation of a meal consisting of a salad, protein (such as meat, fish or fowl), a starch, a vegetable and a cold or flambé dessert. The competition is expected to intensify as judges from leading post-secondary colleges and universities across the country will rate the various contestants. The national event is scheduled to take place in San Diego from Thursday, April 24 to Saturday, April 26, and will feature student teams from across the country.

Source: California Restaurant Association Educational Foundation

Famous Dave's Names Wilson L. Craft as New CEO and President

Famous Dave's of America, Inc. announced that it had named Wilson L. Craft as its new president and chief executive officer, and as a member of its board of directors, effective April 21, 2008. A 25-year veteran of the casual dining industry, Craft, 54, is currently the executive vice president of operations for Longhorn Steakhouse, a 300-unit chain based in Atlanta, Georgia, that generated approximately \$900

million in annual sales in 2007. Longhorn was acquired last August by Darden Restaurants, Inc., of Orlando, Florida. “Famous Dave’s is delighted to have attracted an individual of Wilson Craft’s caliber to lead our organization,” said K. Jeffrey Dahlberg, chairman of the board of Famous Dave’s of America. “Wilson is a proven leader in the industry, and his extensive experience in all aspects of casual dining, as well as franchising, will allow him to guide our company’s growth and further increase shareholder value.” “This is a tremendous opportunity,” Craft said. “In its 13 years, Famous Dave’s has built an incredibly solid reputation in the casual restaurant industry. Its associates, its culture, the ‘cooked from scratch’ approach to all of its menu offerings distinguishes Famous Dave’s in this category, with a broad and loyal following nationwide. This is a great company and I’m eager to do my part to continue to deliver strong results and to build this great brand.” Under Wilson’s operations leadership, Longhorn was named by The People Report as the casual dining concept with the “Best People Practices” in 2007 and had the lowest manager and second lowest staff turnover. In 2006, Chain Leader magazine named Longhorn as one of the “best places to work in the restaurant industry.”

Source: Famous Dave’s of America, Inc.



Maria Maria Restaurant Opens in Tempe, Arizona

Just last week, the doors opened at the highly anticipated Maria Maria Restaurant in the Tempe Marketplace. An upcoming official “Grand Opening” is slated to coincide with Cinco de Mayo Weekend (Friday, May 2). The fresh and authentic Mexican dining destination is inspired by an ongoing collaboration between award-winning, internationally renowned contemporary Latin chef Roberto Santibañez and legendary musician Carlos Santana. It is the second location in what is planned as a series of eateries under the Maria Maria banner nationwide; the first opened in Walnut Creek, CA in fall 2007. With Santibañez at the culinary helm—and creative consultation from Carlos Santana—the adventurous menu at Maria Maria celebrates the diversity and complexity of Mexico’s exciting regional cuisines. It balances innovation and tradition and spice and sweetness throughout, using only the finest ingredients. The restaurant’s ambience and environment are inspired by the music of Santana, reflecting its passion and spirit with vibrant artwork, sensuous lighting, rustically elegant décor and a palette of rich, warm earth tones. At the new Tempe location, the 400-seat restaurant encompasses a variety of indoor and outdoor areas ranging from the intimate Candle Dining Room to the festive Playa Room, featuring a covered patio. There is also an oversized outdoor space for guests to enjoy the pleasures of dining alfresco. Recordings of the best world music from around the globe provide a spirited soundtrack for the Maria Maria dining experience, both inside and out, and live music will be featured several nights weekly as well.

Source: Maria Maria Restaurants

Texas Roadhouse, Inc. Completes Acquisitions of Three Franchised Restaurants

Texas Roadhouse, Inc. announced that it has closed on the acquisitions of three franchised restaurants. The aggregate purchase price for the restaurants, which included one in Kentucky and two in Missouri, was approximately \$8.7 million. The purchase price for all transactions was paid in cash and funded through borrowings under the Company’s credit facility. For accounting purposes, the financial results of all three restaurants will be included in the Company’s financial results from the effective date of March 26, 2008

forward. March 26 is the first day of the Company's second quarter of fiscal 2008. On a 12-month basis, the acquisitions are expected to add approximately \$13 million of net revenue and approximately \$0.005 per diluted share to earnings, excluding any acquisition-related charges. In the Company's second quarter of 2008, the Company expects to record an after-tax charge of approximately \$35,000 relating primarily to the termination of franchise agreements for certain restaurants that operated at a royalty rate lower than the current market royalty rates. "We are acquiring much more than just three profitable restaurants. We are also gaining an experienced management team in each restaurant that knows how to execute and provide legendary food and legendary service each and every day." said GJ Hart, president and CEO of Texas Roadhouse.

Source: Texas Roadhouse

Ruth's Chris Vying to Change Name

Ruth's Chris Steak House Inc.'s acquisition of 22 restaurants from Cameron Mitchell Restaurants LLC in February made the company more than just a place to buy a steak dinner. Now the restaurant chain wants to make sure its name reflects it. In a preliminary proxy statement filed recently with regulators, Ruth's Chris said it will seek shareholder approval to change its name to Ruth's Hospitality Group Inc. at the annual stockholders meeting May 22. The name, the company said, would better represent the business after the addition of Mitchell's Fish Market from its \$92 million acquisition of restaurants from Columbus-based Cameron Mitchell. Ruth's Chris operates 19 Mitchell's Fish Markets, two Mitchell's Steakhouses and one Cameron's Steakhouse. Two of the 19 Fish Markets operate in Columbus. Restaurants scheduled to open in February in Jacksonville, Fla., and Stamford, Conn., were in the deal as well. Two of the three steakhouses are in Columbus and the other is in Birmingham, Mich. Following the sale, restaurateur Cameron Mitchell has said his company will concentrate on expanding Mitchell's Ocean Club and Marcella's, as well as developing new dining approaches. The sale leaves the Ohio company with 11 restaurants and only two outside the Columbus area.

Source: Business First of Columbus - Business First

Arizona, Restaurants Again Pursue Nutrition Goals

Arizonans soon may find it a bit easier to identify healthful meals at some chain restaurants, like McDonald's. In a new program launched recently, the Arizona Department of Health Services is teaming with restaurants to identify items on their menus that meet certain healthful criteria - like calories from fat and milligrams of sodium - or help restaurants tweak their recipes to meet the nutritional standards. The program, called the Arizona Smart Choice Program, is voluntary. Participating restaurants will display a logo on menus and in their windows. McDonald's, Outback Steakhouse, Subway and Macayo's restaurants have signed up to participate, and officials say they hope independent restaurants will join, too. The program grew out of a failed bill in the Legislature last year by Sen. Amanda Aguirre, which would have required chain restaurants to list the nutritional content of all the items on their menus. It is modeled after a similar program in Colorado.

Source: The Arizona Republic

FCSI Names Chris Bigelow to Board of Trustees

FCSI introduced Chris Bigelow as its newest member of the board of trustees. Bigelow, president of Bigelow Company Inc., was elected during the association's member-at-large election held in January, and his term will run through the 2009 fall conference. A 32-year foodservice industry veteran, Bigelow specializes in foodservice design for both new and renovated facilities, including a number of sports, entertainment and convention center foodservice venues throughout the United States, Canada, Europe,

Asia and the Middle East. Bigelow has also chaired the National Association of Concessionaires and the food and beverage division of the Association of Luxury Suite Directors.

Source: FE&S

Pizza Hut to Try 'Pasta Hut'

New line of 3-pound servings will be offered for dine-in or delivery starting next week. With its pizza sales sagging, Dallas-based Pizza Hut Inc. will begin an aggressive marketing push for a new pasta line beginning next week. The nation's largest pizza chain will temporarily change the logo on its headquarters on the Dallas North Tollway to "Pasta Hut," said Chris Fuller, a spokesman for Pizza Hut, which is owned by Louisville-based Yum Brands Inc. The official announcement of the company's "name change" was scheduled for early April. The Pasta Hut logo will probably be on display for about a month, Mr. Fuller said. The 50-year-old pizza brand has offered some pasta dishes since 1975. And many Pizza Hut restaurants carry a bistro menu that features individual-size pasta dishes. The new Tuscani Pastas are 3-pound servings aimed at consumers looking for a family-size meal. The dishes, such as chicken Alfredo and "meaty marinara," will cost \$11.99 and be available for dine-in or delivery. Across the pizza industry, chains are adding menu items, from pasta to chicken wings, to bolster sales. Pizza sales at the nation's top five chains grew only 0.44 percent from 2006 to 2007, according to Technomic Inc., a Chicago-based market research firm that tracks restaurants. Yum Brands, which also owns the KFC chicken chain, Taco Bell and two smaller chains, did not break out Pizza Hut sales for 2007. But in 2006, sales there fell to \$5.2 billion from \$5.3 billion the year before, according to Yum's annual reports. David C. Novak, Yum's chairman and chief executive, has called Pizza Hut the company's "problem child." Steep increases recently in cheese and flour prices mean "pizza is just not as profitable as it was six months to a year ago," said Dave "Pizza Doctor" Ostrander, an industry expert in Oscoda, Mich. Sidestepping questions about the challenges facing pizza sellers, Pizza Hut's Mr. Fuller said the company sees a "large opportunity" in pasta sales and plans to enter the category "very aggressively." Pizza Hut is planning an extensive advertising campaign to push its pasta sales. Mr. Fuller declined to reveal how much will be spent on the campaign or give details on how and where the pasta dishes will be made. He did say they will be baked in the same restaurant ovens used to make pizza.

Source: The Dallas Morning News

KFC Plans to Offer Grilled Chicken Nationwide Next Year

In an effort to gain appeal with health-conscious consumers, KFC Corp. is market testing a new menu item -- Kentucky Grilled Chicken. The grilled chicken, which has about half the calories of KFC's traditional fried chicken, is being tested in Indianapolis, Colorado Springs, San Diego, Oklahoma City, Jacksonville and Austin, according to a news release. Louisville-based KFC, plans to offer the grilled chicken menu nationwide in early 2009. The move is designed to "help KFC continue to evolve and increase our relevance among consumers looking for non-fried menu options," Gregg Dedrick, president of KFC, said in the release. Kentucky Grilled Chicken has between 60 to 180 calories and 3 to 9 grams of fat, while KFC's Original Recipe chicken has between 130 to 360 calories and 8 to 24 grams of fat. The prices of both the grilled and fried options will be about the same, the release said.

Source: Business First of Louisville

Domino's Pizza Now Available in Spanish

Since Spanish speakers eat as much pizza as anyone else, you might think that most delivery companies are able to field calls en Español. But, you'd be wrong. This month, Domino's Pizza is becoming the first of the companies to serve up an automated language ordering system catering to Spanish-dominant Hispanics. The move is part of a push to target the fast-growing U.S. Latino population. The ordering service provides

Spanish-speaking customers nationwide a toll-free number, 1-888-Dominos, to place orders via a system that boasts a personable, digital Latina voice free of regional accents, phrases and, with apologies to the theater industry, sounds reminiscent of the Moviefone guy. "With this platform, every store that is part of this program now essentially has hired themselves an entire staff of people who speak Spanish and can embrace the Spanish-speaking consumer," said Rob Weisberg, Domino's vp-precision and print marketing. "And to a greater degree, we're now able to leverage the Hispanic-targeted media that we're buying." A TV and radio campaign breaking this month, themed "Tienes 30 minutos" ("You've got 30 minutes"), by LatinWorks, Austin, Texas, prominently features the phone number for those wishing to order in Spanish. Offering the Spanish ordering service in some 2,000 stores in 42 states with large Hispanic populations is a strategic move to get ahead of competitors who, like Domino's, already give customers an online option for ordering in Spanish. At the same time, the pizza chain wants to ensure that Latinos will become longtime return customers. "We spend all of this money on Spanish-language media every year because we want to embrace these consumers; then they would pick up the phone to call our stores and find that they couldn't actually speak to someone who speaks Spanish," Weisberg said. Spending for the campaign was not available. The pizza chain spent \$18 million on U.S. Hispanic TV in 2007 vs. \$17 million in 2006, per Nielsen Monitor-Plus.

Source: BrandWeek

Popeyes Fried Chicken Founder Al Copeland Dies at 64

Al Copeland, who became rich selling spicy fried chicken and notorious for his flamboyant lifestyle, extravagant weddings, bitter divorces and lawsuits over Christmas decorations, died at a clinic near Munich, Germany. Copeland, who was 64, had been diagnosed shortly before Thanksgiving with a malignant salivary gland tumor. His death was announced by his spokeswoman, Kit Wohl. After growing up in New Orleans, Copeland sold his car at age 18 for enough money to open his own one-man doughnut shop. He quickly turned the shop into a moneymaker and went on to spend 10 modestly successful years in the doughnut business. The opening of a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant in New Orleans in 1966, however, caught Copeland's eye, especially when he found it offered a shorter workday and about four times as much money per week as his doughnut shop. Inspired by KFC's success, Copeland in 1971 used his doughnut profits to open a restaurant, Chicken on the Run. ("So fast you get your chicken before you get your change.") After six months, Chicken on the Run was short of the break-even point. In a last-ditch effort in the chicken business, he chose a spicier Louisiana Cajun-style recipe and reopened the restaurant under the name Popeyes Mighty Good Fried Chicken, after Popeye Doyle, Gene Hackman's character in the film "The French Connection." The chain that grew from the one restaurant became Popeyes Famous Fried Chicken. In its third week of operation, Copeland's revived chicken restaurant broke the profit barrier. Franchising began in 1976 and the company grew to more than 800 stores in the United States and several foreign countries by 1989. In 1983, he founded Copeland's of New Orleans, a casual dining, Cajun style restaurant. In the next two decades the chain expanded as far as Maryland and west into Texas. He also started Copeland's Cheesecake Bistro and Fire and Ice restaurants and Al's Diversified Food & Seasonings — a line of specialty foods and spices for large national restaurant chains. In March 1989, Popeyes — then the third-largest chicken chain — purchased Church's Chicken, the second largest. The two chains, operated separately, gave Copeland more than 2,000 locations. The Church's purchase was heavily financed, however, and escalating debt forced Copeland to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection for the company in April 1991. Although Copeland lost both Church's and Popeyes in the bankruptcy, he retained the rights to some Popeyes products, which he manufactured through his Diversified Foods & Seasonings plants, along with a few Popeyes stores. Survivors included five sons, four daughters, a brother and 13 grandchildren.

Source: The Houston Chronicle/The Associated Press



If you would like to have news about your company, please send all editorial contributions to Mario Schacher: marioschacher@yahoo.com

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