



March 25, 2009

Restaurants, Thou Shalt Heed These Tips

"It's a great time to be a restaurant customer," says Larry Huber, co-owner of Clean Plate Club, which operates six restaurants (including Pete Miller's and Davis Street fishmarket) in Chicago's suburbs. "It's no longer business as usual. We're zeroing in on customer service, and I see operators all headed in the same direction." There's no question that restaurant spending is down. But take a look at Chicago's most popular restaurants, and you'll see good customer counts midweek and full tables on the weekend. There's money being spent out there, and the smart restaurants are figuring out how to get their share. And it's all about keeping the customer happy. I solicited tips from several restaurateurs (operators of multiple units), mixed in a few of the most common gripes (which I receive on a daily basis), added one or two of my own pet peeves and developed 10 tips—make that 10 Commandments—that every restaurant should be following:

- 1. Assign not the job of the hostess to the unworthy.** The host stand is no place for an inexperienced ditz who looks good in a tight black dress. You want someone who can greet people with a smile, someone who'll try to accommodate last-minute arrivals, some one who doesn't mind grabbing a water pitcher if that's what's needed.
- 2. Prepare for guests a pleasant table.** Customers aren't in your restaurant to exercise their short-term memory skills. If there are more than two specials, print them out on a card—with prices. And why would anyone hand a foursome four menus but just one specials list?
- 3. Honor thy regulars.** It's fine to reach out for new business, but retaining your core audience—the people who already enjoy and patronize your restaurant—is key. Whether it's a free dessert, a wine upgrade or doubling their frequent-diner points, let them know that they're appreciated.
- 4. Work well the service fundamentals.** A ridiculous number of the gripes I hear from customers focus on basic service points that nobody should get wrong these days. Gather your people, and have a little spring-training session. Asking before clearing a plate is as important as hitting the cutoff man. Interrupting a table conversation is as bad as missing a "bunt" sign. Refill those water glasses and coffee cups as though your job depends on it. Because it might.
- 5. Harken to thy feedback.** Worse than any service misstep is the sense that complaints are being ignored. If a customer has a valid complaint, own up to it, make amends and do whatever you can to turn this negative into a positive. And pay attention to other customer comments. "The best thing to happen to us is the customer comments from OpenTable.com," says Alex Dana of the Rosebud Restaurants Group. "They send them in like you wouldn't believe, and I hold my workers accountable."
- 6. Rethinkest thy wine list.** The trick is not to drop wine prices—though some businesses report success with half-price bottles or "20 bottles at \$20" off-night promotions. If you want to goose sales, why not expand your wine list at the lower end, offering more bottles in the \$35-and-under range? With by-the-glass

wines, take the opposite approach: Add more premium pours, for the serious drinker who doesn't want to drop \$72 for a bottle but who'll pay \$18 for a glass of the same thing.

7. *Retainest thou thy trained employees.* Rich Melman of Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises (with restaurants in Chicago, Las Vegas and Phoenix, among other locations) says, "We're doing all kinds of things not to eliminate jobs. We train people to be able to fill in at another restaurant where it's busier. By being flexible and doing that, you preserve people."

8. *Expand thy horizons beyond the dining room.* Noting that companies are cutting back on off-site meetings, Grant DePorter, president of Harry Caray's Restaurant Group, launched Harry's To Go, a pickup and delivery service with menus geared toward breakfast, lunch and dinner meetings. If the businesses aren't coming to you, consider going to the businesses.

9. *Make flexibility thy watchword.* Private-event customers are negotiating tougher than ever, seeking and getting concessions on everything from room charges to corkage fees. "Everybody's pushing the envelope," Huber says. "The restaurants holding firm typically are losing the business. We'd rather get the event with smaller margins than not get it at all."

10. *Work today with an eye on tomorrow.* "We know we're not going to come anywhere near having one of our best years," Melman says. "But we can build a foundation for the future with better hiring, better training, better buying. When so many things are out of your control, you have to work on things in your control."

Source: The Chicago Tribune

Looking for a Special Night Out? Try Hardee's. Fast Feeders Cut Into Casual-Dining Market with High-End Offerings at Lower Prices

As if unemployment rates, home foreclosures and the deepening recession weren't enough, the beleaguered casual-dining industry has to fend off new, formidable competition: fast-food chains. This month Carl's Jr. is launching its Kentucky Bourbon Burger, the kind of product one would expect to see on an Applebee's menu. As consumers increasingly trade down to fast food, several players, such as Wendy's and McDonald's, are working to cement their status as value options. But others are going the other way entirely, marketing higher-end offerings designed to lure the Cheesecake Factory and T.G.I. Friday's faithful. Burger King will begin selling ribs and thicker burgers this summer as a means to attract families to grab dinner on the go and avoid the stove, said Chief Marketing Officer Russ Klein. Pizza Hut is targeting the same demographic with its Tuscani pastas, which feed four, delivered with breadsticks for \$12.99. The chain has said consumer feedback has been positive, although same-store sales up were down 1% in the most recent quarter. Exploiting segment's weakness. Regional chains such as Hardee's and Carl's Jr. are aiming to exploit casual dining's weakness as well. Andy Puzder, CEO of Hardee's and Carl's Jr. parent CKE Restaurants, said people already know fast-food brands are cheap. The way to distinguish yourself is by advertising quality. "When we emphasize the quality of our brand as opposed to solely price, then we are competing with casual dining," he said. His chains upped the ante in the last year with "fake restaurant" commercials from agency Mendelsohn Zien in which consumers bring unwitting friends to a "boutique burger restaurant" and watch them pay \$14 for a Carl's Jr. burger. The strategy seems to be working: Carl's Jr. and Hardee's same-store sales are up 2% in fiscal 2009, which ended in January. And this month, Carl's Jr. is launching the Kentucky Bourbon Burger, the kind of product one would expect to see on an Applebee's menu: a black Angus burger with "zero-proof" bourbon glaze, bacon, pepperjack cheese, lettuce, tomato and onion straws. Darren Tristano, exec VP at Chicago restaurant consultant Technomic, said fast-food chains may in some ways present a real threat to casual dining. "Convenience has always been a factor, so that's a big key," he said, adding that casual-dining companies have begun to admit that trading down to lower prices is habit-forming. "It's going to be harder to break back into getting consumers to go back to full service," he said. Another problem in the casual-dining industry has been homogeneous marketing and product offerings. And during the downturn, chains have also been pushed into price wars, such as Applebee's promotion of two entrees and an appetizer for \$20. The chain's same-store sales fell 5% in the most recent quarter. Chili's, meanwhile, where same-store sales fell 4% in the most recent quarter, has brought back its Bottomless Express Lunch offer: all the soup and salad you can eat for about \$7, further narrowing the gap with fast food. The difference, Chili's points out, is that for not much more than the price of fast food, consumers get table service and the special-occasion feel of dining

out. "At Chili's, we see quality food with bold flavors and our ability to deliver great hospitality as key components in our ability to win against [quick-service restaurants] in this highly competitive marketplace," said Krista Gibson, senior VP-brand strategy. "Our outstanding team members provide a level of service that gives guests more than just a meal; it's an experience. And in tough times, when guests are looking for more value than ever, we can provide that through everyday value items like our Oldtimer Burger with a side of fries for less than \$7."

Source AdAge.com

Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, Inc. Names Sandra B. Cochran as Chief Financial Officer

Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, Inc. announced that its Board of Directors has elected Sandra B. Cochran the Company's Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer. Cochran will have responsibility for all aspects of the Company's finance, accounting, strategic planning, investor relations and information services functions. She will report to Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer Michael A. Woodhouse. She joins Cracker Barrel on April 6. "We are pleased to have someone with Sandy's experience joining Cracker Barrel," said Woodhouse. "Sandy brings great talent and skills both in finance and in business leadership. Having been both CEO and CFO of a retailing company gives her the ability to contribute broadly to our finance, operations and business strategy." The Company also announced that, in connection with Ms. Cochran's election, the Compensation Committee of the Company's Board of Directors approved the award to her of an option to purchase 25,000 shares of the Company's common stock and 25,000 shares of restricted stock. The option is a non-qualified stock option and has an exercise price equal to the fair market value of the underlying shares as of the grant date.

Source: Cracker Barrel Old Country Store Restaurants

Lisa Kro Named to Famous Dave's Board of Directors

Famous Dave's of America, Inc. announced that Lisa Kro, managing director and chief financial officer of Goldner Hawn Private Equity, a Minneapolis-based equity investment firm, has been named to the company's board of directors. Mary Jeffries, a board member since 2003 and Chair of the audit committee, announced her resignation from the board in order to focus on the day-to-day operations of Minnetonka-based Polaroid Corp., where she is chief executive officer. "We are thrilled to have someone of Lisa's experience and caliber joins our board," said K. Jeffrey Dahlberg, chairman of the board at Famous Dave's of America. "Lisa brings a level of financial expertise and industry experience that will serve our company well as we move forward in this difficult operating environment and return to our historic growth rates when conditions improve. I also want to thank Mary Jeffries for her service to our company. She was an excellent board member, and we thank her for her passion, wisdom and insight. "In Lisa, we believe we have found an individual with the breadth and depth of financial expertise needed by a company such as ours," Dahlberg said. "Her audit experience and her experience in the food, consumer product and retail industry will add a high level of accounting and industry-specific knowledge to our board." The company indicated that Kro, who qualifies as a 'financial expert', would serve as Chair of the Audit Committee and would also serve on the company's Strategic Planning Committee.

Source: Famous Dave's of America, Inc.

Papa John's Promotes William Mitchell to President, USA

Papa John's International, Inc. announced the promotion of William Mitchell to President, USA. Mitchell succeeds William Van Epps, who is leaving to pursue other interests after seven years with the company. As President, USA, Mitchell will report to the CEO and be responsible for leading U.S. corporate and franchise restaurant operations, real estate and new business development. "We thank Bill Van Epps for his service to the Papa John's system," said John Schnatter, Papa John's Founder Chairman and Interim Chief

Executive Officer. “Bill has made some outstanding contributions to Papa John’s, both in the marketing and operations areas, to help keep our brand vibrant over the years. We wish him the very best in all his future endeavors.” Van Epps will work with the company to assist with the transition of his responsibilities as needed over the coming months. Mitchell has served as Papa John’s Senior Vice President of Domestic Operations since February 2007, responsible for overseeing all aspects of the company’s U.S. operations. From 2006 to 2007, he served as Papa John’s Division Vice President for the Midwest, the company’s largest division. And from 2000 to 2006, he served as Papa John’s Operations Vice President for the central United States. “Bill Mitchell is a talented operator and I am pleased to have him lead our U.S. corporate and franchise operations teams,” commented Schnatter. “Bill and his outstanding team of operators in the field do a great job delivering on our ‘Better Ingredients. Better Pizza’ brand promise every day.”

Source: Papa John's International, Inc.

Starbucks Details Strategy for Profitable Growth; Further Refines Focus and Expects Record Free Cash Flow of \$500 million in 2009

Starbucks Coffee Company held its Annual Meeting of Shareholders in Seattle where Howard Schultz, chairman, president and CEO, outlined the company’s strategy to grow for the long term. “Despite the challenging economic environment, Starbucks is profitable, has a strong balance sheet and generates solid cash from operations,” said Schultz. “Our customers’ connection with, and trust in the Starbucks brand remains at a high level. We are laser-focused on delivering the finest quality coffee and getting the customer experience right every time.” “We’ve also been putting our feet into the shoes of our customers and are responding directly to their needs,” said Schultz. “Our customers are telling us they want value and quality and we will deliver that in a way that is both meaningful to them and authentic to Starbucks.” During the Annual Meeting, Troy Alstead, executive vice president, chief financial officer and chief administrative officer, underscored the company’s strong financial position and outlined a two-fold growth strategy for the company. Starbucks has focused its attention on increasing profits in existing stores by: Aligning the company’s cost structure to its current business strategy with a planned \$500 million structural expense reduction in fiscal 2009; Improving operational efficiencies and making technology investments; Meeting customers’ needs for value and quality; and Investing in the tools and training store managers need. The company is also making strategic investments in key initiatives by: Entering the \$17 billion instant coffee market earlier this month with the launch of Starbucks VIA™ Ready Brew instant coffee; Growing its consumer products, licensed stores and foodservice channels; and focusing on disciplined global store expansion in key markets. “Our customers like the changes we’ve been making, even as the economic environment is impacting the way customers interact with companies and brands,” said Schultz. “The health of the company, the continued relevance of the brand and our disciplined go-forward plan make us optimistic about Starbucks future.” As part of the meeting, shareholders re-elected the current board members as well as two new board members, Kevin R. Johnson, chief executive officer of Juniper Networks, Inc.; and Sheryl Sandberg, chief operating officer of Facebook, Inc. to the Starbucks Board of Directors. Both individuals have strong technology backgrounds and bring extensive business strategy and operational execution experience, as well as expertise in managing a high-performance business with a diverse and global workforce.

Source: Starbucks Coffee Company

Quiznos Helping Franchisees Lower Their Rent

Sandwich chain Quiznos, which has had rocky relations with some of its franchisees in recent years, announced it is helping franchisees renegotiate their store leases as a way to reduce their expenses. The Denver Company said it has helped renegotiate 40 leases with property owners so far, including expired leases as well as ongoing leases in markets where property values have declined. It said the negotiations so far have reduced lease payments for franchisees by an average of 15 percent to 20 percent. The leases are being lowered “into accordance with current market values, at no cost to franchise owners,” the company said in a statement. In cases where leases have not expired, Quiznos typically has helped franchisees lower

their rent payments in exchange for lease extensions, the company said. “Even a down economy can be an opportunity and the current market for retail rent is an example of that,” Rick Schaden, Quiznos founder and CEO, said in the statement. “...We are working toward mitigating the impact of the economic situation and ensuring our franchise owners’ success. My primary goal as CEO is for franchise owners to say in one year from now they are better off than they are today.” Schaden returned as company CEO in February, replacing Dave Deno, who was CEO for less than five months.

Source: Denver Business Journal

Bertucci’s Corporation Announces Sale of Vinny T’s of Boston to C&T Restaurant Management LLC. Focus on Company’s Growing Core Brand Spurs Sale of Seven-Restaurant Chain

Bertucci’s Corporation announced it has sold the Vinny T’s of Boston to New York–based C&T Restaurant Management LLC. Bertucci’s purchased Vinny T’s in 2006 and is selling the seven-restaurant chain to focus on its growing Bertucci’s Italian Restaurant® brand. “The sale of Vinny T’s will allow us to concentrate fully on the 94 Bertucci’s restaurants,” said Stephen Clark, CEO of Bertucci’s Corporation. “This strategic decision was made to focus on building our flagship brand.” John Thall and Piero Casalicchio are the principals of C&T Restaurant Management LLC. With more than 40 years of restaurant management experience between them, Mr. Thall and Mr. Casalicchio currently own a chain of successful moderately priced Italian restaurants in Long Island, N.Y. called Pomodorino. “We are excited and look forward to the opportunity to bring our fresh, authentic, Italian cuisine to our guests in the Boston area through the Vinny T’s of Boston brand,” said Mr. Thall.

Source: Bertucci’s Italian Restaurant®

Pizza Fusion Unveils World’s First LEED Certified Pizzeria. First Two LEED Restaurants Receive Gold and Silver Certification

Pizza Fusion was recently awarded Gold and Silver certifications by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) for its first two restaurants built to LEED specifications in Palm Beach Gardens and Weston, Florida. This recognition makes Pizza Fusion the first LEED certified pizzeria in the world. “It’s very rewarding to see our first two LEED projects officially comply with the strict specifications of the USGBC’s building and operational standards,” Mike Gordon, vice president of store development and co-founder of Pizza Fusion, explains. “These certifications represent our commitment to building all our restaurants to this standard.” Pizza Fusion’s restaurants feature a number of unique, eco-efficient products, techniques and designs. Pizza Fusion restaurants’ eco-elements include countertops made of re-used glass bottles from other Pizza Fusions and manufactured using a cradle-to-cradle approach, bamboo flooring, 30% recaptured industrial concrete, non-VOC paints, energy start certified appliances, insulation made from recycled blue jeans, low voltage lighting, furniture made from reclaimed wood, and much more. “I congratulate Pizza Fusion on the LEED certification of their Palm Beach Gardens and Weston locations,” states Congressman Ron Klein (FL-22). “Pizza Fusion’s extraordinarily high standards for eco-efficiency make them community leaders in green business. Their forward-looking approach is a model for small businesses across South Florida and the nation.” In the United States, restaurants are the top electricity consumer among retail businesses, accounting for 33% of the total consumption. Each restaurant produces an average of 50,000 pounds of waste per year. Pizza Fusion’s LEED certified restaurants reduce water waste by 40 percent and electricity consumption by 20 percent annually. “Pizza Fusion is to be commended for its LEED certification of its Weston and Palm Beach Gardens, Florida locations,” Rick Fedrizzi, president, CEO and Founding Chair of the U.S. Green Building Council, states. “Pizza Fusion has demonstrated a strong commitment to the environment and by achieving certification they also demonstrate a commitment to the health, comfort and well-being of their customers and employees.”

Source: Pizza Fusion



Yum Goes Mexican with Taco Bell to Take on Street Food in India

The US owner of the KFC and Pizza Hut restaurants, Yum Brands Inc., plans to launch its Taco Bell eateries in India to compete with street food, an official said. “We are bringing in Taco Bell by opening two-three restaurants in Bangalore by the middle of this year,” said Niren Chaudhary, managing director of Yum Restaurants India Pvt. Ltd. “It is a very good time to get in something which is Mexican-inspired food, at street food prices. Our ambition for Taco Bell is that we want to compete with street food.” Taco Bell, according to Chaudhary, is more affordable than McDonald’s, which has become a popular fast food chain in India. Yum has chosen India as one of the few markets where it wants to expand, given the country’s love for food, he said. “It (Taco Bell) is the biggest contributor to the (company’s) operating profit in the US. But so far it has primarily been in the US; the company has over the last two years started thinking of taking the brand international. It’s present in Canada, Singapore, Mexico, Spain, Dubai and now finally coming to India,” Chaudhary added. The first few outlets in the country will be company-owned and depending on the response it gets, Yum will put in place a strategy for future growth, he said. However, in order to satisfy the Indian taste buds, the food at Taco Bell will be customized to suit local demand. “Though the basic offering will remain Mexican, we will spice up the preparations to make it appealing for the consumers here,” Chaudhary said. Experts say the new brand could do well in India as the fast food segment in the country has not yet seen any impact of the current economic downturn. “India is a value-conscious market. Yum’s claim to offer Mexican food at street food prices could be penetration-pricing strategy to get more footfalls in the stores and make people experience the food,” Purnendu Kumar, associate vice-president at KSA Technopak, a retail consulting firm, said. The organized fast food market in the country is currently estimated at Rs2,500 crore and growing at 20-22% each year, according to Kumar. Prominent brands in the market include Pizza Hut and KFC by Yum, Dominos, “Today, we have more than 200 restaurants in India, about 140-odd Pizza Huts and over 45 KFCs. In case of Pizza Hut, we already have a very large base and are well penetrated. But KFC has come up only in the last six-seven years. So, we want to double the number of outlets to 400 in the next two-three years, with more focus on KFC,” Chaudhary said. He added Yum is getting a positive response to its brands. “The goal is to double our revenues in the next two-three years driven by KFC, which has grown by 30% over the last year. Even Pizza Hut is also growing at a rate of 7-8%,” Chaudhary said, without sharing the revenue figures. To drive the growth, Yum will open more company-owned stores in the near term. In the longer term, the split between the franchise-owned stores and company-owned outlets would be 80:20.

Source: The Wall Street Journal

HOST 2009: The World of Professional Hospitality in Milan, Italy

Host 2009 will be held from 23rd through 27th October 2009, Milan, Italy, and will feature a rich high-level exhibiting offer. The leadership of the event is confirmed by the figures of the 2007 edition: 1,865 exhibitors (+3,61% compared to Host 2005) of which 350 exhibitors were international, 110,000 sqm of net exhibition space (+10%). The figures have grown steadily for this pioneering event that is based on a “system” framework, and the results for the past three editions – from 2003 until now – have confirmed this fact. Over the years, the expo boomed, going from 76,000 to 110,000 net square meters (+44.7%).

Source: HOST, Milan, Italy

Foodservice Yearbook International 2009 Global Buyer's Guide

For decades, FYI has been regarded worldwide as a "One-Stop Shop" for purchasing and specifying, the Foodservice Yearbook International reaches buyers at the very beginning of the decision-making process. FYI is the original and most widely used annual buyers' guide in global foodservice. It reaches close to 100,000 buyers, consultants, exporters and foodservice professionals around the world, and with more than six readers per copy. Also, the latest buying patterns survey showed that our readers refer to FYI eleven times per year, and these contacts have produced actual sales for the advertisers. The Foodservice Yearbook International contains the most comprehensive listing of exporting suppliers and manufacturers to the foodservice world with more than 1,300 manufacturers' listings and over 3,000 product listings. Bonus circulation at selected major global trade shows during 2009. The Foodservice Yearbook International's targeted audience of 16,166 readers control over 80% of the world's \$1.5 trillion annual foodservice volume. The readers of FYI are buying-empowered professionals at global and regional headquarters of hotel and restaurant chains, major hotel and restaurant locations, consultants, contract caterers, cruise-ships/airline/rail/amusement caterers, supermarket and c-store chain headquarters and a global network of distributors, in over 140 countries worldwide. The targeted circulation of Foodservice Yearbook International allows you to consolidate your advertising budget into one magazine that reaches the entire foodservice world. For more information, please contact mschacher@globalfoodservice.com

MAFSI Announces 60th Anniversary; Conference to Be Held in Toronto, Canada Sept. 22-25, 2009

Two thousand and nine is a sparkling year for MAFSI and its 500 rep and manufacturer company members as the trade association celebrates its 60th anniversary as the voice of the manufacturers' rep and the manufacturers they market in the foodservice industry. The celebration of MAFSI's diamond anniversary will bring us to Toronto, Canada as the host city for the MAFSI Annual Conference. The conference which runs Sept. 22-25, 2009 attracts hundreds of reps, manufacturers and other attendees, and is the premier event for industry leaders to identify trends, participate in a full schedule of educational sessions and network. The conference theme is Re-Charge, Re-Invent, Re-Emerge. We'll show you ways to Turn Up the Profits in a tough economy by incorporating leaner, greener and smarter business processes. Re-Charge, Re-Invent, Re-Emerge! The MAFSI Annual Conference, Westin Harbour Castle, Toronto, Canada

Source: MAFSI

INTERNORGA 2009 – Optimism in the Restaurant and Food Service Market Satisfied Exhibitors Praise the Quality of the Trade Show

Trade visitors showed great interest in innovations. About 103,000 trade visitors and 1,050 exhibitors. The mood in the restaurant and food service business is positive, with optimism and a decisive outlook for the future. These are the encouraging signals coming from INTERNORGA 2009. The 83rd International Fair for the Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Baking and Confectionery Trades ended its six-day run at the Hamburg Fair site on Wednesday. The statistics show some 103,000 trade visitors from Germany and abroad at this leading fair for the out-of-home market, showcasing the products and services of 1,050 exhibitors from 26 countries. There was strong interest in the many innovations presented here. The mood remained upbeat, despite the fact that visitor numbers were down about 8,000 versus 2008. Practically all exhibitors expressed satisfaction at the high level of expertise of visitors. INTERNORGA was completely booked, and with 87,000 square meters of exhibition space it was larger than ever before. "Exhibitors and visitors benefited this year from use of the complete site," said Bernd Aufderheide, CEO of Hamburg Messe und Congress GmbH (HMC). "We were able to use the new Hall B7 for this event, and are delighted that it was so well accepted by both sides. This opens a new chapter, continuing the outstanding tradition of this trade fair, and enabling us to build on the leading position of INTERNORGA." Ralf Hübner (Chairman of the

INTERNORGA Exhibitor's Council, CEO of Hobart Germany and Vice-President Hobart Europe), said "The standard of expertise at INTERNORGA was very high. The exhibitors showed a great many innovations, providing their customers with solutions to face the market challenges." Rose Pauly (Chairman of INTERNORGA Organising Committee, President of Dehoga Hamburg), said "The hoteliers and restaurant owners see the current situation as an opportunity and are determined to make their companies fit for the future." Highlights at INTERNORGA included the excellent supporting program with leading conferences such as the International Foodservice Forum and the German Congress for Bulk Catering, and attractive competitions such as the "Chefs' Grand Prix". The 84th INTERNORGA will be held at the Hamburg Fair site from 12 to 17 March 2010.

Source: INTERNORGA

Sodexo Announces the Acquisition of Radhakrishna Hospitality Services Group to Become the Leading Food and Facilities Management Services Company in India

Sodexo announced that it has signed a binding agreement to acquire the Radhakrishna Hospitality Services Group (RKHS), one of the leading providers of Food and Facilities Management services in India. Completion of this transaction is subject to customary closing conditions. The parties expect to close the transaction before the summer of 2009. Founded in 1966, RKHS is today a leader in the Food and Facilities Management services market in India, serving a prestigious client base in 22 states and employs 20,000 people across more than 1,000 sites. For Fiscal year ended March 31, 2008, RKHS generated 70 million euros of revenues. Sodexo has been a major provider of Food and Facilities Management services in India for more than 10 years. With this acquisition, Sodexo significantly reinforces its position and takes clear market leadership in India, a country with the second largest population in the world and which offers considerable future growth potential. Through a new combined entity, representing Sodexo's existing Food and Facilities Management operations in India together with RKHS, Sodexo will offer its clients a comprehensive range of tailored solutions designed to enhance their reputation, improve efficiency of their employees, preserve the value of their assets and optimise their resources. With a view to bringing his valuable insight and knowledge of both the Company and the Indian market, Mr Raju Shete will become non executive Chairman of the combined entity.

Source: Sodexo

Shari's Expands Presence in California

The Shari's restaurant chain has acquired four locations of the bankrupt Bakers Square brand in the San Francisco Bay area, expanding its presence in California, officials confirmed. Shari's Management Corp., parent to the 24-hour, family-dining Shari's brand, plans to convert the Bakers Square restaurants to Shari's within the next few weeks. The restaurants are in the California towns of Livermore, Castro Valley, San Bruno and Rohnert Park. The four new Shari's locations will add to the chain's presence in California, where two locations currently operate, in Sacramento and Red Bluff. Shari's is primarily concentrated in the Pacific Northwest, but Shari's officials said the chain would continue to expand in Northern California. The addition of the four locations brings Shari's unit count to 105 restaurants in six states. "This is an exciting growth step for Shari's, further extending our reach beyond our core restaurants in the Pacific Northwest," said Bruce MacDiarmid, Shari's chief executive. "Shari's focus on quality food, and warm welcomes, resonates universally with guests in our segment. Tough economic times create opportunities for strong, well-positioned brands like Shari's."

Source: nrm

UK Cruise Industry Announces Another Record Year

The Passenger Shipping Association (PSA) has announced another record year for the UK cruise industry

with nearly 1.5 million passengers taking a cruise in 2008 - an 11% increase on 2007. The latest statistics reveal a 23% increase in the number of people joining their cruise in a UK port while the number of fly-cruise passengers increased by 4%. Speaking at the Seatrade convention in Miami, William Gibbons, director of the Passenger Shipping Association, said: "2008 proved to be another tremendous year for the UK cruise industry. The launch of P&O Cruises' Ventura, Royal Caribbean's Independence of the Seas, Fred Olsen's Balmoral, and the first full year of service for Cunard's Queen Victoria, along with ship launches from Carnival, Celebrity Cruises, Holland America and MSC, all contributed to a record number of passengers. The decision by a number of cruise lines, including MSC, NCL, Princess Cruises and Royal Caribbean, to increase the number of British port departures contributed to an additional 110,000 passengers choosing to begin their cruise in the UK in 2008." 2008 saw 577,000 passengers take an ex-UK cruise with 900,000 Brits choosing to take a fly-cruise. The Mediterranean and Northern Europe, including the UK, proved to be the most popular destinations seeing increases of 17% and 24% respectively year on year. The Mediterranean has a 43% share of the market with 634,000 passengers and Northern Europe 18%, with 265,000 passengers. Looking ahead, Mr Gibbons said: "The world of today is a very different one from that of 12 months ago. Although the cruise industry is not recession proof it is better placed than many other travel sectors to weather the economic storm."

Source: Ehotelier.com

Little Caesars Veterans Program Continues to Grow

Little Caesar Enterprises celebrates U.S. veteran Rick Loz's second store with a grand opening in Easton at 2439 Butler St. One year ago, Loz opened his first Little Caesars franchise in Allentown. "My Little Caesars store has been very well received in Allentown, and I'm excited to grow my business and bring the Little Caesars brand to customers in Easton," Loz says. "The Little Caesars Veterans Program has given me the opportunity to become my own boss and build for my family's future." As a Little Caesars franchisee, Loz is able to apply the military skills he gained while he served as a captain in the U.S. Air Force to run his business. Before becoming a Little Caesars franchisee, he also was a project manager for a large telecommunications company. Loz was looking to transition into a new phase in his career and opted to become an entrepreneur to gain more independence. "I've enjoyed building my Little Caesars business, and I encourage other veterans to explore transitioning into a second career with Little Caesars," adds Loz. "Franchisees receive the benefit of a proven system, ongoing training and a globally recognized brand. Little Caesars offers a great value to its customers, and I look forward to providing the Easton community with a high quality pizza for a great price. "With talented veterans such as Rick joining the Little Caesars team and opening more stores, the Little Caesars Veterans Program continues to grow and provide veterans with business ownership opportunities," says David Scrivano, president, Little Caesar Enterprises, Inc. "Providing benefits to veterans is a critical first step toward their becoming entrepreneurs, but the fact that they are building their second stores really demonstrates the strength of the program." Since the program launched two years ago, interest has remained high in the Little Caesars Veterans Program. Currently, more than 50 veterans are applying more than \$1.5 million in credits and benefits to help them grow their Little Caesars businesses. To date, 2,500 inquiries have been made about the program. Several veterans have opened second stores and more are expected to open their first stores under the program in the coming months. The Little Caesars Veterans Program was created in 2006 to thank veterans for their service and provide them with career opportunities when they transition to civilian life or seek a career change. It offers honorably discharged, service-disabled veterans who qualify as Little Caesars franchisees, a benefit of up to approximately \$68,000 on their first store. Honorably discharged, non-service-disabled veterans who qualify as Little Caesars franchisees, such as Loz, are eligible for a benefit of up to approximately \$20,000 on their first store.

Source: Little Caesar Enterprises



Dunkin' Donuts to Push Doughnuts with \$10M Promotional Campaign, Design a Doughnut Contest

It's time again to make doughnuts. After focusing on waffle breakfast sandwiches and espresso-based coffee drinks, Dunkin' Donuts is coming full circle with a new advertising campaign to remind people it also sells doughnuts. Frances Allen, brand marketing officer, said the company has not embarked on a major campaign for doughnuts since 1997. "We've been doing so much innovation that it really is timed to refocus back on our core," Allen said. Allen said the yearlong effort will include a \$10 million promotional campaign featuring television, radio and Internet ads and a contest for customers to design their own doughnut. The winning doughnut, to be sold in the chain's roughly 8,000 stores nationwide, will be unveiled June 5. Customers can start designing new flavors on the company's Web site on Wednesday, when two other new doughnuts, including a Berries n' Kreme filled doughnut, will appear on menus. "Faced with daily disappointments and struggles, the doughnut is one of those affordable treats that can make someone's day," Allen said. To give consumers an extra incentive to stop by, the chain is also offering doughnuts for 49 cents with the purchase of a medium or larger hot coffee.

Source: The Associated Press

Industry Wide Push to End Childhood Hunger Launched

Each year, more than 12 million children in America (one in six) worry about when their next meal will come. This year, Food Network star Aaron McCargo, Jr. will serve as the national spokesperson for the second annual Share Our Strength's Great American Dine Out. From September 20 – 26, 2009, this week-long national event will join thousands of restaurants—from coffee shops to fine-dining establishments—in cities across the country to raise funds to help end childhood hunger in America. With a broad range of restaurant and catering experience, McCargo feels passionate about helping Share Our Strength as millions of consumers visiting participating restaurants will help make sure no kid in America grows up hungry. The first Great American Dine Out in 2008 raised more than \$500,000. Four thousand casual- and fine-dining restaurants participated, from independent and family owned establishments to large chains and restaurant groups. Donations from the week's restaurant sales, direct donations from customers and restaurant suppliers, and money raised through restaurant promotions all helped to make Great American Dine Out a success. To date, more than 1,500 restaurants have signed up for the 2009 Great American Dine Out, including Corner Bakery Cafe, Dave & Busters, The Great American Restaurants, Il Fornaio, First Watch, Claim Jumper, Captain D's, Lonestar Steakhouse & Saloon and Texas Land & Cattle Steak House, McAlister's Deli and Joe's Crab Shack. "We are asking millions of consumers and thousands of restaurants to help us fight childhood hunger," says Billy Shore, co-founder and executive director of Share Our Strength. "We were heartened by the generosity and commitment of restaurant diners and the restaurant industry last year. Our hope is to continue this program every year until every child in America has access to nutritious food where they live, learn and play." With the demand for food assistance in America the highest it's been in a generation, Food Network star Aaron McCargo, Jr. will proudly serve as the 2009 national spokesperson for Great American Dine Out to help generate awareness and drive participation. The restaurant industry's commitment to ending childhood hunger played a vital role in the success of the first Great American Dine Out. To recognize their valued partnership and participation, Debbie Shore, co-founder of Share Our Strength, presented the National Restaurant Association with a special service award during its annual Board Meeting in January 2009, marking its continued contribution to the success of the

Great American Dine Out. The 2009 Great American Dine Out is sponsored by Sysco, S.Pellegrino Sparkling Natural Mineral Water, Ecolab, Food Network, USA Today, and The National Restaurant Association.

Source: QSR/The National Restaurant Association

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

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