



April 4, 2011

Dunkin' Donuts Hits 3000 Mark in International Locations

Dunkin' Donuts, a baked goods and coffee chain owned by Dunkin' Brands, has opened its 3,000th restaurant outside the US. The 3,000th Dunkin' Donuts restaurant is located in Shanghai, China, and this marks the company's 71st restaurant in Greater China. The QSR brand recently signed an agreement with India-based Jubilant FoodWorks to develop, sub-franchise and operate more than 500 Dunkin' Donuts restaurants throughout the country over the next 15 years. In 2010, the company entered into a development agreement to expand throughout Russia and Ukraine over the next several years. The company's entry into India and Russia follows its expansion over the past several years throughout Europe, the Middle East, Latin and South America, as well as the Asia-Pacific market. The first Dunkin' Donuts restaurant outside the US opened in Canada in 1961. At the end of fiscal 2010, Dunkin' Donuts had more than 9,700 restaurants in 31 countries.

Source: Food Business Review

Olive Garden to Revamp Restaurants

Olive Garden plans to renovate as many as 400 of its existing restaurants nationwide by 2013 into its Tuscan farmhouse design, a new model introduced in 2000. The Italian restaurant chain, owned by Orlando-based Darden Restaurants Inc., said the revamp will include updated decor inside its restaurants along with new Tuscan-inspired outside updates such as Cypress trees. Renovations are scheduled at 30 Texas locations this fiscal year, a spokeswoman said. Remaining restaurant renovations will be determined based on feedback. Olive Garden has 16 Central Florida locations, some of which already have the new design. Two Central Florida restaurants, in Kissimmee and Lake Buena Vista, were renovated last fall.

Source: Orlando Business Journal

Planet Hollywood Hotels Ready for Limelight Abroad

Planet Hollywood, the once glitzy restaurant chain endorsed by celebrities such as Sylvester Stallone, is mounting a comeback through hotels. Wyndham Worldwide is expected to announce Thursday the first three Planet Hollywood hotels planned as the restaurant brand attempts to build a worldwide hotel chain. The hotels will be located in Doha, Panama City and Boao, China, according to a press release issued by the company plans. Wyndham, which owns such hotel brands as Ramada, Howard Johnson and Days Inn, has recently begun also offering its hotel management services to other companies looking to spread brands, including Dream and Night brands from New York hotelier Sant Chatwal and his son Vikram Chatwal. In September Wyndham signed a deal to manage Planet Hollywood hotels for its first hotels outside of a casino and hotel in Las Vegas owned and managed by Caesars Entertainment Corp. Planet Hollywood grew restaurants aggressively in the 1990s on the promise of a chance to glimpse Hollywood glamour and movie memorabilia. The chain closed many of its restaurants since those heights. The Qatar

hotel will be near Entertainment City, a theme park, and will open in 2014 with 300 rooms for owner Regency Group Holdings. The Panama City hotel will be around the same size and owned by RG Hotels. The 350-room Planet Hollywood in China's Hainan Island area will be part of a large resort complex that's being developed there. These new hotels will not include casinos.

Source: The Wall Street Journal/Ehotelier.com

Restaurant Operators Optimistic About the Future

Improving same store sales and customer traffic levels were both cited as reasons why the National Restaurant Association's Restaurant Performance Index climbed to 100.7 in February, a 0.4% increase compared with the January R.P.I. "Restaurant operators reported positive same-store sales and customer traffic results in February, after January's results were dampened by extreme weather conditions in many parts of the country," said Hudson Riehle, vice-president of the Research and Knowledge Group for the Association. "In addition to improving sales and traffic indicators, restaurant operators' outlook for capital spending hit a 40-month high, while their expectations for staffing growth rose to the highest level in nearly four years." The R.P.I.'s current situation index, which covers same-store sales, traffic, capital expenditures and labor, stood at 99.4 in February, a 0.9% increase compared with January. Restaurant operators reported improvement in same-store sales in February. Forty-nine per cent reported a same-store sales gain between February 2010 and February 2011, up from 39% of operators who reported higher same-store sales in January. In comparison, 37% of operators reported a same-store sales decline in February, down from 44% who reported lower sales in January. The R.P.I.'s expectations index, which includes same-store sales, business conditions, employees and capital expenditures, rose to 101.9 in February, a slight increase compared with the January level of 101.8. The expectations index showed that restaurant operators remain optimistic that sales levels will improve in the months ahead. Forty-eight per cent expect to have higher sales in six months (compared with the same period in the previous year), up slightly from 47% who reported similarly last month. In comparison, 12% of restaurant operators expect their sales volume in six months to be lower than it was during the same period in the previous year, down from 14% who reported similarly last month.

Source: FoodBusinessNews.net

Argonne Capital Expands IHOP Ownership

Private investment firm Argonne Capital Group LLC has expanded its IHOP ownership with the addition of 40 restaurants. Argonne said Tuesday that its affiliate, Peak Restaurant Group LLC, purchased the restaurant assets, operations and franchise rights to the restaurants. Terms were not disclosed. The restaurants are in seven states in and near the Rocky Mountain region, including California. With these 40 locations Argonne-controlled companies, including Sunshine Restaurant Partners and ACG Texas, run or sub-franchise 254 IHOPs. IHOP restaurants are franchised by DineEquity Inc. subsidiaries. Earlier this month, DineEquity reported that its fourth-quarter net loss widened due to debt reduction and redemption of preferred stock.

Source: Bloomberg/BusinessWeek

***Pret A Manger* Ready to Expand Sandwich Chain Here**

Chicago will be seeing more of a quick-serve soup-and-sandwich chain with an unusual name — ***Pret A Manger*** (pronounced Pret a mahn-ZHER) — a French phrase meaning "ready to eat." The London-based company known for its freshly made, organic and no-additive eats, will open at least three more sites in the Loop, including one at 73 W. Monroe, by year's end, said CEO Clive Schlee. The chain has opened two sites since last fall in Chicago's financial district, with one at 211 W. Adams attracting as much traffic in its first week as stores open a decade in New York City, Schlee said. ***Pret A Manger*** prominently posts calorie counts on its foods, donates leftovers each day to the Greater Chicago Food Depository and hires local vendors such as Gonnella bakery in Chicago for breads and Get Fresh Produce of Carol Stream for in-season fruits and vegetables. "We are known for our core product, the Granary sandwich, as well as our salads, coffee and baguettes," Schlee said. "We think that Chicagoans respect the

speed, high-quality ingredients and our charity message.” Office workers hungry for a quick meal pay \$4.99 to \$5.99 for sandwiches, \$5.99 to \$6.99 for salads and \$2.85 to \$3.15 for half-a-sandwich, called a “slim.” Also seeking expansion here is Bar Louie, which is looking downtown and in the suburbs for five more locations, besides the seven it now operates along with an eighth set to open in mid-April near O’Hare airport. It’s part of a national expansion in which Bar Louie aims to open more than 100 new restaurant-bar establishments.

Source: The Chicago Sun-Times



Papa Murphy’s Marks Anniversary with New Marketing Campaign

Papa Murphy’s International is marking its 30th anniversary with the launch of a \$35 million marketing initiative titled “Join the Take ‘N’ Bake Revolution.” The new campaign was created in large part by Minneapolis-based Periscope, Papa Murphy’s agency of record, and consists of print, television, radio, online and in-store elements. A total of six television commercials will feature a new spokesperson who interacts with customers and employees, pointing out the revolutionary benefits of Papa Murphy’s pizza. Additionally, Papa Murphy’s website and Facebook page will encourage visitors to “Join the Take ‘N’ Bake Revolution.” “In this campaign, we’re going back to the basics to really showcase what you can expect from Papa Murphy’s – award-winning pizza that’s handmade with loads of fresh ingredients and then baked and enjoyed only when you’re ready. We’re about giving our customers high value, low prices, plenty of choices and complete control over their dining occasion. The new campaign speaks to all of this,” said **Jenifer Anhorn**, Papa Murphy’s chief marketing officer. The new campaign fits Anhorn’s objectives when she joined Papa Murphy’s as CMO less than a year ago. One of her first items of business was to expand the brand’s digital marketing initiatives to meet old and new customers where they are flocking. “We’re not shifting our targeting at all, but making sure we are staying current with how the younger generations communicate,” Anhorn said upon her appointment. In addition to the media bombardment of the new campaign, Papa Murphy’s will make available to its 1,250-plus employees a variety of T-shirts, in-store promotional pieces and other decorative items that encourage everyone to “Join the Take ‘N’ Bake Revolution.”

Source: Pizza MarketPlace.com

Panera 'Casual Dining Brand of the Year'

Panera, known locally as St. Louis Bread Co., has been named the 2011 Casual Dining Brand of the Year by a new poll. The Harris Poll EquiTrend study asked 25,099 U.S. consumers in January to rate different brands. A total of 1,273 brands were rated in 53 separate categories. **Panera Bread** is the 2011 Casual Dining Brand of the Year followed by a trio of Italian food restaurants: **Carrabba's**, **Olive Garden** and **Maggiano's Little Italy**. Panera, a St. Louis-based café-bakery chain (NASDAQ: PNRA) led by CEO **Bill Moreton**, reported revenue of \$1.54 billion in 2010. Subway is the 2011 Quick Serve Restaurant Brand of the Year, followed by **Dairy Queen**, **Wendy's** and **McDonald's**, according to the poll. The brands whose brand equity increased the most over last year include **Domino's Pizza**, KFC restaurants and **Taco Bell**. M&M's Plain Chocolate Candy is the 2011 Sweet Treat Brand of the Year, with Hershey's Milk Chocolate Candy Bars ranking second and last year's highest ranked treat, Hershey's Kisses Chocolate Candy, ranked third. Among beverage brands, **Coca-Cola** is the 2011 Carbonated Beverage Brand of the Year, with Sprite making significant improvement to rank second followed by 7-Up. Among non-carbonated

beverages, Dasani ranked highest among water brands. Blue Moon Beer was the highest ranked beer brand for the second year in a row, followed by **Samuel Adams** and Guinness Stout.

Source: St. Louis Business Journal

KFC Opens First Zambia Unit, Brings Double Down to Australia

KFC opened its first unit in Zambia last week. The restaurant is located in Lusaka and the opening was marked by First Lady Thandiwe Banda. Banda said the company's presence signifies Zambia's emergence as a global business destination with much potential for growth, according to the **Lusaka Times**. The local unit is operated by Cobus Prinsiloo, who plans to extend the brand to other provinces in the country. **Double Down reaches Australia**, In Australia, KFC plans to launch its Double Down item this week. The controversial item was first introduced last year in the **United States**. It features two boneless white meat chicken filets, two pieces of bacon, two melted slices of Monterey Jack and pepper jack cheeses and the Colonel's sauce. The Original Recipe version includes 540 calories and 32 grams of fat. The grilled option will save customers 80 calories and 9 grams of fat. The Australian version will be called "The Double" and will be marketed as "The ultimate manfood," according to **Mumbrella**.

Source: QSRWeb.com

China's Hotels Confident, Despite Challenges

China's tourism authorities are hoping that the country's burgeoning economic growth will mean big business for the nation's accommodation sector, but have warned against any complacency. Speaking at the 7th Annual China Hotel Development and Financing Conference in Beijing, China Tourist Hotels Association president Zhang Run Gang said that whilst optimistic, the country's hotel industry was still concerned with rising inflation, labour shortages and costs and fallout from the disaster in Japan. This cautious assessment was echoed by China National Tourism Administration deputy director general Liu Shi Jun, who is lobbying the industry to address low pay levels, which he says remain an obstacle in attracting and retaining talent. According to STR Global Asia area director Jonas Ogren, the Average Daily Rate (ADR) of hotels in China is now at RMB 478, with key markets Shanghai, Hong Kong and Beijing witnessing ADR growth in 2010 of 47 per cent, 32 per cent and 28 per cent respectively. Mr Ogren added that in the next 3 to 4 years, China will account for around 56 per cent of all new hotel rooms in Asia, with the country's hotel room inventory expecting to increase by about 16 per cent. According to Stephen Green, head of research for Standard Chartered in Greater China, 2010 saw a 10.3 per cent increase in China's gross domestic product (GDP), which accounted for 10 per cent of the world's total GDP.

Source: etravelblackboard.com



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Michael Jordan Bringing Steakhouse to Chicago

A Michael Jordan-branded restaurant is returning to Chicago. Michael Jordan's Steak House will open in late summer in the second-floor dining room and ground-floor bar of the InterContinental Chicago on North Michigan Avenue. The steakhouse will replace Zest, and construction is set to begin by early June, said **Richard Moreau**, an executive vice president of Chicago-based Strategic Hotels & Resorts, which owns the hotel and will own the

restaurant. "Zest is essentially a hotel dining room, and it really didn't provide what that hotel needed, which is a very special occasion restaurant," Moreau said. Jordan is setting up in something of a steakhouse alley; there are nearly two dozen beef-centric restaurants in the River North neighborhood. But Moreau said he believes the Jordan brand remains iconic enough and the location visible enough to fill the 160-seat restaurant. The InterContinental will manage the restaurant while licensing the Michael Jordan name from Jump Higher LLC, which is managed by **David Zadikoff's** Cornerstone Restaurant Group. This would be the third Michael Jordan Steak House. Zadikoff, Cornerstone's chief executive, has a relationship with Jordan dating to Michael Jordan's Restaurant on North LaSalle Street, which closed in 1999 amid a legal dispute that Jordan won, allowing him to launch the steakhouse chain in Chicago. In 2004, the Tribune reported that Zadikoff planned to close one sixtyblue on West Randolph Street, in which Jordan is a partner, and replace it with one of the steakhouses. But Jordan halted those plans and kept one sixtyblue open, saying at the time he wanted a more visible downtown location near hotels for the steakhouse. It took him seven years to get it. "I think the Michael Jordan brand has to be in a very sort of landmark location," Zadikoff said, adding that he and Jordan initially were looking to lease a third location and own and operate the restaurant themselves. "But given the hotel, the makeup of the kitchens and other issues, it was simpler just to do it this way. So we went with a simple solution for a major location." Jordan and Zadikoff will receive a percentage of the restaurant's annual revenue, called a licensing fee.

Source: The Chicago Tribune

Krispy Kreme Scores First Yearly Profit Since '04

Krispy Kreme Doughnuts, Inc. posted net income of \$7,599,000, equal to 11c per share on the common stock, in the year ended Jan. 30, marking the company's first profitable year since fiscal 2004. By comparison, the company sustained a loss of \$157,000 in fiscal 2010. Revenues during fiscal 2011 totaled \$361,955,000, up 4% from fiscal 2010. Looking ahead to fiscal 2012, James H. Morgan, president and chief executive officer, said he remains optimistic that the turnaround will continue. "Assuming we can mostly offset higher overall costs through pricing and other measures, we estimate fiscal 2012 operating income, exclusive of impairment and lease termination costs, will be in the range of \$22 million to \$24 million, which would represent an increase of 15% to 25% from our fiscal 2011 results," he said.

Source: FoodBusinessNews.net

BR Guest Restaurants to Enter Atlantic City with Three New Restaurants

Caesars Entertainment Atlantic City, a division of Caesars entertainment corporation, said that BR Guest Restaurants will open three new restaurants in Harrah's Resort Atlantic City and Caesars. With this partnership, which is its first with Caesars Entertainment, BR Guest Restaurants will step into Atlantic City. The forthcoming additions include: Dos Caminos, Atlantic Grill and Bill's Bar & Burger all of which will open Summer 2011. Harrah's Resort and Caesars Atlantic City senior vice president and general manager Jay Snowden said the opening of BR Guest restaurants at Harrah's Resort and Caesars will continue to expand Atlantic City as a must-visit culinary destination. Dos Caminos executive chefs Ivy Stark and Scott Linquist will put forth Mexico City style quesadillas, tacos, tuna ceviche and fresh guacamole. The 209-seat restaurant at Harrah's Resort will serve their infamous signature dishes that range from \$12-\$28.

In addition to a semi-private 35-seat dining room, there will be a separate lounge area in the front of the restaurant offering the full dining menu. Atlantic Grill, the 124-seat seafood restaurant known best for its fresh fish, raw bar and sushi, will open at Caesars Atlantic City under the culinary vision of executive chef Anthony Amoroso. Exclusive to Atlantic City, Atlantic Grill at Caesars will feature a 10-seated sushi bar experience which is a centric bridge to the main dining room. The restaurant also houses a 19-seat sunken bar-area. Bill's Bar & Burger at Harrah's Resort will offer classic comfort food in a relaxed, casual atmosphere with bay views. The 178-seat restaurant and 21-seat bar will create a classic pub feel for patrons looking for a comfort-food style meal in a relaxed grill environment. The meat is a mixture from the country's burger butcher; Pat LaFrieda of Pat LaFrieda Meat

Purveyors. Rounding out the menu are items ranging from \$4-\$11 including grouper sandwiches, turkey burgers, hot dogs, chicken wings, onion rings, crispy veggie fries, and milkshakes (with the option of a spiked adult version), as well as international and local microbrews.

Source: Food Business Review



Noodles & Company Enters into New Franchise Development Agreement

Noodles & Company, the Colorado-based restaurant concept that serves made-to-order noodles, salads and sandwiches, has signed a new development agreement with franchise group Prairie Pasta Company, an affiliate of Minnesota-based Border States Management. The new franchise partner is scheduled to open its first Noodles & Company restaurant in Fargo, North Dakota in 2011, in addition to seven additional locations in North and South Dakota over the next five years. The company said that areas of future development will include Grand Forks, Fargo/Moorhead, Bismarck, Sioux Falls and Rapid City. The company plans to continue its industry-leading growth by expanding its presence in existing markets and entering new areas such as the upper Midwest. The company anticipates double-digit unit growth (both company-owned and franchise-operated) in 2011. The Noodles & Company menu features made-to-order noodles, salads and sandwiches, Think Mac & Cheese, Pad Thai, Chinese Chop Salad, Pesto Cavatappi and a Wisconsin Cheesesteak Sandwich. The company is a collection of more than 255 neighborhood restaurants in 18 states.

Source: Food Business Review

16 Handles Expands as Other Fro-Yo Chains Close Stores

Frozen yogurt purveyor 16 Handles is at it again. Just in time for warmer weather, the 3-year-old company is opening five additional Northeast outposts, including one on Manhattan's Upper West Side, within the next two months. "The competition has been closing stores, but our sales have opened up," said Solomon Choi, founder of the self-serve fro-yo chain, which allows customers to select from 16 different flavor options. On Wednesday, a location will open in Boca Raton, Fla. It will be followed by outposts in Clifton Park, N.Y.; Manhattan; Fairfield, Conn.; and Port Washington, N.Y. The new sites will double 16 Handles' existing outposts, including the company's original East Village store, on Second Avenue and East 10th Street, and its recently opened Upper East Side shop on Second Avenue and East 83rd Street. All locations range in size from 1,300 square feet to 1,500 square feet. The Upper West Side location, at 325 Amsterdam Ave., will be launched by the same franchisee who debuted the 16 Handles site on the Upper East Side last year. Each location costs a franchisee between \$350,000 and \$500,000 to open, Mr. Choi said. He expects to eventually have a dozen Manhattan outposts within the next two and a half years, and is currently eyeing a spot on East 64th Street and Second Avenue. While 16 Handles is on a tear, other fro-yo chains, including Red Mango, Yogurberry and Yolato, have been closing up shop here in New York. Restaurant experts said the high rents, coupled with a product whose peak business is only eight months out of the year, could have led to the decline. "The frozen dessert retail business in the Northeast is a very risky proposition," said Andrew Moger, chief executive of restaurant development firm BCD. Nationally, the trend is on the wane as well. Frozen yogurt production in the U.S. fell more than 5% in 2009, versus a year earlier, to 74.4 million gallons, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Last year, in November, 4 million gallons were produced, compared with 4.6 million gallons the year-ago period. Mr. Choi attributes his company's success to the self-serve option for time-pressed New

Yorkers. “People here tend to be in a rush,” he said. “When it comes to something like treating yourself, they don’t like to wait if they don’t have to.”

Source: Crain’s New York Business

Carlson to Double Number of TGI Friday’s

The chain plans to add at least 160 restaurants by 2015, although it hasn’t disclosed a time frame for its ambitious long-term plans. Carlson Restaurants on Friday announced plans to double the number of TGI Friday’s restaurants across the globe. Carlson Restaurants is a subsidiary of Minnetonka-based travel and hospitality giant Carlson. The announcement was made at the company’s global business conference in Dallas, Texas. The company plans to accelerate growth over the next five years, adding at least 160 more restaurants by 2015 and eventually doubling the number of TGI Friday’s sites around the world. Carlson did not disclose a time frame for reaching that long-term goal. Forty more are on track to open in 2011. There are currently 900 TGI Friday’s restaurants in 60 countries—350 of which are outside the United States. At the conference, Nick Shepherd, president and CEO of Carlson Restaurants, said that the company is positioned to increase the restaurant’s footprint, given the strength of its brand, management, and franchise partners. “Our foundation for growth is an organization-wide focus on enhancing all elements of the guest experience,” Shepherd said. Carlson is a family-owned, global hospitality and travel company that encompasses more than 1,070 hotels, across brands such as Radisson, Country Inns & Suites, Park Inn, and Park Plaza. Carlson operates in more than 150 countries and its brands employ about 170,000 people.

Source: Twin Cities Business



Pollo Tropical Moves Upscale to Fuel Expansion Plans

At the core of Pollo Tropical’s menu will always be its signature citrus-marinated chicken, fried plantains and black beans and rice. But the Miami-based chain has learned over the years that to succeed outside South Florida, it needs a menu with broad appeal to entice consumers from Jacksonville to Clifton, N.J. Pollo Tropical’s fare today goes beyond Cuban influences. You’ll find fajitas, ribs, chicken wings and chicken quesadillas. For those who want to add more flavor, there are a broad range of sauces from pineapple rum to cilantro garlic and spicy amazon with chipotle peppers. For the value-conscious diner, there’s a \$4.99 combo meal featuring a sandwich or wrap. And for something closer to a casual dining experience, most Pollo Tropical locations outside of South Florida have been testing an upgraded concept with real plates, silverware, table service and alcoholic beverages. These restaurants also offer classic American side dishes like brown rice, mashed potatoes and macaroni-and-cheese. It’s still the same Pollo Tropical that South Florida fans have known since the first store opened in Miami in 1988. But the tweaks are designed to give the chain more mass market appeal. It helps that consumer tastes have continued to shift over the last decade toward the more exotic and ethnic. “We have tried to stay true to the authenticity of our Caribbean roots, but we’ve also tried to broaden our appeal with flavor,” said Alan Vituli, chairman and chief executive of Carrols Restaurant Group, the parent company of Pollo Tropical. “We believe we’re now a general market brand. As the brand has moved toward the non-Hispanic consumer, the non-Hispanic consumer has also moved toward the brand.” Vituli is so confident in the brand’s ability to spread its wings beyond Florida that Carrols announced plans last month to spin-off Pollo Tropical and its Mexican chain Taco Cabana as a stand-alone public company. The new Hispanic Brands company would most likely be based in Miami. Vituli’s belief is that by creating a company

focused on Hispanic brands — Pollo Tropical and Taco Cabana — he can raise capital on the public markets to focus on that growth potential. The two Hispanic brands had a combined revenue of \$439.1 million in 2010. While Pollo Tropical's restaurants are concentrated in Florida with a small foothold in New Jersey, Taco Cabana's restaurants are currently in Texas. The transaction would take place sometime this year, after refinancing the debt of both companies to allow for a tax-free spin-off to stockholders of the parent company. Today, nearly 70 percent of Pollo Tropical's 91 company-owned restaurants are still concentrated in the tri-county area. The chain has 23 stores spread around the rest of Florida and another five in New Jersey. Plus there are 26 franchise-owned restaurants in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as three university locations in Florida. But when it comes to growth plans, Vituli sounds like an executive who has learned from the mistakes of the past. "Before we went outside of South Florida believing that it was a one-size-fits-all proposition," Vituli said. "We were after the exact same consumer we had here. The exact consumer doesn't exist outside of South Florida. We've adapted the brand to fit the consumers." One lesson Pollo Tropical learned is that Hispanic consumers in the Northeast do not spend as much of their disposable income dining out as those in South Florida. Several of the failed locations in the Northeast were in areas with lower-income Hispanic consumers. It's one reason the company's new site selection strategy is less concerned about opening in areas with the highest concentration of Hispanic residents. Instead the focus is on locations with a strong middle-class population. Additional sites have been approved for this year in Jacksonville and for the first time, the Atlanta market. The new restaurants aim to reposition Pollo Tropical as more of a fast casual or quick casual restaurant similar to a Pei Wei, Panera Bread or Chipotle Mexican Grill. Consumers typically prefer the improved service, food quality and ambiance compared to a typical fast-food chain. They also appreciate the savings over the higher prices of a sit-down casual dining restaurant. Boston Market is utilizing a similar strategy. Pollo Tropical hopes these strategies will differentiate it from the competition, including dramatically larger Latin chicken chains El Pollo Loco and Pollo Campero and a plethora of Mexican brands. It doesn't hurt that Hispanics today are the fastest-growing demographic and rapidly influencing all aspects of mainstream culture from food to music.

Source: The Miami Herald

HOA Restaurant Group Names New EVP & Chief Financial Officer

HOA Restaurant Group, the franchisor and operator of over 435 Hooters restaurants in 44 states and 28 foreign countries, has named Matthew Wickesberg as executive vice president and chief financial officer (CFO) of the company. Wickesberg will be responsible for leading all aspects of the company's finance, accounting, and strategic planning functions. He is a veteran of the restaurant industry having served for more than 10 years in senior management roles with restaurant companies. He most recently served as the CFO of Z'Tejas, an upscale casual dining chain. HOA Restaurant Group chairman Allan Karp said the company is delighted to have Matt join the Hooters executive team. "Matt brings a broad base of expertise to our company and will be an excellent partner in helping to lead our company into the future," Karp added.

Source: Food Business Review

Sbarro Pizza Chain Said to Consider Possible Bankruptcy Filing

Sbarro Inc., the pizza chain owned by buyout firm MidOcean Partners, may seek bankruptcy protection after missing interest payments on its debt, said a person familiar with the process. The filing may come as early as next week, said the person, who declined to be identified because the deliberations are private. New York-based MidOcean bought the pizza chain in 2007, according to Sbarro's website. The company is still examining options on how to restructure debt. Sbarro, led by interim Chief Executive Officer Nicholas McGrane, owns or franchises more than 1,000 fast-food Italian restaurants. On March 3, Sbarro obtained its third forbearance agreement with senior lenders, allowing it to keep operating even though it's in breach of its debt covenants, according to a regulatory filing. The company failed to make interest payments on debt due in February. Its third forbearance agreement expires April 1. The possibility of a Sbarro bankruptcy filing was reported earlier by the Wall Street Journal. The Melville, New York-based chain hired law firm Kirkland & Ellis LLP to advise on restructuring options, two people with knowledge of the situation said in January. The company has about

\$350 million in bonds and loans, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. The Sbarro family founded the company as a single Italian delicatessen more than half a century ago in Brooklyn, New York, according to its website. The family opened its first mall location about a decade later.

Source: Bloomberg News

Grimaldi's Founders Plan Fast Casual Burger Concept

Grimaldi's Pizzeria has announced its current expansion plans that call for new locations in Dallas, West Palm Beach, Fla., and various other sites. The Scottsdale, Ariz.-based company is also setting its sites beyond the pizza oven, with the launch of a new fast casual concept called Coal Burger. The latest venture will utilize a similar coal-fired brick oven that has made Grimaldi's pizza famous. The first location will open in the spring at the Scottsdale Quarter, a growing shopping, dining, entertainment destination that first opened in the spring of 2009. Named for the cooking method used to create the signature items, "Coal Burgers" are made of a natural grass-fed beef, cooked in a brick oven over piping hot coals, to sear in the juicy flavor. Coal Burgers are served on a choice of brioche, gluten-free or wheat buns. Topped with a selection of cheeses, fresh produce, and top-quality condiments, Coal Burger prides itself in using organic or more naturally grown products whenever possible. "Coal Burger is an exciting new concept in today's restaurant marketplace. The delicious smoky flavor of cooking in a coal fired oven, paired with natural ingredients, makes us believe we have a winning combination," said Joe Ciolli, Coal Burger founder. Although, Coal Burger will be known for its savory coal-fired burgers, the restaurant also has an expanded menu with more healthy options. Selections include a vegetable and rice vegetarian burger and "Chef Inspired" salads. A variety of sides such as sweet potato fries, onion rings and seasoned french fries, all cooked in rice grain oil (notable for their higher amounts of antioxidants) are also available. Burger lovers can pair their meals with organic beer, biodynamic wine, thick organic gelato shakes, Boylan's self-serve natural fountain sodas and organic adult floats. Beyond the sustainable food choices, Coal Burger's building features eco-friendly features such as reclaimed wood, recycled natural nickel patina, PVC-free banquet seating and bamboo furniture. All napkins, paper towels and toilet paper on site are 100-percent post-recycled product out of nearby Flagstaff, Ariz.

Source: FastCasual.com

Saladworks CEO Gets Back to Operational Roots by Visiting Open Locations

John Scardapane, Founder/CEO of Saladworks, the nation's first and largest fresh-tossed salad franchise concept, has been hitting the road for over a year visiting franchisees in locations across the country to express personal commitment to their success. Currently, Saladworks has over 100. One of Saladworks' core values, to "value each other," is clearly represented in these visits. The Saladworks value states that a humble leader should know that each member is an important component and necessary for a successful team. Scardapane exemplifies this value in his personalized visits with each franchisee in the system. Scardapane and his team, including VP of Brand Services and each location's business coach, travel together several times a month to continue to improve relations and communication with franchisees. The team and the franchisees have open dialogue about operations, marketing, new product development, and the company's strategy. Jamie Nichols, new franchisee of the Salisbury, MD location, was looking forward to the meeting to talk about his needs as a new owner. "John was extremely responsive to all the questions or concerns I had about growing from one location to two," Nichols said. "The team visited the second location I had in mind and actually approved it while they were here. I felt like my opinions were taken seriously and all of my goals were accomplished." "The support you feel by having the Founder, a VP, and the business coach of a business that you've invested in come out to speak with you about how to improve is extraordinary," said David Maciborski, franchisee of the Easton, PA location. "It's always good to listen to the people who are hands-on in a business, and this can only make the company even better moving forward." As a result of these store tours, Scardapane and team have seen the level of franchisee satisfaction increase. From both bi-monthly Franchise Advisory Council meetings and business coaches, where Saladworks proudly touts a one business coach to every 25 store ratio, the feedback has been outstanding. Additionally, the store tours have encouraged development within the existing franchise community for second and third locations – further validating the Saladworks brand. Scardapane, who also travels with new franchisees for real estate selection, will continue to meet with all franchise locations throughout the rest of the year. "Some of the most successful ideas come from our franchisees, who are interacting

with our fans every day. New products, marketing ideas, and sales building techniques are important to the entire system, and we're getting the chance to hear them first hand," said Founder/CEO, John Scardapane. "No matter how large Saladworks gets, we will never lose sight of how important our franchisees are."

Source: Saladworks/BusinessWire

Sodexo to Open Indian Fast Casual Restaurant

Sodexo Inc. has announced that it has signed a master retail license agreement with the award-winning Indian concept, Café Spice, to bring traditional Indian cuisine to Sodexo operations across country. The concept made its non-traditional debut in the university segment this fall at Sodexo-managed Babson College in Massachusetts and at Georgia Tech in Atlanta. Since then, Retail Brand Group, Sodexo's strategic branding company, worked with Café Spice to develop solid brand positioning and aesthetically capture the essence of their brand through new identity design that helps tell their story and engages customers in a more experiential way. This included a new look and feel for the concept as well as the addition of the chutney bar. The 'new' Café Spice is available as of April 1, and is exclusive to Sodexo. The menu features traditional Indian favorites such as Chicken Tikka Masala, curry bowls and Chicken Vindaloo, all prepared using all-natural ingredients and Halal meats. Also available are Café Spice's naan sandwiches, a uniquely 'made to order,' folded, crispy naan bread with a variety of authentic fillings. Adding to the experience is the chutney bar where guests can customize their entrée with traditional chutneys such as mango, tamarind and mint. "Indian fare plays an important role in our brand portfolio as customers seek traditional ethnic flavors, including the aromatic spices and rich flavors that Cafe Spicé has to offer," said John Nappier, vice president of business development for Sodexo's Retail Brand Group. "Café Spice is an award-winning brand that sees the importance of reaching customers in non-traditional locations with an engaging, on-trend offer." The license agreement grants Sodexo the right to open and operate the Café Spice concept at its various managed locations for the next 10 years.

Source: FastCasual.com



Business as Usual at Sushi Restaurants Across Asia

Asian diners are still tucking into sushi at restaurants around the region despite fears that elevated radiation levels in Japan could reach the food chain and contaminate raw ingredients. In Taiwan's Sushi Express chain, notices informed customers that all seafood was imported before Friday's quake crippled two nuclear plants on Japan's east coast sparking fires and explosions that resulted in radioactivity leaking. "The current supply and safety of Japanese food is normal," reads a poster on the front door of its 196 restaurants. A spokesman for the chain said business had not been affected. But in Hong Kong, used to health scares of its own, including the 2003 SARS outbreak, William Mark, president of the Federation of Hong Kong Restaurant Owners, said he was concerned that business would suffer. "We're very worried," Mark told AFP. "The concerns about radioactivity have a long-reaching psychological impact. There is nothing we can do. We're hoping for the best, but we don't see any silver lining in the near future." Elsewhere, restaurants in Singapore, India and Vietnam serving Japanese cuisine said Wednesday their businesses seemed to be unaffected by the deepening nuclear crisis, at least for now. Singapore's largest sushi chain Sakae Holdings said customers were still flocking to its outlets, which serve sushi and sashimi on moving conveyor belts as well as popular Japanese cuisine such as teppanyaki. "So far I think we've been seeing business as usual," a

spokeswoman for the firm told AFP. Customers appeared to be satisfied with assurances that the city's food regulator, the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority, would screen incoming Japanese produce. The nuclear crisis deepened Wednesday with another fire at the Fukushima plant, fears a reactor containment vessel may have been damaged, and a radiation spike that forced the temporary evacuation of workers. Chief Japanese government spokesman Yukio Edano reported a sudden and brief rise in radiation levels at the facility. In India, which also instituted checks on food imports from Japan, business remained brisk at Japanese supermarket Yamato-Ya. "People are still buying our fresh fish and seafood," Mukesh Rai, store accountant, told AFP. The store is well-known in New Delhi and imports seafood and packaged meat from Japan. Japanese restaurants in Vietnam were similarly unaffected. "We import notably Kobe beef and certain fish from Japan, whose safety is checked well before importation," said Pham Minh Huyen, sales manager at Japanese restaurant Saigon Sakura in central Hanoi.

Source: The Korea Herald

Private Equity Firm Takes Bite of Taco Bell

The Los Angeles private equity investment firm Brentwood Associates announced that it has acquired K-MAC Holdings Corp., one of the largest Taco Bell franchisees in the United States. K-MAC, located in Fort Smith, Ark., is a major franchisee of Louisville, Ky., fast food restaurant giant YUM! Brands Inc. K-MAC operates 190 restaurant locations in the Midwest, including 166 Taco Bell, 19 KFC and five Golden Corral restaurants. K-MAC will continue to be led by Chief Executive Sam Fiori and Chief Operating Officer Tina Reagan. Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed. "K-MAC has achieved tremendous growth and success throughout its history," Anthony Choe, partner at Brentwood Associates, said in a statement. "We look forward to leveraging our expertise in growing consumer businesses to help management continue its growth into the future." This is the third investment that Brentwood Associates has made in the restaurant industry, and second in the YUM! franchise system. The K-MAC investment was made through its Brentwood Associates Private Equity IV L.P. entity, with the Arlon Food and Agriculture Investment Program and Northwestern Mutual Capital as partners. BofA Merrill Lynch, Wells Fargo Bank, and SunTrust Robinson Humphrey arranged the senior debt financing portion.

Source: The Los Angeles Business Journal

Two New Posts at Einstein Noah

Brian Unger and Mike Ellis have been named executive vice-president of operations and executive vice-president of franchise and restaurant development, respectively, at Einstein Noah Restaurant Group, Inc. Mr. Unger joins Einstein Noah after a 25-year career with McDonald's Corp. He joined McDonald's in 1985, moving to the company's International group in 1991 where he worked in Latin America as a senior business consultant. In 1992, he moved to Puerto Rico, where he was named director of operations for Central America and the Caribbean. In 1997, Mr. Unger was named director of operations for Latin America, and in 2003, he was named president of the Caribbean Region. He returned to the U.S. business in 2005 as senior vice-president and general manager of McOpCo West Division in McDonald's USA. In 2009, he moved to Toronto to lead Canadian corporate operations as vice-president of McDonald's Canada. Mr. Ellis has a background in franchising, real estate development, construction and design, and he has held leadership roles at a number of restaurant operators. He most recently was chief development officer at O'Charley's, Inc. Earlier, he was senior vice-president of development at Carlson Restaurants Worldwide, and before that, was chief development officer at Burger King Corp. Mr. Ellis also has held various positions of increasing responsibility at Darden Restaurants Inc.

Source: FoodBusinessNews.net

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