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INSIGHT FOR RESTAURANT EXECUTIVES

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Information

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A franchisee-friendly formula
keeps Raving Brands growing.

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Martin Sprock, chairman and CEO, Raving Brands

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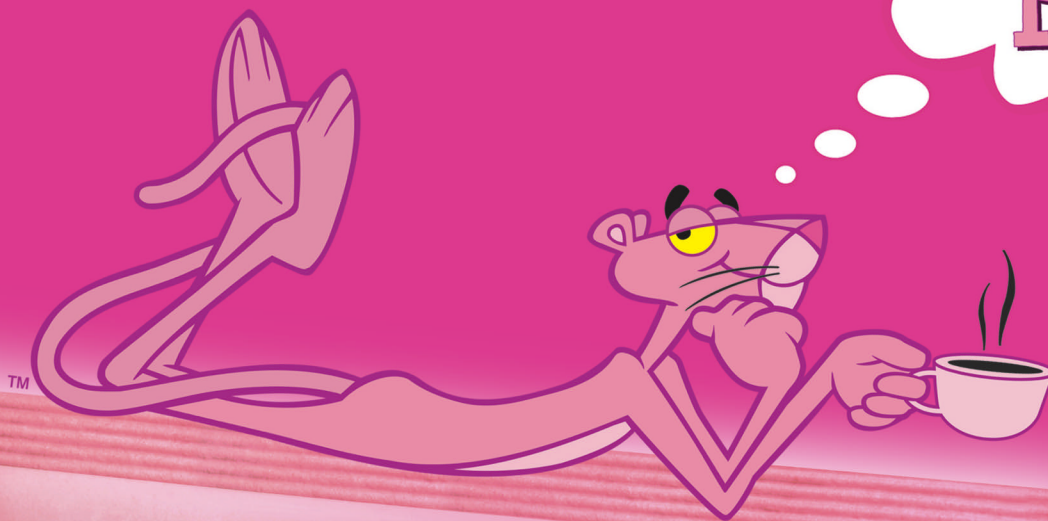
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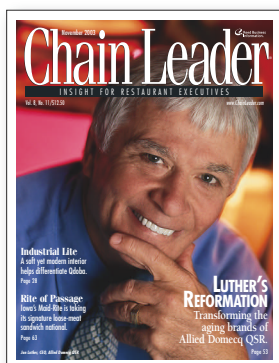
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The Best of Times



Now that the buying and selling are over, Jon Luther sees only good things ahead for Dunkin' Brands.

BY MARY BOLTZ CHAPMAN

The *Chain Leader* Cover Society is made up of the executives who have appeared on the cover since the magazine's debut in August 1996. This occasional feature updates readers on a Cover Society member.

To find out more about what Luther had to say about the future of Dunkin' Brands, download the podcast of his extended interview at www.chainleader.com.

Jon Luther graced *Chain Leader's* cover in November 2003, 10 months after he joined Allied Domecq QSR, then-owner of Dunkin' Donuts, Baskin-Robbins and Togo's. Since then, Dunkin' Brands, as the trio is now called, traded hands a few times before finding a home with a group of private-equity firms: Bain Capital Partners, The Carlyle Group and Thomas H. Lee Partners. *Chain Leader* checked in to see what's new and what's next for Dunkin' Brands.

How's business?

Things couldn't be better. We ended last year ahead of our plan. And we have exceeded everyone's expectations both from a leadership standpoint as well as from the financial standpoint. With the transfer from Allied to Pernod Ricard and then to the new ownership of our new three major private-equity firms, it's been exciting around here.

Let's look at some of the things that you talked about in November 2003. Upgrading coffee at Dunkin' Donuts...

Our coffee platform is expanding constantly. We have introduced a product called Turbo Ice, which is our iced coffee with a shot of espresso. And just recently we launched our Turbo Hot, which is an espresso shot into our hot coffee, and it's been resonating very, very well. We're close to launching a new product for the summer. Right now, coffee and coffee-related products represent over 65 percent of our store sales.

You also were talking about Dunkin' Donuts' lunch daypart.

We have a new prototype. It's a reconcept pointing more toward our coffee credentials, a little warmer environment. We've exploded the PM platform. Our first two prototypes are up with the full menu. In those two locations, about 40 percent of the overall sales are now coming in after 11 o'clock. And it's a mix of our good coffee platform...and people are then coming in enjoying a snack in our PM platform.

We're going to introduce between all three of our brands 38 new products that

will be put on the menu over the next two or three years.

Tell me about the new Baskin-Robbins.

It's a lot of energy, a lot of fun. We've created a sundae bar where we have the old-style soda jerk making sundaes for you. We've added a Bold Breeze beverage platform to Baskin, which is a fruit-based iced drink with natural fruit. And we're experimenting with frozen custard. We now have a freestanding franchise model in Baskin, which is not dependent on combo growth.

What's the status of the all-day concept?

The all-day concept is gone. It's day is over. We have taken Togo's out of most of the all-day stores and replaced it with what we call the Dunkin' Deli, which is a wonderful sandwich platform under the Dunkin' Donuts umbrella.

So what is the future of Togo's?

We've closed stores that weren't profitable. And as a result, we have a very, very strong Northern California and a rebounding Southern California market. We'll probably open 15 to 20 stores next year in Togo's single stores out on the West Coast.

We're now pointing it to be compared with a Panera Bread quality or a Firehouse Subs quality or Potbelly quality. And we've also elevated it more toward fast casual.

How have you improved franchisee relationships?

Well the first was the commitment to the Brand Advisory Councils, the Regional Advisory Councils and the Enterprise Advisory Council. The other thing is that we as a leadership team are always out in the field with the franchisees, making sure that the message that we deliver is consistent, that we're always working with our franchisees in a fair and firm way.

You've been named chairman since your most recent purchase.

How's your role changing?

I think my role changes a bit away from the day-to-day, which I love. But you know what? At the end of the day, I'm just a kid that loves to operate the business. So I'm probably going to find myself dabbling in the weeds once in a while. **CL**

Who said

“you can’t please all of the people, all of the time”?



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Chain Leader

INSIGHT FOR RESTAURANT EXECUTIVES

Vol. 11, No. 6
May 2006

STORYBOARD

24 Into the Blues

Famous Dave's new ad campaign uses blues music to highlight its authentic barbecue.

With Texas Slim and the Love Machine singing in the background, the new commercials feature dishes like catfish and ribs as well as the chain's many regional barbecue styles.

By Margaret Littman



RESTAURATOUR

28 Work in Progress

Located near the University of Delaware, California Tortilla's first two-story restaurant gives off a carnival vibe. The walls are painted orange, lime green and yellow. And chili-pepper lights hang from the black ceiling. The unit brings California Tortilla one step closer to a standard prototype—crucial as it steps up expansion.

By Lisa Bertagnoli

TOQUE OF THE TOWN

35 Building on Tradition

Director of Quality Assurance Doug Hetherington is mixing Olga's Kitchen's classic Mediterranean recipes with new ingredients and cooking techniques. Spinach pies and gyros now stand alongside original creations like a deep-fried, phyllo-covered cheesecake and white bean chicken chili, prompting a jump in the average check and systemwide sales.

By Monica Rogers

LIQUID MEASURE

45 Creative Juices

Juice It Up is using exotic fruits full of antioxidants and fresh-squeezed juices to reinforce its "healthy" image as it expands. Its Brazilian Blends line features the acai berry and acerola cherry. Meanwhile the new Healthyway Juices combine fresh-squeezed vegetable and fruit juices that go beyond the usual orange, carrot and apple.

By Maya Norris

COVER STORY

53 Support System

Chairman and CEO Martin Sprock has positioned Raving Brands and its eight fast-casual concepts for national expansion. His franchisee-friendly formula includes free operational support and leveraging his successful concepts to secure A locations for the others. With 465 units across the eight brands, the company expects to grow unit totals to 1,200 to 1,500 by 2008.

By Lisa Bertagnoli

ROAD TRIP

83 Growing Up

With small-town tradition and major urban amenities, Charlotte, N.C., is one of the fastest-growing cities in the Southeast. Chris Ivens-Brown, vice president of culinary development at Compass Group North America, gives *Chain Leader* a tour of the sophisticated restaurants that call Charlotte home.

By Lisa Bertagnoli

HUMAN ASSETS

90 Latin Influence

Consolidated Restaurant Operations and its franchisees are finding that tapping the growing Hispanic labor pool helps them better recruit and retain talent at its Cantina Laredo and El Chico locations.

By Donna Hood Crecca

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ON THE NET

How to Grow to 100 Units

- Our new online series, created to help young chains reach the next level.
- The experts respond: How often should regional managers visit units?
- Coverage of *Chain Leader's* "How to Grow to 100 Units" roundtable, including video highlights.
- An expanded editorial archive of stories on growing concepts.
- California Tortilla's Pam Felix on the trials and joys of growing her spunky concept.

Plus

- Download a podcast featuring Dunkin' Brands' Jon Luther.
- Financial adviser Jim Parish talks about the financial status of the industry.
- Senior Editor David Farkas muses about the restaurant industry in his blog, Dave's Dispatch.
- Daily news.
- Franchise opportunities.
- Archived stories from the pages of *Chain Leader*.

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High Definition

During the Women's Foodservice Forum leadership conference last month, I participated in a workshop called, "Speak Up, Stand Out, Be Heard." In it, we learned how to define our roles not by our job titles but by what we actually do. So if someone asks me what I do for *Chain Leader*, my response should not be "editor-in-chief" but something like, "I help chain restaurant executives do their jobs better by providing and filtering news, analysis and information."



If you don't communicate who you are, others will make up their own minds.

**MARY BOLTZ CHAPMAN,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

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What Can I Do For You?

Changes the perspective, doesn't it? I don't edit a magazine. I filter information so you get what you need. That's why *Chain Leader* uses other methods beyond this publication to provide you with knowledge where and when you need it: Via e-mail with *Newsbites*, the daily newsletter we distribute with our sister publication, *Restaurants & Institutions*.

In the electronic version of our printed issue, which is downloaded to computers the same day the hard copy ships. On our Web site, www.chainleader.com, which continues to offer more and more Web-exclusive features, some hooked to the magazine (like the current podcast featuring an extended version of the Cover Society interview with Jon Luther of Dunkin' Brands on Page 2) and others unique (like California Tortilla founder Pam Felix's blog chronicling the growth of her spunky concept). At our annual *Chain Leader LIVE* conference, which brings the insight and analysis of the print magazine to a live forum.

Perhaps you didn't even know about some of those offerings. Perhaps you see *Chain Leader* as a magazine and nothing more. That's fine, I guess. Unless you want more information or would like it in a different format.

Chain Leader needs to define itself continually so you know what we have to offer.

Charles Bernstein, our editor-at-large, knew that a long time ago. Back in the '70s, he defined himself not as an editor of a foodservice trade magazine, but as an expert on the industry who could help companies grow. He wrote books, created industry events and volunteered his time to organizations. It's why his title is editor-at-large—anything else just seems too small. Charles is retiring, so this is his last issue. But he's promised to continue to be a resource for us here at *Chain Leader* and for the industry.

Defining Moments

Luther, chairman and CEO of Dunkin' Brands, knows the importance of the definition exercise. During our interview, he said the company's focus is on "culinary development rather than product development." He boasted about the culinary team Dunkin' Brands attracted to keep the new-product pipeline full of compelling offerings. For example, Executive Pastry Chef Christopher Boos has won several gold medals from international pastry competitions, and Executive Chef Stan Frankenthaler is a James Beard nominee.

And Luther talked about the importance of getting buy-in from the company's franchisees before marketing initiatives to the masses. He and his team are changing the definition of Dunkin' Donuts from "time to make the doughnuts" to a brand that "America runs on."

The challenge is to define yourself or your concept not by name or title, but by results. If you don't define yourself, clearly and consistently, somebody else will. **CL**



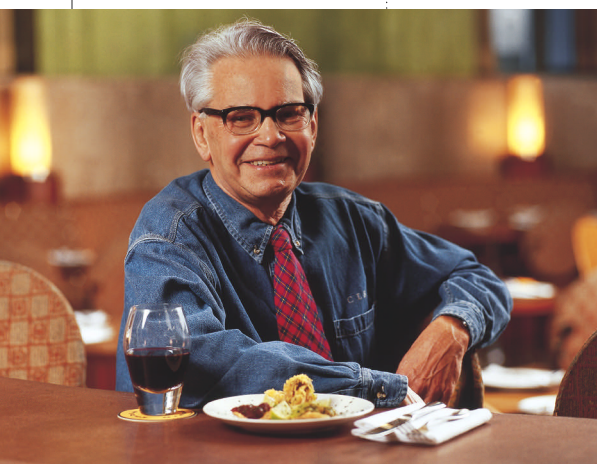
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A Fond Farewell

After more than 30 years of studying and reporting about the restaurant industry, this will be my last column as an official foodservice editor. I am finally retiring to smell the roses and spend time with my wife, Norma, our three children and five grandchildren. Truthfully not a bad idea at all at age 71.



I've been honored to chronicle the industry's growth, but there is still work to do.

**CHARLES BERNSTEIN,
EDITOR-AT-LARGE**

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I'm proud of my accomplishments as a founding editor of *Chain Leader*, helping it over the last decade to grow to its strong position. It's come a long way since 1996.

I am proud of my three books, which sold well and I think helped the industry: *Great Restaurant Innovators*, 1981; *Sambo's, Only a Fraction of the Action*, 1984; and *Winning the Chain Restaurant Game*,

1994, a collaboration with Ron Paul, president and CEO of Technomic.

And I fondly recall my work with *Restaurants & Institutions* and the 18 years I spent as chief editor at *Nation's Restaurant News*.

A Look Back

This was a different industry in the 1970s when I started out at *NRN*. Among the key industry leaders were Joe Lee, Norm Brinker, the late Dave Thomas and the late Joe Baum, all giants in the industry. Sambo's had been a leading chain then, until it faltered in the early 1980s from overstepping its limits. And Victoria Station, launched in 1969 by three Cornell University grads, rose quickly from 1969 to 1978 to some 100 units, and then the bottom fell out. Another lesson in too much, too fast.

My favorite story was in 1976. I spent a week on assignment reporting on the Alaskan Pipeline, which was being built then. I watched the caterers and distributors conquer the Arctic wasteland in hazardous May weather. I saw trucks filled with food supplies bogged down in mud, unable to move

until they could be towed away. I watched 30 percent of the produce spoil, and precious hours lost.

Another one of my favorite assignments was a two-week trip in 1987 through several parts of the Soviet Union. I studied its efforts to build halfway decent restaurants, which rarely succeeded at that time. But by 1990, McDonald's finally started opening restaurants in Moscow.

Now we see the restaurant industry growing at a faster pace than ever, but we must be careful. It is not perfect by any means.

Challenges Ahead

Certainly, despite the strong, dedicated efforts of the Women's Foodservice Forum and the MultiCultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance, there still should be a lot more room for women and minorities at all levels of the industry. Diversity remains one of the biggest battles we have faced and continue to face.

Other problems that continue are the too-rapid growth of many overly ambitious companies; IPOs and financing that don't work out because of rose-colored glasses and lack of due diligence; and too many companies frequently switching leaders at the top—take Burger King as a prime example.

At the same time, we have a massive immigration challenge which must be settled reasonably.

And the restaurant industry needs to continue trying to elect more foodservice leaders to Congress and other public offices.

When I started, this was a smaller industry and didn't have anywhere near the clout that it has today. It has been my honor to be with you and to see it grow. And I'll still be watching and cheering you on. **CL**

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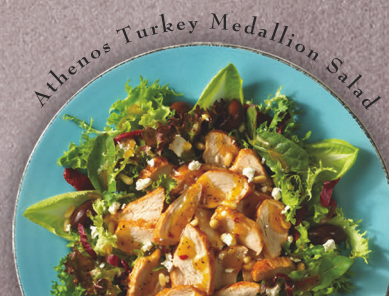
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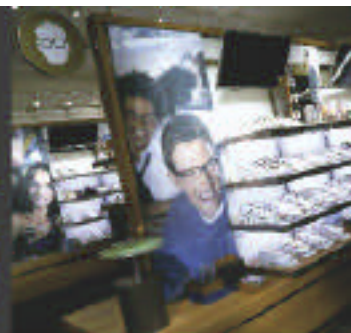
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Performance Enhancing

Applegrove Restaurants, a 100-unit Applebee's franchise based in Atlanta with revenues of almost \$250 million, finally outgrew a homegrown reporting system. CFO Mike Rummel replaced it with a custom-made performance-management system from an Atlanta-based software firm. He details the recent changes.

What did you buy?

I term it a business-performance-management solution, or BPM. I was looking for a tool to take us through the financial reporting and information processing, from forecasting our business plan to analyzing actual results versus the forecast.

As opposed to what?

As opposed to having to do this process in an Excel file and then import the forecast into the general ledger. We spend a lot of time reconciling the data. Our goal is to get financial information to users quickly and cost effectively.

Why engage in this process now?

The technology is finally catching up. Our company is approaching \$250 million in revenues, and until now, the cost was prohibitive for a company of our size. We think the investment cost will be less than the cost of adding human capital to keep up with our expected growth.

Couldn't you simply outsource these processes?

Yes, but I didn't even know who to outsource it to. Plus, I didn't see this as an outsourcing opportunity. We were looking for tools to help operators manage their restaurants by giving them access to what we call "one version of the truth."

Who's using it?

Right now we have trained our directors of operations on the system. The training lasted about eight hours. We trained

them how to forecast and budget using the system. The next phase is to integrate our actual results into the system so we can compare and react.

What are the benefits of the new system?

Financial information will be delivered faster, which will allow our operators to more quickly identify and adjust for variances to our plan. One thing we like about the tool is, long term, it will be quicker and easier to do analysis across restaurants. It will allow a better focus on problem areas.

Was there pushback?

The initial feedback was that this is going to take a lot of time out of the operators' day. They said, "It was easier when you did it for us." After we went through the [training] process, they said, "We know our financial side of business better than we did before."

How much did you budget for implementation?

[Applegrove is] investing about \$250,000 during a three-year implementation. That includes user licenses and annual software maintenance.

How do you measure savings?

One mantra I have is being efficient and effective. We have three staff accountants, one for every 30-plus restaurants. We will be able to expand the unit number utilizing this system. We will be able to grow from 90 to 120 units without adding another accountant, saving roughly \$65,000 to \$70,000 a year. The other payback is, we will eliminate redundant systems. Finally, and most important, we will speed up the delivery of accurate financial information to our operators. **CL**

An Applebee's franchisee makes reporting efficient and effective.

BY DAVID FARKAS





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At Off The Grill, delivery makes up 60 percent to 65 percent of sales, while dine-in accounts for 20 percent to 25 percent, and takeout, 15 percent.

Second Chance

Off The Grill climbs out of bankruptcy to start growing again. **BY MAYA NORRIS**

Alan Thompson hopes the second time around is the charm. The founder and COO of Franklin, Tenn.-based Off The Grill has resurrected the chain from bankruptcy and is ready to give expansion another try.

It has been a bumpy ride for Thompson, something he didn't foresee when he opened Off The Grill in 1999 in St. Louis. A former Steak-Out franchisee, Thompson had envisioned a concept that delivered a limited menu of steaks, burgers and chicken. But to increase margins, get A locations and differentiate it from other steak-delivery concepts, Off The Grill also offered dine-in and takeout in a fast-casual environment.

Too Much, Too Soon

The formula seemed to work. A year after opening the first unit, Thompson entered into a joint-venture agreement with a company in Phoenix for six stores and began franchising soon thereafter. From 2000 to 2004, Off The Grill grew to 21 units in Alabama, North Carolina, Arizona, Missouri, Southern California, Oregon, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Connecticut and Tennessee, with some units posting sales over \$1 million.

Such fast expansion turned out to be a detriment to an undercapitalized company still developing its concept. The stores were so spread out that the company could neither gain market saturation and buying power nor provide adequate support for franchisees. And because most of the franchisees were mom-and-pop operators, they didn't have the resources and infrastructure to operate the stores properly.

"That kind of growth in the development stage is just...in retrospect, it was stupid," Thompson says. "It was my fault

as a franchisor, not knowing enough about where we were and where we were going."

By 2004, Off The Grill had racked up \$1.5 million in debt, filed bankruptcy and closed half its stores, mostly in the West. An investment group that Thompson sought out purchased the chain out of bankruptcy that year.

New Game Plan

Off The Grill spent the next year-and-a-half coming up with a new strategic plan. It calls for growing concentrically in the Southeast and accepting only multiunit franchise deals with companies that have financial resources and restaurant experience.

Off The Grill also improved store efficiencies. It reduced its prototype to 1,800 square feet from 2,500 square feet while adding seating. It also created two separate grill areas: one for takeout and dine-in orders and the other for delivery orders.

To better support franchisees, Off The Grill rewrote its training, operations and pre-opening manuals to be more comprehensive. And because the chain is only growing regionally for now, it was able to secure contract pricing with distributors and vendors.

With these systems in place, Off The Grill is concentrating on opening three to four units in Nashville, two or three in Memphis and three or four in Atlanta this year. While Thompson predicts the chain could easily have between 100 to 300 units nationwide in five years, he emphasizes that the company is committed to growing its existing markets first.

"What we really want and part of our strategic growth plan is to make certain we have strong growth—much more quality than quantity right now," he says. **CL**

SNAPSHOT

CONCEPT

Off The Grill

HEADQUARTERS

Franklin, Tenn.

UNITS

13

2005

SYSTEMWIDE SALES

\$8 million

2006

SYSTEMWIDE SALES

\$14 million to

\$15 million

(company estimate)

AVERAGE

UNIT VOLUME

\$800,000

AVERAGE CHECK

\$18.50

EXPANSION PLANS

10 in 2006,

15 in 2007

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Into the Blues

Famous Dave's lets blues music sing its tale of authenticity.

Last year, Famous Dave's of America, the Minnetonka, Minn.-based barbecue chain, launched a black-and-white ad campaign set to blues music. The campaign was only the second year of television advertising in the chain's nearly 12-year history.

The commercials showed how the Famous Dave's concept developed. As its chefs and founder Dave Anderson looked all over the country for the best regional barbecue recipes, they "ran into a lot of blues music. There's a natural connection between blues music and barbecue," explains Vice President of Marketing Lane Schmiesing. "We used the black and white to grab interest. It had a documentary-esque feel, and then as you started to move into Famous Dave's food, it became more vibrant, and moved into color."

The campaign worked as intended.

But as the publicly owned chain plans to expand at the rate of 25 to 30 units annually, primarily through franchising, that sort of aggressive growth prompted Famous Dave's to create a new ad campaign that highlights its authentic barbecue and blues ambience.

"We just decided to take the original idea and make it better," says Denny Haley, president and chief creative officer at BBDO Minneapolis, the agency that created the campaign. "It is still very much about the marriage of barbecue and blues. We're just taking it up a notch."

Filmed entirely in color, the new spots once again feature blues band Texas Slim and the Love Machine singing lyrics BBDO specifically wrote for the ad. The songs are rife with double entendres, referring to "a hunger inside me" and "now that I've found you, there's nothin' more to do."

The team hired Danny Clinch, a director nominated for a Grammy for his work on a

BY MARGARET
LITTMAN

"America's Favorite" Length: 30 seconds



1. [Blues music]



2. Voice-over: Famous Dave's spent 25 years perfecting America's favorite styles of barbecue.



3.



4. Like our slow-smoked chopped pork with tangy Georgia mustard sauce.

Bruce Springsteen video, to create the ads. “That’s how serious we were about this. It is really a short-form music video,” says Haley, who believes the spots are able to garner attention without getting off message. “A lot of [other] executions got in the way of the food. But marrying the blues music to the food worked really well.”

Food First

This second iteration of the musical campaign began airing in early March. The three spots, available in both 15- and 30-second formats, feature limited-time promotions such as the variety of catfish items on the menu, from blackened to fried. This summer’s commercials will highlight ribs, while the fall touts pork loin. Another version introduces customers to Famous Dave’s “To Go” carryout options.

Haley says the commercials feature more than one kind of barbecue to underscore Famous Dave’s authenticity. The ads specifically mention the chain’s many regional sauces such as tangy Georgia mustard and smoky Texas pit. The spots end with the tagline: “Real Honest Barbeque.”

Unlike their black-and-white predecessors, the new spots feature images of Famous Dave’s restaurant interiors from the back-of-the-house grill to the front-of-the-house waiters in addition to Texas Slim’s tunes, which are more upbeat and faster-paced than the ones it sung in the 2005 ads.

But Haley says the spots were created

with the food in mind from the get-go. “This was not ‘have some blues music and then insert food.’”

No Cheap Shots

“This is a smart position, and it is working,” Haley says. “We never mention price. If someone wants to buy the cheapest barbecue, they’ll go find it. We are not commoditizing. We are [showing Famous Dave’s] as uncompromising. These musicians, Texas Slim, are guys who have not sold out, and [Famous Dave’s barbecue] is the same kind of thing.”

Such advertising doesn’t come cheap. According to TNS Media Intelligence, Famous Dave’s spent \$2.5 million on advertising placement in 2005, up from \$1.4 million in 2004. The chain subsidized the campaign with its first ad fund, in which franchisees contribute 1 percent of sales.

The ads are targeted to new, lapsed and current customers, ages 21 to 54, who are college educated. To reach that wide, varied audience, the commercials have been airing in a variety of time slots on both cable and network TV. Coordinating radio ads run during sports radio and adult rock programming.

But for all the emphasis on the menu, Schmiesing says, the chain brought in an unexpected new audience when it announced the agreement with Texas Slim and the Love Machine: “We started getting e-mail from their fan base.” **CL**

SNAPSHOT

CONCEPT

Famous Dave’s of America

HEADQUARTERS

Minnetonka, Minn.

UNITS

40 company-owned, 91 franchised

2005 REVENUES

\$102.4 million

2006 REVENUES

\$109 million*

AVERAGE CHECK

\$13

2005 AD BUDGET

\$4 million*

AD AGENCY

BBDO Minneapolis

EXPANSION PLANS

25 to 30 annually, maintaining a 30-to-70 ratio between company and franchised units

*Chain Leader estimate



5.



6. And, if over 150 national and regional awards don’t convince you, the great taste will.



7.



8. Tagline: Real Honest Barbeque.



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Work in PROGRESS

California Tortilla plays with its interior design as it prepares to expand more aggressively.

BY LISA BERTAGNOLI

The wall colors and chili-pepper lights at California Tortilla look punchier against the black ceiling.

The plumbing needed fixing. A staircase in the center of the restaurant had to be moved. But even with those major faults, California Tortilla couldn't say no to a two-story, 4,700-square-foot location on Main Street in Newark, Del., just steps away from the University of Delaware campus.

Main Street "is like a carnival when the weather is nice," says co-founder Alan Cohen, who is also head of new store construction and design for the Rockville, Md.-based chain. Indeed, the restaurant

was packed on a recent pleasant spring day, even though it was the first day of spring break for the university.

Besides, "kids find us," Cohen says. "That's how we have grown."

The restaurant's interior certainly gives off a carnival vibe. The walls are painted unabashed orange, lime green and yellow. A glass case stocked with bottles of hot sauce, many with lively names, lines the entryway. Red chili-pepper lights hang from the black ceiling. Booths are a deep burgundy, and the tabletops are a collage of burgundy, yellow and orange. Halogen spots light "rave boards," geometric



plaques that hold restaurant reviews and other press clippings.

Major Change

Located in a former Italian restaurant, the Newark restaurant is the first two-story store in the system. While the location is desirable, the facility needed work, including new plumbing, new bathrooms and a new place for a staircase located in the middle of the restaurant. If left there, the staircase would have blocked entering customers' views of the open kitchen, a key design element at California Tortilla. Because of all the structural changes, the buildout of the Newark location cost \$330,000, about a third more than the average California Tortilla.

In addition to the second floor, the Newark location includes quite a few additions to the basic design scheme. To start, the restaurant has booths and banquettes. The first batch of California Tortilla locations didn't offer booth seating. However, booths add a warmer feeling to the dining room, Cohen says: "People gravitate toward booths. They're in their own little world."

Another first: a low wall that

SNAPSHOT

CONCEPT

California Tortilla

LOCATION

Newark, Del.

DESIGNER

Brian Laug, Heath Design Group, Baltimore, Md.

OPENING

Jan. 23, 2006

AREA

4,700 square feet

SEATS

90 inside,
5 on the patio

AVERAGE CHECK

\$7.50

2006 UNIT VOLUME

\$1 million
(company estimate)

EXPANSION PLANS

10 this year; markets include Philadelphia, southern New Jersey and Williamsburg, and Richmond, Va.



The mezzanine, which will offer semiprivate dining, is popular with lunch customers.



(Clockwise from l.) Murals and banners will cover the wall space, which is far more expansive than California Tortilla's single-story units.

The chain experimented with adding blue to the color mix; yellow will replace the blue in future locations.

Vinyl flooring, new to this location, is more durable and easier to clean than the painted floors in other units.

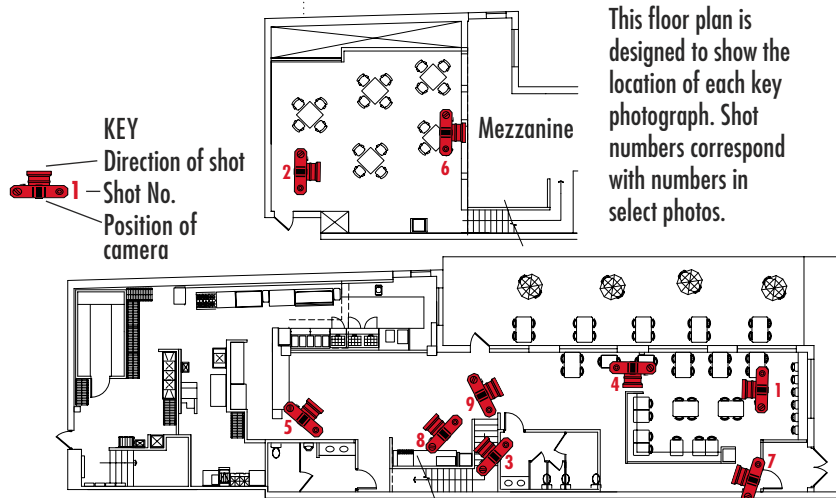
cordons off the dining room from the doorway and entryway. Before, customers would meander through the dining area to get to the ordering counter. The wall helps guide traffic flow from the door to the counter, Cohen says.

Another change: Floors, once painted, are now linoleum. The linoleum is easy

to clean and far more durable than paint, according to Cohen.

Several design experiments won't move on to other stores. For instance, a mottled-blue vinyl that serves as wainscoting in the entryway and as a cover on the low wall doesn't work because the color is too serious, Cohen says. He'll replace it with a mottled-yellow vinyl that complements the lime, orange and yellow wall colors.

"Rave boards" in geometric frames display California Tortilla's reviews and writeups.



Working Toward a Standard

The Newark location brings the chain one step closer to a standard look and procedure for the stores, says Brian Laug, principal at Heath Design Group, the Baltimore-based design firm on the project. "We're trying not to reinvent the wheel each time on these," he says.

So far, standardization has been difficult because no two California Tortilla stores are alike. The Newark location, at 4,700 square feet, is nearly twice as big as the ideal California Tortilla location, and the original unit, in Washington, D.C.'s China-

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(Clockwise from top l.) The designers moved the staircase from the center of the unit to the side to provide guests with a clear line of sight to the open kitchen.

A new feature for the chain, a low wall divides the entryway from the dining room and guides guests to the counter.

Vinyl flooring reproduces a tortilla chip-like pattern that faces the burrito-making counter and conjures up the menu items.

Booths and banquettes, another new touch, warm up the room.

Design standardization is a challenge, because no two California Tortilla locations are alike.

town, is only 17 feet wide. "They're not the standard 20-by-80 box," Laug says. "All seem to have their own nuances."

California Tortilla expects the Newark location to generate at least \$1.2 million in unit sales. The average unit volume for California Tortilla ranges from \$1.1 million to \$1.5 million, except for its unit at the Baltimore/Washington International airport, which tracks at \$1.7 million.

Standardization is crucial at this point, due to the chain's stepped-up expansion plans. California Tortilla has opened 17 locations in the past 16 years. Current expansion plans call for 10 units to open this year and 10 in 2007. "We have to tone this thing down so it's a little more automatic from the design and construction-cost standpoint," Laug says.

Cohen allows that standardization is necessary as expansion accelerates. However, he says he'll hang onto one rule: "It's got to be fun. If it's not fun, we won't do it." **CL**

MENU SAMPLER

SPECIALTY BURRITOS

Havana Chicken: mesquite chicken, Mexican rice, black beans, spicy low-fat Havana sauce with a touch of lime, salsa and shredded romaine, \$4.89 small, \$5.69 regular

BURRITO BOWLS

Nacho Chili Bowl: Mexican rice, turkey chili, jalapeños, tortilla chips, shredded lettuce, sour cream, salsa and guacamole, \$5.99


BIG, FRESH SALADS

Southwestern Chicken Salad: grilled chicken breast, lettuce, tomatoes, shredded Monterey Jack cheese, guacamole, corn, cilantro and tortilla strips, \$6.49

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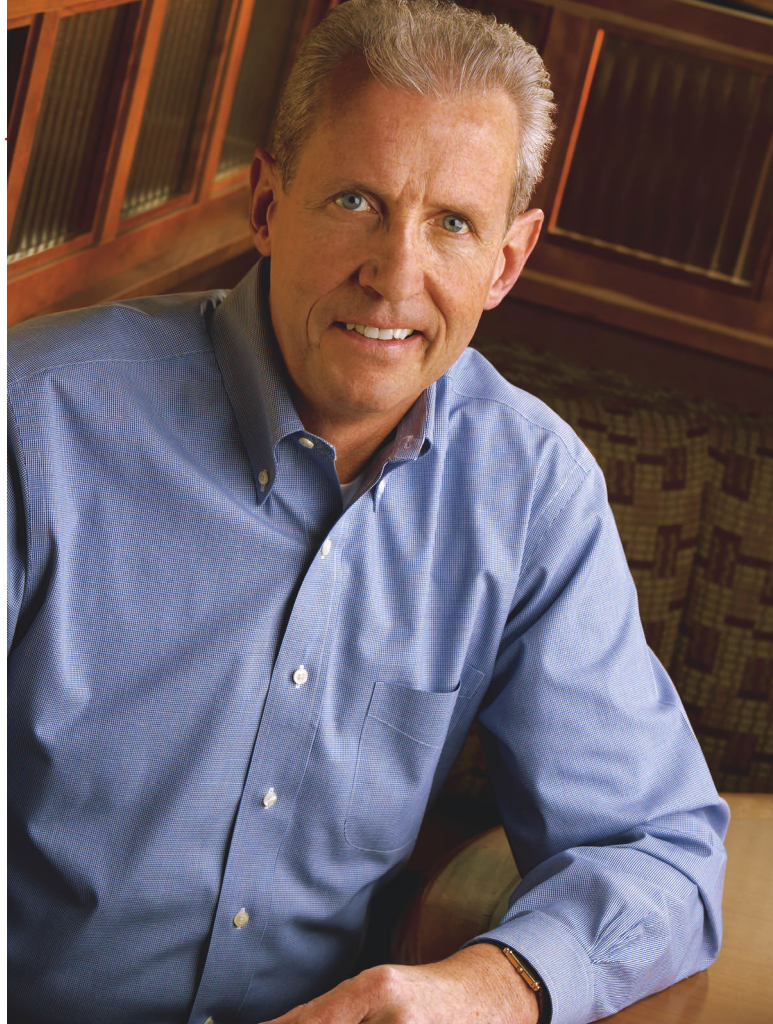
The Original Olga sandwich is the top-selling menu item, making up 30 percent of sales.



Doug Hetherington puts a contemporary spin on Olga's Kitchen's culinary heritage.

BY MONICA ROGERS

Building on TRADITION



Go out for a gyro sandwich and you expect counter service from guys in white aprons, meat on a rotating spit, and maybe a blue and white awning stamped with psuedo-Hellenic lettering. Unless you head to Olga's

Kitchen, a 26-unit chain where Mediterranean influences are downplayed in favor of sandwiches, soups and sides that "you aren't going to find someplace else," says Doug Hetherington, director of quality assurance and menu committee lead for the Troy, Mich.-based concept.

Yes, there's spinach pie and a salad with feta, olive and red onion, but most everything else studiously sidesteps stereotype. The White Bean Chicken Chili, \$3.49 a cup, and fried bread wedges with Swiss-almond cheese outsell the spinach pie. Even the gyro sandwich isn't called a gyro. It's an Original Olga, \$5.79, seasoned beef

and lamb broiled and served with onions, tomatoes and yogurt sauce on lightly sweetened flatbread that's griddled to order.

"Our strategy has always been to serve distinctive foods only available at Olga's," Hetherington says.

Original with a Difference

Hetherington shows off dishes like the best-selling Peasant Soup, \$2.89 a cup, with veggies, ground beef and lamb in rich tomato broth. Olga Snackers, \$4.79, deep-fried wedges of seasoned Olga bread, started out as complimentary dippers served with soups and salads. But they proved so popular that the chain now also sells them as an appetizer. And there's more than 20 iterations of the Olga Sandwich—from the Salmon, Bacon, Lettuce and Tomato with dill mayonnaise, \$7.49, to the Thai Chicken, \$6.69, with rice, julienne veggies, napa cabbage and spicy peanut sauce.

Most of these dishes partially rely on

SNAPSHOT

CONCEPT

Olga's Kitchen

HEADQUARTERS

Troy, Mich.

UNITS

26

2005 SYSTEMWIDE SALES

\$40 million

AVERAGE UNIT VOLUME

\$1.5 million

AVERAGE CHECK

\$9.87

EXPANSION PLANS

5 in 2006



MENU SAMPLER

APPETIZER

Three Cheese Balls: cheddar, Jack and Swiss cheeses bread-coated, deep-fried and served with pizza sauce, \$3.39 for eight

SALAD

CBC Salad: grilled chicken breast with mixed greens, red onion, crumbled blue cheese, dried strawberries and toasted almonds tossed in housemade balsamic vinaigrette, \$7.79

OLGA SANDWICHES

Asian Vegetable: carrot, zucchini, celery, green peppers, pea pods, green onion and water chestnuts, stir-fried with soy, topped with fresh tomato and onion, and served with a side of yogurt sauce, \$5.29

Fajita: marinated chicken grilled with green peppers and onions, topped with cheddar cheese, lettuce and tomatoes, and served with salsa and yogurt sauce, \$6.55

Open Face Mushroom Steak Monterrey: sirloin steak grilled with onions and fresh mushrooms, tossed with creamy sauce and topped with Jack cheese. Served with choice of soup, spinach pie, roasted vegetables, stir-fried rice or Olga's fries, \$8.69

SUNCOAST SMOOTHIES

Three Berry Tango: blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, raspberry sherbet and apple juice, \$3.50 for 16 ounces

Mandarin Chicken salad, with breaded and fried chicken pieces, mixed greens, napa cabbage, Mandarin oranges and sesame seeds in a house-made citrus dressing, is the best-selling entree salad.

original recipes for gyro meat, bread dough and sauces from founder Olga Loizon, who sold the original 1970 restaurant to its current owners in 1976 but remains ambassador for the chain. But embellished with new ingredients and cooking techniques, original recipes continue to evolve and take on new life.

Other dishes are completely original. The whimsical French Toasted Cheesecake, \$4.29, looks like a little tumbleweed. The shredded-phylo-covered cheesecake is deep-fried, sprinkled with cinnamon sugar, and served with strawberries and whipped cream. Launched in summer 2004 as part of the company's most recent menu overhaul, the cheesecake is now the top-selling dessert.

TOQUE OF THE TOWN

Hetherington also launched the White Bean Chicken Chili in summer 2004, after someone submitted a recipe from a newspaper. "We tried it all sorts of ways, finally adding Jack cheese into the mix, before coming up with a final recipe," he says. Mildly spicy, with chicken and white beans, the light-colored chili has a creamy consistency thanks to the cheese.

Olga's Kitchen's strategic mix of cherished traditions with new ideas has proven a successful formula. Its average check increased 3.3 percent from 2004 to 2005 and jumped 2.1 percent from 2005 to 2006, to the current \$9.87. Systemwide sales increased 6.6 percent and 4.3 percent, respectively, in those periods.

New Look, New Demographic

With the increase in sales, Olga's Kitchen is ready to grow the concept through joint ventures and with a new upmarket freestanding prototype. The first joint venture with Southfield, Mich.-based TEAM Schostak Family Restaurants meant one unit in 2005, two in 2006, two more yet to open this summer and firm plans for another 10 before 2010. Hetherington expects similar multiunit deals to come.

According to foodservice and hospitality consultant Jerry McVety, president of Farmington Hills, Mich.-based McVety & Associates, the time is right. "It's a mature, proven concept," he says. "There's nothing like this in the market. And the new model they have should do well for both regional and national growth."

While McVety points out that new menu ideas aren't necessary to help Olga's Kitchen move into markets, the company says it needed to evolve to meet a changing demographic. "The freestanding unit makes Olga's Kitchen much more of a destination-dining occasion," Hetherington explains. "We used to be primarily in regional malls, which meant our guests were mostly women shopping during mall hours."

The three new units have seen takeout orders increase from 5 percent to 10 percent

Original recipes from founder Olga Loizon are closely held secrets prepared behind closed doors at the company's central kitchen.

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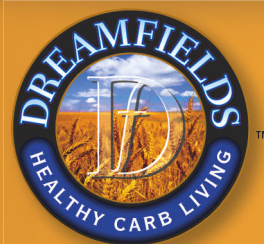
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TOQUE OF THE TOWN



Employees' habit of blending frozen vanilla yogurt and orange soda on their own led to the Orange Cream Cooler.

Olga's Thai Chicken sandwich combines seasoned grilled chicken with rice, veggies, napa cabbage and spicy peanut sauce.



Olga's Kitchen downplays the Mediterranean connection: the words "gyros," "pita" and "Greek-style" do not appear on menus.

of daily orders to as much as 40 percent as well as more businessmen at lunch.

Accommodating male appetites, the company bolstered its bill of fare in July 2005 with hearty items such as the Roast Beef and Burnt Onion Olga, \$6.69; the Roast Beef and Swiss Cheese Olga, \$6.35; and a 7-ounce version of the 5-ounce burger, plank-shaped to fit the bread, \$5.89.

Roast beef also figures in the new \$7.79 Club Salad, topped with turkey, roast beef, bacon, Swiss cheese, red onion and hard-boiled egg.

Teamwork Approach

Shaping such new items is a task never far from Hetherington's mind. He got his start in foodservice working at the commissary at Detroit's Tiger Stadium before joining Olga's Kitchen 30 years ago, during his college days at Eastern Michigan University. "I first met Olga in 1976, as a cook during summer break at the second Olga's Kitchen to open," Hetherington says. "It never crossed my mind that I might one day be responsible for expanding Olga's menu."

After graduating with a degree in fine arts, Hetherington went right into management training at Olga's, working as assis-



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TOQUE OF THE TOWN

Olga's cross-utilizes ingredients to keep food costs within 24 percent to 25 percent.

The Peasant Soup blends beef and lamb from Olga's gyro recipe with vegetables in rich tomato broth.

Seasoned Olga bread started out as free dippers served with soup and salad. They proved so popular, they're now an appetizer, too.



tant manager and then general manager for five years. He then joined the corporate staff as director of quality assurance. As such, Hetherington manages and implements internal inspection programs at all restaurants and the central kitchen and assists with training programs. He's been leading the menu committee for four years.

Hetherington says menu development is very much a team endeavor that includes regular input from Director of Purchasing Clyde Manion, Food Production Manager Mark Elsholz and President Michael A. Jordan.

"Once we have developed a product that meets all of our criteria, we present the idea to Mike," Hetherington says. "If we all agree that it's an item that will work in our system, we test it at one of our neighborhood restaurants and then move it to select

mall locations, before making the decision on whether to take it systemwide."

Ideas come from all directions. Customers' call for vegetarian options, for example, resulted in the Roasted Veggie Pesto sandwich, \$5.29, launched last July. The sandwich features oven-roasted vegetables griddled to order and combined with pesto, tomato and Jack cheese.

The Orange Cream Cooler, a blend of Olga's frozen yogurt with orange soda, "was something the unit staff were constantly mixing up and drinking on their own," Hetherington says.

Try and Fry Again

Although the summer 2004 menu included more than a half-dozen new items, plus new graphics to match the prototype,

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Desire to be different prompted development of Olga's French Toasted Cheesecake. Rolled in shredded phyllo dough, deep-fried and dusted with cinnamon sugar, the top-selling treat is served with strawberry sauce and whipped cream.

Olga's development process for new dishes usually runs just under a year.

Olga's usually only introduces one or two new items a year. The development process for new items ordinarily runs just under a year, but some new dishes may be in development for five or more years.

For example, Olga's soon-to-launch zucchini fries took seven years to develop. "We worked long and hard first to get a laterally sliced zucchini plank to market," he says. "We had that on the menu for a year and guests liked it, but it was operationally challenging." So the team began working on the fry: "We think this will be the right one. It's like a matchstick fry, with a very light, tempura-like batter," Hetherington says.

With checks averaging less than \$10, Hetherington says part of his challenge is keeping quality while staying within the

24 percent to 25 percent food-cost and 26 percent to 28 percent labor range. "Margins are extremely important," he says. "We're careful to avoid inventory widows, cross-utilizing ingredients as much as possible."

Helping speed operations and improve consistency, Olga's installed steam-jacketed kettles in 2004 to streamline and speed soup production.

And capitalizing on the West Coast smoothie craze, Olga's Kitchen launched a new concept, Suncoast Smoothies, in summer 2004 that operates from a separate counter within units. "The only equipment this required us to bring in was some blenders, juicers, an ice chipper and an ice-cream cabinet," Hetherington concludes. "It's new, it's fresh, it's family—just the right fit for Olga's Kitchen." **CL**



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Creative Juices

Juice It Up bolsters its “healthy” image with exotic fruits and fresh-squeezed juices.

BY MAYA NORRIS

Clemente, Calif.-based distributor that could harvest and import the fruits according to the chain's specifications.

The best-selling drink in the line is The Ultimate Acai Smoothie, \$4.95 for 24 ounces and \$5.95 for 32 ounces, blending organic acai

with a Brazilian energy drink, bananas and apple-strawberry juice. The acai is also used in the \$4.95 Ultimate Acai Bowl, which blends organic acai, a Brazilian energy drink and banana-apple juice, topped with sliced banana and organic omega-3 granola. The Super C Cherry, \$4.95 for 24 ounces and \$5.95 for 32 ounces, rounds out the category. Blending acerola cherry, orange-pineapple juice, nonfat yogurt and peaches, the Super C Cherry contains 1,000 milligrams of vitamin C.

Juice and smoothie bars have always billed themselves as the choice for health-conscious consumers. But with the increase in competition, Irvine, Calif.-based Juice It Up launched two new lines of drinks that take health and wellness to another level. It added smoothies with exotic Brazilian fruits chock full of antioxidants as well fresh-squeezed fruit and vegetable juices to help reinforce its image as it expands.

“[The new drinks] help position our overall product line to say that we offer something that's healthier than the alternative that's out there,” President Brandon Gough says.

Into the Amazon

In 2001, Juice It Up introduced its Brazilian Blends line, featuring the acai berry and acerola cherry, both indigenous to the Brazilian Amazon. The acai berry has twice the antioxidants of blueberries, as well as amino and omega acids. The acerola cherry has 10 times the vitamin C of orange juice. Juice It Up developed the drinks with a San

SNAPSHOT

CONCEPT

Juice It Up

HEADQUARTERS

Irvine, Calif.

UNITS

93

2005

SYSTEMWIDE SALES

\$20 million

2006

SYSTEMWIDE SALES

\$26 million

(company estimate)

AVERAGE CHECK

\$5

EXPANSION PLANS

50 in 2006



Juice It Up's Brazilian Blends line features exotic fruits like the acai berry in The Ultimate Acai Smoothie (l.) and Ultimate Acai Bowl, and the acerola cherry in the Super C Cherry smoothie.

LIQUID MEASURE

It is vital for operators to keep track of which Healthyway Juices are selling in their stores to minimize waste.



The Pure Gold is the best-selling drink in the Healthyway Juices line.

While Juice It Up claims it was the first U.S. juice and smoothie chain to offer an acai smoothie, competitors like Jamba Juice and Smoothie King have since jumped on the acai bandwagon. So to set its drink apart from the competition, in 2002 Juice It Up doubled the amount of acai and began using fresh rather than frozen bananas in its smoothie. It has since become the No. 2-selling drink overall at Juice It Up, behind its strawberry-banana smoothie.

Turning on the Juice

To further emphasize its brand positioning, Juice It Up launched the Healthyway Juices in February 2005. The six drinks feature a combination of fresh-squeezed fruit and vegetable juices that go beyond the basic orange, carrot and apple juices prevalent at most smoothie chains. For example, the best-selling Pure Gold, \$2.50 for 8 ounces, \$3.50 for 16 ounces, \$4 for 24 ounces and \$5 for 32 ounces, juices pineapple, carrots, ginger and oranges.

"The introduction of the Healthyway line was really about staying true to the roots of the juice bars back in the '50s and '60s. The idea of blending fresh fruits and vegetables—fresh products—to get the nutrients out of those products," Gough says. "I see our competition moving more towards a kind of mass-market appeal and not necessarily staying true to the original smoothie bar and juice concept."

Although the Healthyway Juices line only makes up less than 10 percent of sales, Juice It Up is keeping the drinks on the core menu because they help cultivate the chain's "healthy" image, especially among hard-core health-conscious consumers such as athletes and weight lifters, an audience Gough feels other concepts have lost touch with.

Work with What You've Got

According to the company, both the Brazilian Blends and Healthway Juices were

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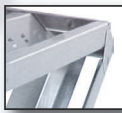


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Juice It Up's Rejuvenator consists of juiced carrots, cucumbers and beets.

easy to execute because the units already had the equipment—blenders and juicers—in place, and the employees were already trained to use them, keeping labor costs at 23 percent to 25 percent. "We just expanded the menu to be able to use that equipment a little bit more than what we currently used it for," Senior Operations Manager Desiree Enciso says.

Enciso and Vice President of Operations Steve Boud say food costs have stayed within 24 percent to 28 percent because the growing 93-unit chain has been able to use its buying power to negotiate and lock in favorable pricing for franchisees.

But inventory management and waste with the Healthyway Juices continue to be ongoing challenges. Because the Brazilian Blends use fruit pulp that is flash frozen, the fruit has a long shelf life. The Healthyway drinks, on the other hand, use fresh vegetables and fruits that can spoil easily. To minimize waste, Juice It Up trains franchisees on keeping track of which drinks are selling, ordering produce based on the sales mix, and proper storage and handling of the fresh produce.

Although Juice It Up is still working out the kinks with the new drinks, it hasn't hindered its balance sheet. The company credits the Healthyway and Brazilian Blends drinks for helping it finish 2005 with \$20 million in systemwide sales and a same-store-sales increase of 14 percent.

Juice It Up says the two new product lines should help differentiate the chain as it opens 50 new stores this year in California, Arizona, Nevada, Texas and Florida, and 75 to 100 new stores nationwide for the next three to five years.

"It is part of who we are now. Both of these line extensions...are what our selling proposition is," Gough explains. "In addition to our core smoothies, we have these two other lines now that you can't get at other places." **CL**

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Raving Brands has no formal expansion plans. Its eight brands grow catch as catch can, albeit overwhelmingly in Atlanta locations. It has no corporate office and no nationwide marketing strategy. Raving Brands has only one company-owned store for each of its brands: Moe's Southwest Grill, Mama Fu's Asian House, Monkey Joe's, Doc Green's Gourmet Salads, Boneheads Grilled Fish and Piri Piri Chicken, PJ's Coffee, Planet Smoothie and Shane's Rib Shack.

Yet the Atlanta-based company has made such seeming disorganization work, and work well. Chairman and CEO Martin Sprock launched Raving Brands in 1998 with one Planet Smoothie; the company now has about 500 locations across eight concepts. Another 200 will open by the end of this year—a figure based on signed leases, Sprock says, not on franchise agreements—and unit totals could reach 1,200 to 1,500 by 2008.

Its eight brands cover most segments in the fast-casual arena. This year's purchase of a breakfast concept called Flying Biscuit and the creation of a yet-unnamed pizza concept will make that coverage complete.

Raving Brands has "good positioning, and the brands

BY LISA
BERTAGNOLI

Chairman and CEO Martin Sprock launched Raving Brands with one mission: to be kind to franchisees. With 465 units across eight brands, the company expects to grow unit totals to 1,200 to 1,500 by 2008 with the help of franchisees.



Raving Brands' concepts offer a mix of healthful and indulgent menu items.

SNAPSHOT

COMPANY

Raving Brands

HEADQUARTERS

Atlanta

CONCEPTS

288 Moe's Southwest Grill, 125 Planet Smoothie, 38 PJ's Coffee, 23 Mama Fu's Asian House, 19 Shane's Rib Shack, 7 Doc Green's Gourmet Salads, 4 Monkey Joe's, 3 Boneheads Grilled Fish and Piri Piri Chicken, 2 Flying Biscuit

2005

SYSTEMWIDE SALES

\$258.4 million

2006

SYSTEMWIDE SALES

\$490.8 million
(company estimate)

AVERAGE CHECK

\$10 or less for each concept

EXPANSION PLANS

715 total units
in 2006

have good consumer appeal," says Darren Tristano, managing partner at Technomic Inc., the Chicago-based foodservice research firm.

But the collection of concepts could prove unwieldy as the company grows. "When you have 10 different concepts to make successful, it's inevitable that some will do worse than others," Tristano says. "Companies tend to put more energy behind the brands that are doing well."

Sprock disputes the notion that every brand has to be a star. "Some brands will do better than others," he says. "We have brands that won't be superstars, and that's OK. At the end of the day, we don't have a brand we consider not successful."

Looking for a Better Way

Sprock, 40, founded the company with a mission: to be kind to franchisees. After college, he and some friends expanded a bar business, Clarence Foster's, in Atlanta and other Southeastern cities. Soon discovering that "counting money and drinking tequila really don't go well together," he investigated a few restaurant franchises.

He was not impressed. The companies he talked with "were out to get me at every turn," he says, alluding to Draconian contracts, an abundance of fees and not much operational support. One contract specified a \$500 charge for a lost recipe book. "They said it was to punish people who lost the book," Sprock says.

The experience inspired him to launch Planet Smoothie and also try another way of franchising. "I thought, 'Let's be the good guy,'" Sprock says.

He opened 10 Planet Smoothie units in Atlanta in time for the 1996 Olympic

In 2003, Raving Brands entered into a joint-venture agreement with Shane's Rib Shack (l.), which has an average unit volume of \$950,000.

In 2005, Raving Brands developed Boneheads Grilled Fish and Piri Piri Chicken, which specializes in dishes grilled with piri piri, a South African pepper.



Games; he says that due to political maneuverings in the city, all but two closed. The chain has since grown to 125 units with an average unit volume of \$275,000.

In 2001, Sprock approached a Mexican concept with the intent of buying it. When the seller balked, Sprock launched Moe's Southwest Grill, focusing on burritos. With 288 units open and 125 more scheduled to open this year, it is Raving Brands' biggest concept. Average unit volumes at Moe's have risen steadily to \$860,000 in 2005 from \$760,000 in 2003. Units in Atlanta, the brand's most saturated market, do well over \$1 million a year, Sprock says. He adds that same-store sales have risen by 12 percent to 14 percent over the past three years, and that average store profitability hovers around 16 to 18 percent; some stores net as high as 30 percent.

In 2000 Sprock entered into a joint-venture agreement with PJ's Coffee, a 28-year-old New Orleans-based concept that roasts its own beans. Raving Brands has since purchased the concept.

Sprock developed Mama Fu's Asian House in 2002-2003 and entered into a joint-venture agreement with Atlanta-based

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Raving Brands leverages Moe's Southwest Grill and Doc Green's to secure A locations for its other concepts.

Beyond franchise agreements, a round of financing will support expansion.

Shane's Rib Shack during that time as well. "They were doing \$2.2 million in 1,200 square feet," Sprock says of Shane's.

Raving Brands developed Doc Green's and Boneheads Grilled Fish in-house and opened

both in 2005. Doc Green's, a build-your-own salad and sandwich bar, bills its menu as "as healthy as you want to be." Boneheads features chicken and fish grilled with piri piri, a South African pepper.

Also in 2005, Sprock inked a joint-venture agreement with Monkey Joe's, a children's concept with play areas and snacks, from founders Mel Silverman and Joe Wilen. Fourteen units are expected to open this year.

And earlier this year, Raving Brands agreed to buy Flying Biscuit, a two-unit Atlanta-based breakfast concept featuring turkey sausage, organic greens and other trendy items. "It's so killer," Sprock says.

The brands share many qualities. All are fast casual, with checks at or less than \$10. The menus offer both healthful and indulgent items. Sprock, who has two young children, says all the brands are kid-friendly. The stores do not use MSG, and he recently swapped Moe's popular tri-color tortilla chips for a dye-free chip. "We're taking a risk, taking a chance to be more on the cutting edge," he says.

And while all sport hip interiors, the average buildout cost is \$400,000, "literally half the cost of our major competitors," Sprock boasts. Perhaps not: Tristano calls the buildout "not exactly low," but suspects that Raving Brands' unit volumes produce a fast return on investment.

That well may be the case. Raving Brands just signed a major financing deal for Moe's. The financing, through Wells

Fargo Bank, will fund general expansion plus the acquisition of regional brands to convert to Moe's, says Steve LaMastra, president and COO of Raving Brands. The financing "is imperative for the size of the system," LaMastra says.

The outright purchase of Flying Biscuit also speaks to the company's financial future, LaMastra says. "This shows a more aggressive posture in the acquisition marketplace, and it demonstrates that we're not afraid to buy an operating company and operate those units," he explains.

Franchising with a Twist

As he bought and created concepts, Sprock fashioned a franchise system that's different from most in the restaurant industry. According to Raving Brands' Uniform Franchise Offering Circular, the company can charge for store openings, but Sprock says it does not. An all-company team provides services such as real estate and other operational support, as well as the services of brand-specific opening teams, gratis.

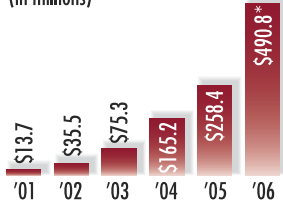
Cary Chastain, who franchises five Moe's and one Mama Fu's in Charleston, S.C., welcomed the free help when he opened his first location, a Moe's, in 2002. "They were down here three times to help me get opened," Chastain says of Raving Brands' opening team. "I kept dropping the ball, and they did everything they could." Chastain plans to open two more Moe's, one Shane's, two Doc Green's and one Mama Fu's, over the next 18 months.

Not charging for opening services costs the company: Sprock says a would-be investor told him the practice costs Raving Brands roughly \$17 million a year. But that could change as Raving Brands grows. "As he gets bigger, he might not be able to afford that," Tristano says.

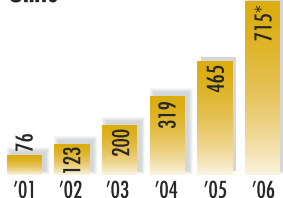
Again, Sprock begs to differ. "We've been through the hump of barely being able to pay bills," he says. "The bigger we get, the

Raving Brands' Steady Climb

Systemwide Sales
(in millions)



Units



*company estimate; does not include Flying Biscuit



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Raving Brands provides services such as real estate, technology and other operational support to franchisees gratis.



Raving Brands is experimenting with wine bars in some PJ's Coffee units (l.); so far they are averaging volumes of \$550,000 vs. \$425,000 for the coffee-only units.

Mama Fu's is testing fusion dishes and full service at night to revive flagging stores.

leaner we'll make ourselves for franchisees."

Raving Brands also helps out franchisees with leases. The company signs leases for A-list locations, keeps them on the company's balance sheet, and then gives—not subleases—them to franchisees who need them. Such largess "creates a real partnership" and a chain with a preponderance of A-

location restaurants. Sprock says the strategy is necessary because franchisees won't do well in B locations.

Giving leases to franchisees is indeed rare, says Susan Kezios, founder of the American Franchise Association, a franchisee advocacy group based in Chicago. "A lot of companies won't do that because they don't want the risk," Kezios says. She adds that companies also sublet to franchisees because it's easier to evict them as tenants than to terminate the franchise agreement. "I've found [subleases] used in insidious ways," Kezios says.

Fixing to Grow

While six of the eight concepts are thriving from his franchisee-friendly formula, Sprock characterizes two, Planet Smoothie and Mama Fu's, as "tough brands." To make Planet Smoothie more competitive with beverage giant Jamba Juice, Raving Brands is testing co-branding efforts with Nestle Tollhouse cookies and Edy's Ice Cream. So far, the effort has boosted sales at a unit in Atlanta's Phipps Plaza to \$400,000 from \$225,000 annually.

Mama Fu's, a 23-unit Pan-Asian concept, is "ahead of its time. ... Asian concepts are still a tough sell," Sprock says, mentioning Scottsdale, Ariz.-based Pei Wei as the



exception to the rule. He hopes a test menu of fusion items and full service at night, to boost wine sales, will revive the flagging stores. Mama Fu's averages unit sales of \$970,000, but "half the stores are successful and half are struggling," Sprock says.

He's also honest about PJ's position in the specialty-coffee segment. "If PJ's went head-to-head with Starbucks, they'd lose most of the time," he says. Raving Brands is experimenting with a wine bar in some units; so far the units with wine bars are averaging \$550,000 vs. \$425,000 for the coffee-only units.

Still, Raving Brands can leverage its successful concepts to secure A sites for its struggling brands. By offering to fill end-caps with Moe's and Doc Green's, it can usually persuade landlords to hand over a prime inline space, Sprock says.

Such tactics are helping Sprock to create a 1,000-store franchise system without franchise advertising. Raving Brands has already hired a marketing director, a public-relations firm and an advertising agency. All are meant to prepare the brands to compete nationally, which to date, they have not: Many stores are concentrated in the Southeast.

These days, Sprock has "a little hand in a lot of things," but likes to handle real estate and loves to work with franchisees. "He's always made time to address my concerns," says John White, a Raleigh, N.C.-based franchisee with three Moe's and a fourth under construction. "The relationship [with Raving Brands] is great," White says.

Seeing that Sprock founded the company to be franchisee friendly, his interest in working with franchisees is hardly surprising. "The only reason we're successful is if our franchisees are successful," he says. "We have to make it work." **CL**

FoodSafety **INSIGHTS**

FOODSERVICE NEWS & RESOURCES

NSF

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MAY 2006



20/20 Foresight: MANAGING RISKS

5 Proactive Strategies

FRONTLINE

- Bird flu concerns
- Hidden ingredient dangers

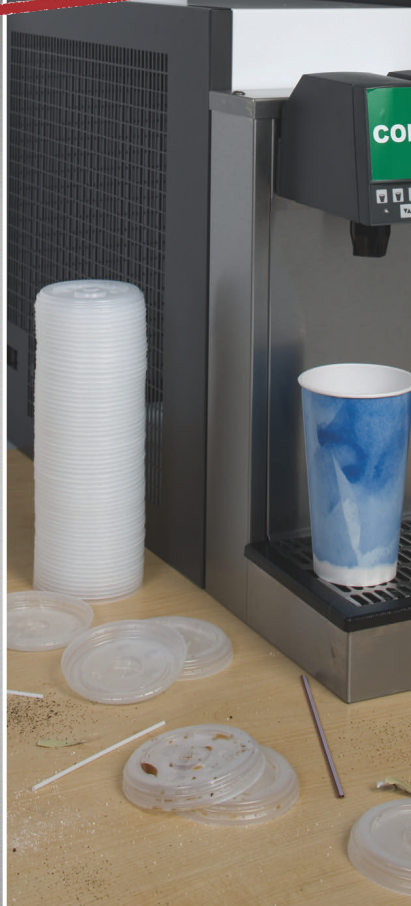
NSF AWARDS

- Making food safety safer
- 2 lifetime achievement honors

EQUIPMENT

- Keeping ice bacteria-free
- Ice machine review

BEFORE



AFTER



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FoodSafety INSIGHTS**CONTENTS****A LETTER FROM NSF**

Dear Colleague,

In this issue, we address proactive ways for you to minimize food safety risks. Recently, a simple seventh grade science project that found bacteria in soda ice became national news. "The New Ice Age" goes beyond the headlines to offer you specifics on how to manage this threat of bacterial growth in your ice supply.



"20/20 Foresight" presents real-life risk-management solutions from five operators. These are realistic programs that you can incorporate into your daily systems to avoid food safety violations.

We also announce the winners of our **2006 NSF Food Safety Leadership Awards Program**, now in its third year. We are proud to recognize true excellence in the foodservice industry. The awards program reflects the spirit of our nonprofit mission of educating all our key stakeholders—industry, the regulatory community and the consuming public—on the critical role of public health and safety. The Food Safety Leadership Awards will be presented at the **National Restaurant Association Restaurant Hotel-Motel Show**, May 20-23, 2006 in Chicago at McCormick Place.

We hope you find this issue useful. We welcome your perspectives on our goal of providing solutions *before* problems arise in your business. This goal is a key component of our overall mission at NSF International.

—Kevan P. Lawlor, President and CEO,
NSF International

WHAT'S INSIDE**FRONTLINE: NEWS AND COMMENTARY****S-4**

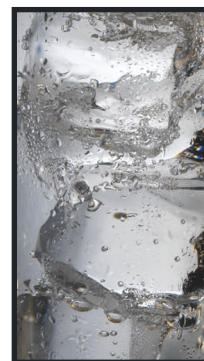
Dealing with questions about avian flu . . . The dangers of hidden ingredients in menu items . . . NSF Food Safety Leadership Awards

**COVER STORY:****20/20 FORESIGHT: MANAGING RISKS****S-10**

Savvy operators have proactive strategies for preventing food safety problems. Here are five to consider.

**EQUIPMENT SOLUTIONS: THE NEW ICE AGE****S-14**

Exposés have pointed out the existence of bacteria in restaurant ice. Our look at ice machines offers solutions to ensure safe ice.

**PLUS: ICE MACHINE REVIEW****S-18**

Ice maker food safety features at a glance

FoodSafety INSIGHTS is published four times a year, in March, May, August and November, by BP Partners, with the sponsorship of NSF International. Foodservice operator audited circulation is 100,000. For more information, visit the Website: www.foodsafetyinsights.com.

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FRONTLINE

News and Commentary

By STEPHANIE SALKIN

KNOWLEDGE AND
COMMUNICATION KEY
TO CALMING BIRD FLU
CONCERNS

During the Cold War, the fear was that “the Russians are coming.” Now, concern is slowly building that “bird flu is coming.”



Hopefully, the most recent fear will be a non-event as was the Cold War threat, but operators need to be prepared for consumer hysteria, nonetheless.

The National Restaurant Association (NRA), Washington, DC, is actively preparing members to deal with questions from diners about avian flu. In addition, poultry suppliers like Tyson and Pilgrim's Pride have instituted programs to check every chicken flock that is harvested to ensure that the products are safe to eat.

According to Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns, avian flu could arrive in the U.S. soon. As birds continue to migrate, an outbreak of avian flu in Alaska is “very possible” in the near future and could affect the lower 48 states by this fall, some experts say. However, while affecting migratory birds, the avian influenza is not very likely to enter the food chain, as the U.S. has strict biosecurity, says Donna Garren, NRA vice president for health and safety regulatory affairs. “Restaurant customers should

HIDDEN INGREDIENTS CAN WREAK HAVOC
WITH DINERS AND OPERATORS ALIKE

If a diner with celiac disease eats gluten, this is not a good thing. Celiac disease is a chronic digestive disease that damages the small intestine and interferes with the absorption of nutrients from food. The only treatment for the disease is to never eat gluten. Gluten intolerance was brought to light recently with the controversy over whether there is gluten in McDonald's French fries. McD's announced that the fries include a “natural flavoring” made from wheat and dairy products, but that the product has no allergens. Despite this claim, there are several lawsuits by celiac sufferers who say they became seriously ill after eating the fries.

Regardless of the outcome of this case, operators increasingly need to be on guard against potential allergic reactions from diners ingesting foods with hidden allergens. There are eight foods that are responsible for 90% of allergic or food-sensitive reactions: milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts (walnuts, cashews, etc.), fish, shellfish, soy and wheat. It is



essential to communicate the existence of these products if it is not immediately apparent to diners that they are an ingredient in a menu item. (See our coverage of Denny's allergen initiative in “20/20 Foresight.”)

Resources: www.foodallergy.org and www.foodallergy.org/allergens/wheat.html; www.fda.gov; www.usda.gov

have reassurances that chicken that is safely handled and properly cooked is safe to eat, a fact that has been reconfirmed by both the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO),” she points out.

The important thing for operators to do is to be prepared to answer diners' concerns

and to ensure that their chicken dishes are safely handled and properly cooked. For handling and cooking guidelines, visit www.avianinfluenza.info.com; www.fda.gov or www.usda.gov, which has a meat and poultry hotline.

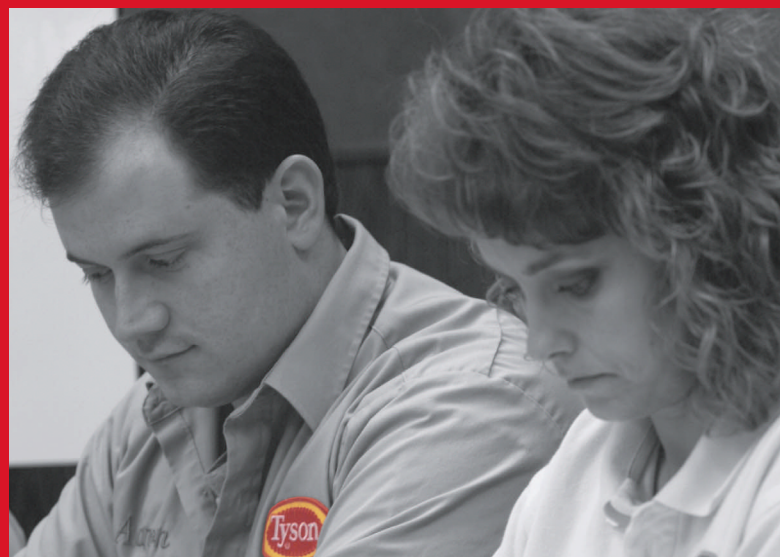
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FRONTLINE

News and Commentary

NRA BACKS CONTROVERSIAL UNIFORMITY IN FOOD ACT

The National Restaurant Association (NRA), Washington, DC, part of a coalition of organizations including Grocery Manufacturers of America (GMA, www.gmabrands.org), is supporting the National Uniformity in Food Act, which has raised the ire of various consumer activist organizations such as Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), Washington, DC.

While CSPI says the pending legislation would “nullify” more than 200 state laws dealing with issues like shellfish safety, milk pasteurization, egg safety, allergen disclosure, and other food safety risks currently monitored at state and local lev-

els, NRA says this is not the case. “We will have one set of guidelines that the Food and Drug Administration and states can collaborate on, to assure that all 50 states

have a sound food safety standard,” notes Allison Shay Whitesides, NRA director of legislative affairs. “This bill will enable us to monitor safety based on real science.”

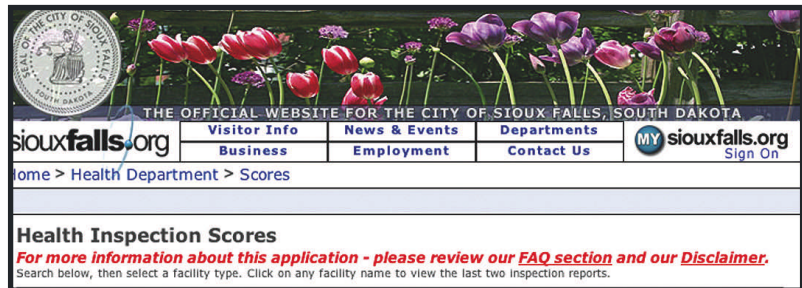
The screenshot shows the GMA (Grocery Manufacturers of America) Public Policy page. The header includes a 'Member Login' section with fields for 'User Name' and 'Password', and a 'Log In' button. Below the header is a navigation menu with links: 'About GMA', 'Public Policy', 'Industry Affairs', 'News', 'Events', 'Publications', and 'Membership'. The main content area features the article title 'National Uniformity For Food Act: Background & Analysis' with a 'BACKGROUND' section. The text in the background section states: 'The "National Uniformity for Food Act" (H.R. 2699) was reported favorably by the House Committee on Energy and Commerce by a vote of 30 to 15. H.R. 2699, led by Cong. Richard Burr (R-N.C.) has nearly 170 bi-partisan co-sponsors, and now awaits further action by Congress. GMA and its members strongly support this legislation, which provides a national uniform standard for direct food additives and warning labels of FDA-regulated products. During the 106th Congress, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry favorably reported S...' To the right of the article is an 'EVENTS' calendar for March 29, 2006, listing: '03/30/2006 GMA President's Advisory Council Meeting San Antonio, Texas', '03/31/2006 Global CEO Forum London', and '04/02/2006 2006 IS/LD Conference Tucson, AZ'. A search bar is visible on the left side of the page.



Fowl play allowed.

CSPI WANTS RESTAURANTS IDENTIFIED IN NEW FSIS RECALL POSTINGS

A regulation proposed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) would post online lists of retail "consignees" that have received meat and poultry products subsequently recalled. CSPI has been campaigning since 2004 for USDA to disclose names not just of grocery stores but of restaurants that have received tainted meat and poultry. The consumer activist organization wants the term "consignee" clarified and, in its comments, seeks to ensure that foodservice operators are included.



SIOUX FALLS WEB POSTINGS DRAW HEAVY DINER TRAFFIC

The Sioux Falls, SD, Health Department has reported twice the number of people visiting its Website, since the department began posting restaurant inspection reports online in mid-January. Within six weeks of the first postings, the scores generated about 125,000 page views, almost twice the number in December. The state says it eventually plans to post its own inspections on the Internet.

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FRONTLINE

News and Commentary

NSF ANNOUNCES 3RD ANNUAL FOOD SAFETY LEADERSHIP AWARD WINNERS

NSF International has announced the recipients of its third annual Food Safety Leadership Awards. An independent awards selection committee representing academicians, industry and government officials made the selections. Winners were selected for outstanding achievement in technology, research, equipment design and systems improvement. Two individual leaders with outstanding contributions to food safety will be honored with the prestigious NSF Lifetime Achievement Award.

TECHNOLOGY BREAKTHROUGHS

HORMEL FOODSERVICE, AUSTIN, MN High-Pressure Processing (HPP)

Unlike chemical anti-microbial growth inhibitors, HPP provides an effective pasteurization process for sliced meats by killing *Listeria monocytogenes*, other pathogens and spoilage organisms. HPP applies hydrostatic pressure of 87,000 pounds per square inch after the sliced meats are packaged. Because the package is sealed, bacteria cannot be introduced through slicing and handling. HPP does not affect flavor or texture, typical with traditional heating or chemical processes.

RESEARCH ADVANCES

MAPLE LEAF FOODS, INC., TORONTO, CAN Traceability

Maple Leaf Foods, Inc., a Canadian food processor, has implemented a traceability system using DNA technology to track each

piece of pork it produces from the farm to the consumer's plate. This genetic marker tracking system is currently in the development process, and Maple Leaf is applying to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) for official recognition. Maple Leaf also is planning comprehensive implementation and training programs to support this new technology.

EQUIPMENT DESIGN

H&K INTERNATIONAL, DALLAS, TX Safe-T-Shroud

Safe-T-Shroud is the first cold pan refrigeration accessory to hold perishable food safely in an open condiment rail without freezing. It uses a design that prevents drying or freezing of the product, satisfying the FDA Food Code temperature holding requirements in the extreme environments found in commercial kitchens.

SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT

SODEXHO USA, GAITHERSBURG, MD HACCP Program

Sodexo USA, a food and facilities management company, has improved its Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) program to respond to today's food safety challenges by integrating new technology. Improvements and upgrades include: electronic food safety communication, expanded food safety training, food safety zone support, expanded verification process, brand protection index measurement, custom electronic record-keeping, product quality assurance, and food security.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

RESEARCH

Dr. Ranzell "Nick" Nickelson II

Dr. Nickelson's thesis at Texas A&M was responsible for the first isolation of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* from shrimp in the Gulf of Mexico. *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, a bacterium in water in coastal regions, can cause serious gastrointestinal illness in humans. He has been responsible for many breakthroughs, such as the dramatic reduction in the incidence of *E. coli* O157:H7 in beef and apple juice. His long and productive career has been responsible for many food safety controls that are standard today.



EDUCATION

Dr. Oscar Peter Snyder, Jr.

Dr. Snyder has provided the hospitality industry and government personnel worldwide with food technology and management education for more than 50 years. He has helped food companies by implementing HACCP-based Total Quality Management programs that strive to achieve zero-defect food safety, customer satisfaction, and productivity. Some of his most noted work has been with the Denny's Corporation, for which he is the HACCP process authority.

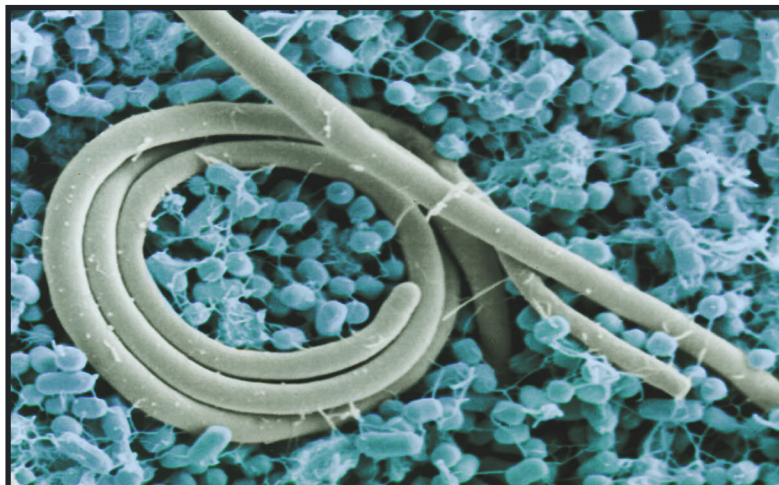


Visit www.nsf.org for more information on these outstanding achievements.

FSIS INITIATIVE AIMS TO REDUCE SALMONELLA

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has announced a new initiative to reduce Salmonella contamination in raw meat and poultry. Resources will be concentrated on processor operations that need improvement, and sample-by-sample test results will be made available to facilities as soon as they are ready. By comparison, processors currently receive results after a full set of samples is completed. FSIS also will begin quarterly postings on its Website of nationwide Salmonella testing results.

A major factor sparking the initiative is the steady increase of Salmonella found in broiler chickens tested by USDA since 2002. About 16% of broilers tested positive in 2005.



Cells of *Salmonella enteritidis* as shown in an electron micrograph

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COVER STORY

20/20 Foresight: 5 Proactive Strategies



Thanks to widespread adoption of HACCP, many practices for managing food safety risks have become standard operating procedure in responsible foodservice kitchens. But there are some practices that are not so common. As education increases and commitment strengthens, proactive approaches to managing risk are emerging. Indeed, just as they do with their concepts, menus, marketing and human-resource initiatives, the industry's best and brightest operators are taking food-safety and QA up a notch.

This special report takes you behind the scenes with five industry leaders for a look at some of the unique strategies they're most proud of. As part of comprehensive food-safety programs, the strategies highlight just a few of the specific ways in which food safety is coming into sharper focus across the industry.

By **DANA TANYERI**

MOCK INSPECTIONS KEEP STAFF ON THEIR TOES *Union Square Hospitality Group, New York*

Unannounced health department inspections can unnerve even the most fastidious foodservice operators. On a good day, they're interruptions that have to be dealt with, generating nervous jitters among management and staff. On a bad day, they can have a serious impact on both the day's operations and crew morale. If the results are unfavorable, the effect will be much more far-reaching.

Union Square Hospitality Group (USHG), the multi-concept business headed by award-winning restaurateur Danny Meyer, takes no chances when it comes to inspections. The nine-unit group has concepts ranging from the renowned Union Square Café and Gramercy Tavern, to Tabla, serving "New Indian" cuisine, The Modern, serving French-American cuisine, to Shake Shack, a "roadside" burger and frozen custard stand. Management puts all

of its kitchens through mock inspections monthly.

"They're done on a surprise basis," says Ron Parker, USHG's operations manager. "If we find anything wrong, the restaurant can correct it quickly. A big benefit of the program is that when the Health Department does come, the staff is used to the experience. They welcome them with open arms and say, 'Come on in, let me show you around. Thanks for being here.'"

Parker says he's surprised more restaurants don't do similar drills. "The chef and kitchen crews get immediate feedback after the audit in the form of a report that follows guidelines used by health inspectors," he says. They appreciate the fact that management is doing its part to ensure that they are complying with all food-safety requirements, he adds.

Managing Risks

COMPETITORS INVITED TO BENCHMARKING PROGRAMS

Jack-in-the-Box, San Diego

Since suffering a devastating E. coli outbreak in 1993, QSR burger giant Jack-in-the-Box rose from the ashes in part by making food safety its No. 1 operational priority. Supplementing the chain's comprehensive HACCP program are a number of initiatives that position it solidly as a food-safety leader. Most—from an aggressive hand-washing system (a chime rings in the kitchen every hour, reminding employees to wash their hands) to ultra-strict supplier compliance systems—affect operations within the company's own “four walls.” But one initiative, launched a decade ago, is unprecedented in that it extends well beyond the bounds of Jack-in-the-Box proper to reach out to the entire industry.

“We established a benchmarking program. It's essentially an open invitation to any restaurant company to come in and learn about our food-safety systems,” says Dr. Dave Theno, senior vice president, quality and logistics. “We have at least one company in every month. Even our most direct competitors have come in. Our stance is that food safety is too important to make it a competitive issue. Food safety problems hurt not just one operator, but the whole industry.”

Operators who take Jack-in-the-Box up on its “sharing” program visit the company's new Innovation Center in San Diego for a half-to full-day workshop in which Theno and other food-safety team members present information on the company's systems and address questions and topics brought in by attendees. Content ranges from supply-side



Audits and mock inspections ensure food safety compliance

issues and setting safety-related specifications, to evaluating distributor capabilities, food-safety training, and general HACCP systems to how the company responds to specific issues that arise in the stores. “Even though we're sharing our systems, which we feel are the best of the best, it's a two-way dialog,” Theno says. “We might not change based on what we learn, but it does enable us to continually think through our systems and enhance what we're already doing.”

He adds that communication between Jack-in-the-Box and companies that participate in the benchmarking program doesn't end with their sharing session. “There's a lot of ongoing communication between the food safety and tech teams,” he says. “They keep in touch with each other and it's become a little industry working group.” Attendees also are asked, upon departing, to follow Jack-in-the-Box's lead and share their systems with other operators. “Several companies have done just that,” he says, “and that feels good. If we can give back and make a difference through programs such as this, we know it's the right thing to do.”

DOCUMENTATION LEAVES NOTHING TO CHANCE

*Sodexo USA,
Gaithersburg, MD*

As the leading provider of food and facilities management in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, Sodexo employs more than 12,000 people and, like any organization of its size, faces significant training challenges. One way the company is meeting those challenges is by tapping technology to help standardize operations, make it easy for employees to succeed and ensure that food-safety requirements are met. After four years in development, Sodexo has begun rolling out its Culinary Data Assistant™ (CDA), a hand-held device that's preloaded with complete menu and temperature guidelines.

According to Mike Dunn, director of product quality assurance, the beauty of the system is its simplicity. Nothing is left to chance or to employees' judgment. “A thermometer is attached to the device, so readings go directly in with no manual input needed,” he says. “The employee simply inserts the thermometer into the selected food item and the reading tells its temperature and if it's a pass or fail based on specifications. If it's a fail, the device gives the employee the corrective actions to be taken.”

All information gathered by the CDA device feeds directly into a main database, and once data is logged in it can't be changed; it's time- and date-stamped. “Most typical HACCP programs in the industry require extensive numbers of documents for critical control point documentation on cooking, cooling, holding, etc.,” Dunn says. “With our system, such documents are replaced by the pocket PC. If there

COVER STORY 20/20 Foresight: Managing Risks

is a system breakdown, we always can revert to paper documentation, as the information is backed up electronically in a major database.”

Dunn says the system ventures into a “whole new world of tracking and management.” While not currently mandated, he says some 130 operations already are on board with CDAs—mostly healthcare, college and university operators. “We find that users enjoy collecting data with this device,” he says. “It eliminates paper, it’s web-based, very fast and easy-to-use. We are actually collecting significantly more data than when employees have to write down the information. Thus, we get more temperature data, not just the minimum required. This, in turn, helps us to create some statistical reports on our website and to identify critical control point areas that need improvement.”

THIRD-PARTY AUDITS HELP FRANCHISEES

Moe’s Southwest Grill, Atlanta

Moe’s Southwest Grill is a fast-casual chain ranked as the 11th fastest growing company in America by Inc. Magazine. Fun, frivolity and fresh-made Southwest fare are specialties of the house. Menu items sporting names like Joey Bag of Donuts (a burrito), The Other Lewinsky and The Ugly Naked Guy (specialty tacos) help define the experience for guests. But when it comes to ensuring food safety, there’s nothing frivolous about Moe’s.

Part of the Atlanta-based Raving Brands portfolio of franchise companies, Moe’s puts serious resources into making sure its franchisees and their employees are trained in and comply with stringent food-safety practices and regulations. HACCP procedures are followed diligently, and, to bolster its own internal program, the company last year began making available a third-party audit program for comprehensive food-safety checks.

“We work with two outside audit firms,” says Dan Barash, director of new product development for Raving Brands. “We’re a franchise company, so it’s not mandatory that

our partners participate, but we highly recommend it. We feel it’s a worthy program to offer to franchisees to help uphold our standards as our brand moves into the next stage of development.”

Approximately 50% of Moe’s 300-plus partners already are participating in the audit program. “Many franchisees were excited about it and signed up right away,” Barash says.

The audits, which take an average of four hours each, are paid for by the franchisee. They’re typically done quarterly. Managers are encouraged to accompany auditors on the walk-through, and recommendations are made for both critical (correct immediately) and non-critical (correct promptly) steps to take to improve food safety. Following each audit, the franchisee, franchisor and franchise support consultants see the report and together analyze the results.

Other key measures taken at Moe’s include intensive training, starting with a sharp focus on food safety during the three-day Raving Brands University that all franchisees and managers complete. “It all starts with training,” Barash says. “We work on everything, down to the proper procedure for employees to follow when they go to the restroom. And we repeat it constantly. Getting the word out day in and day out, and now adding to what we’re doing with programs like the third-party audits, helps us ensure we’re serving safe and delicious foods to our customers.”

ALLERGENS PAMPHLET INFORMS DINERS

Denny’s, Spartanburg, SC

With growing numbers of patrons expressing concerns about allergens in the foods they enjoy away from home, family-dining behemoth Denny’s has committed to making it easy for guests to get questions answered—and for staff to respond knowledgeably to requests for information. The company makes available a pamphlet containing detailed information on common allergens and sulfites that appear in its menu items.



Denny’s pamphlet highlights potential allergens for guests

“We at Denny’s realize that an ever increasing number of our guests need to know if certain ingredients are in our foods, i.e., they may be sensitive to MSG or may have a severe life-threatening allergy to peanuts,” the pamphlet states. “We are providing this information to all of our guests that request it so that they may make informed choices prior to ordering.”

The pamphlet lists nearly 170 menu items and/or ingredients, noting whether they contain hot-button allergens such as wheat, nuts, tartrazine (Yellow #5), soybeans, MSG, garlic, fish/shellfish, milk/dairy, egg, corn hydrolyzed protein, aspartame and sulfites. It even goes so far as to note that Denny’s pancake mix is prepared on equipment that also makes products containing soy, eggs and tree nuts.

The company has just updated this brochure and is working to raise awareness among Denny’s employees about it, according to Debbie Atkins, Denny’s director of public relations. “Restaurant managers review this information with all hosts and servers, it’s included as part of our server/host orientation process, and the pamphlets are placed in a convenient location for hosts and servers,” she says. The information contained in the pamphlet is posted on Denny’s Website, as well.

Proactive strategies not only raise the food-safety consciousness of staff, they also keep managers ahead of the curve in preventing problems. These operators not only have 20/20 foresight, they are putting it to work to manage risk.

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FEATURE

The New Ice Age

By JOHN KAROLEFSKI

The results of a seventh grader's science project in Tampa recently made national news and was noted throughout the foodservice industry. The project, which won a local science fair, compared the ice served in drinks at several fast food restaurants with the water from toilet bowls in the same restaurants. The bottom line: 70% of the time, the ice contained more bacteria than the toilet water.

"Over the last few years, there have been a number of similar exposés done on television," says Garth Pearson, marketing manager for Scotsman Ice Systems. "But there are always one or more flaws in each assessment."

Nevertheless, makers of ice machines have responded to the increasing safety concerns of consumers. They have enhanced their units with cutting-edge engineering features designed to improve safety by preventing or controlling bacteria build up. Here are some of the latest improvements to consider.

EASY ACCESS FOR CLEANING

Providing easier access for cleaning the ice machines prompted a design change in the S series equipment from Manitowoc Ice. The S series is a modular machine that makes 300 to 2,000 pounds of ice. It is mounted on a bin or on a dispenser.

The company re-designed the 'food zone'—where the ice is made—to make it easier to clean and inhibit the growth of bacteria. Making the evaporator accessible for cleaning has traditionally been a difficult task.

"On our machines, we have front-facing evaporators," explains Mike Rimrodt, product manager. "So when you open up the machine, everything you need to clean is staring you right in the face. We made it removable. Unscrew some simple thumb screws and the water distribution tube comes out and separates into two pieces, so you can clean not only the outside but also the inside. To clean the water tray on the bottom, just take your thumbs, disengage the tray, and you can take that out. All of the components are made with plastic that is safe in a dishwasher. We wanted all the plastic in the 'food zone' to remain white, so it's obvious what needs to be cleaned."

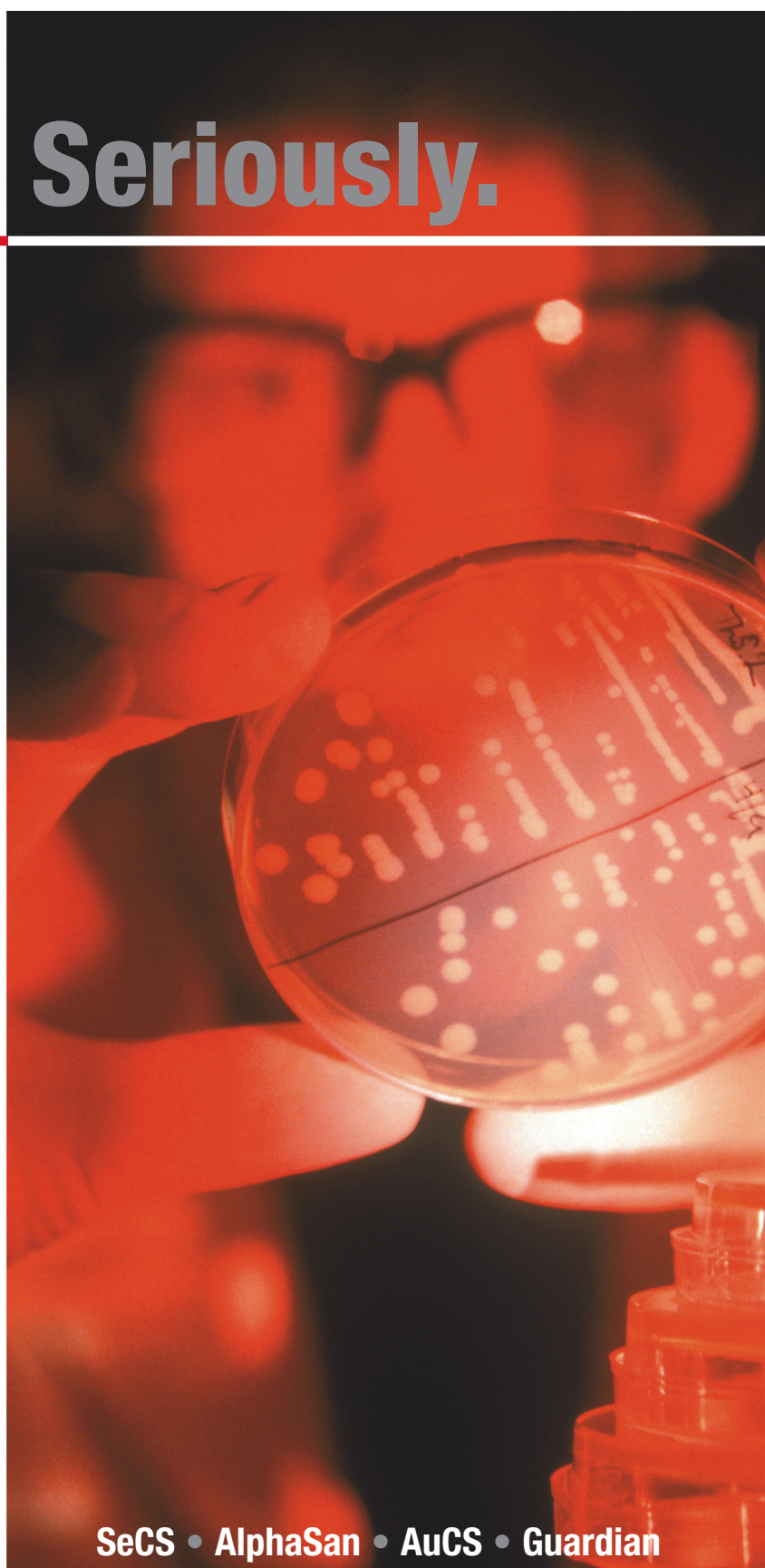
The onus is clearly on the operator to maintain a regular cleaning schedule for top-notch food safety. For inherent protection, the units have three other features designed to keep bacteria at bay:



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FEATURE

The New Ice Age

◆ **AlphaSan:** This silver-based anti-microbial is incorporated into the primary components of the machine to keep bacteria from colonizing.

◆ **Automatic Cleaning System:** The machine periodically turns on the cleaning system which will pump either cleaner or sanitizer into the water distribution area, flushes and rinses itself, and then goes back to ice making.

◆ **Inhibitor for Airborne Bacteria:** The unit releases chlorine dioxide to inhibit bacteria from building up in the equipment. This feature is especially effective in units that operate where there is airborne yeast such as where bread or pizza is made.

Of course, in addition to cleaning, operator error must be minimized. Handling and transport of ice within the operation must be monitored to avoid contamination from staff hands, scoops and buckets.

DESIGNED TO INHIBIT BACTERIA

The job of protecting the inside of ice machines from bacterial growth begins during the manufacturing process. Some equipment manufacturers permanently embed an antimicrobial agent into the parts that come into contact with water such as the water tubes and the drain tubes. For example, Hoshizaki America, Inc. relies on its HoshiGuard Antimicrobial Agent to inhibit the growth of bacteria, mildew, mold and other microorganisms that can cause odors, discoloration and deterioration. It is used throughout their product lines.

To erect its own line of defense, ICE-O-Matic has integrated PURE ICE, an Agion (silver-based ionic) technology, into key components of its cube ice makers. The agent is designed to inhibit the growth of bacteria and slime through several mechanisms: penetrating the microbial wall, inhibiting microbial metabolism and stopping multiplication of microbes.

"We strive to make our equipment easy to clean by including a simple sanitation process and cleaning cycle," says David Foth, market-

ing manager at ICE-O-Matic. "We recommend the owner/operators clean their ICE-O-Matic machine on a regular basis and that they increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing the machine within environments of high yeast content such as baking environments or establishments selling beer products."

KEEPING CHLORINE AT WORK

Ice machines typically use water from the municipal water system. The Aqua Patrol Water Filter, which can be installed on any ice machine from Scotsman Ice Systems, lets the chlorine already in most municipal water pass through during filtering so it can continue its function as a powerful sanitizer reducing the growth of harmful bacteria inside the ice machine.

According to Pearson, "The chlorine itself goes back into the reservoir in the ice machine while pure water is frozen into the ice. Any excess chlorine is flushed down the drain during the flush cycle."

Another enhancement to the company's ice machines is the Aqua Bullet. This 9-inch silver microbial wand is inserted into the reservoir where the water circulates.

"As the water circulates through the ice machines, it's constantly exposed to the antimicrobial wand, which reduces the likelihood that something is going to grow in the ice machine. It can significantly extend the amount of time between ice machine cleanings, especially in foodservice operations where bread or pizza is baking," Pearson says.

SAFETY IN A SEALED SYSTEM

Follett's Horizon Chewblet ice machines make a chewable "nugget" ice in any extremely sanitary manner. Water comes into a sealed reservoir that goes right into the back of the barrel-shaped evaporator. The ice forms inside of the evaporator and gets harvested off the walls by a rotating auger. It is then extruded through a nozzle into a transport tube which comes out of the ice machine and takes the ice directly to the dispensers.

"We're essentially a sealed system," says Mike

Rice, product marketing manager for the maker of the new Horizon ice machines. "Virtually the entire water system is protected from exposure to molds or free-floating bacteria in the air."

Another feature of the company's machines is the 'Satellite-fill capability.' The ice machine may be placed in the back room on a wall or under a counter. The ice can travel more than 30 feet through an insulated tube into a counter-top or under-counter dispenser.

A semi-automatic cleaning system for both the icemaker and the transport system facilitates and encourages regular cleaning.

WATER FILTRATION SYSTEMS

Tainted ice isn't always traceable to a shortcoming in the design of the ice machine itself or a lack of sanitary maintenance. Sometimes the culprit is the inbound water. The nation's polluted waterways can contaminate the water supply. Municipal treatment facilities occasionally fail to detect and remove all of the harmful chemicals and bacteria from the water. That's where a filtration system comes in.

Responsible foodservice operators rely on water filtration systems to remove waterborne pathogens. But choosing the right system is critical. Experts say the first step in proper selection is determining what contaminants are in the local water supply. Then select a system that removes those contaminants.

The most popular water treatment technologies are precoat filtration, granular activated carbon (GAC), carbon block, reverse osmosis (RO) and water softeners. Experts recommend selecting a water filtration system with NSF Certification.

The use of ice in foodservice is ubiquitous. The potential for food safety problems is enormous. Comparing and selecting the best ice machines and filtration systems are a necessary—and critical—part of every operator's food safety strategy.

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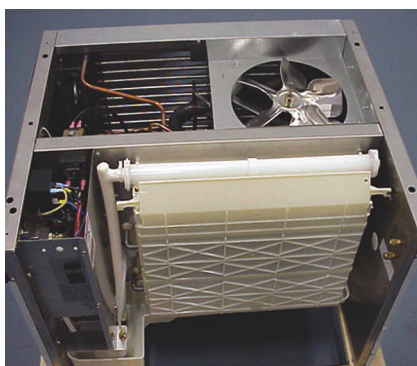


Horizon can be top mounted on ice storage bins. If ceiling height is a problem, consider Satellite-fill. The icemaker can be installed on a wall bracket or a stand on the floor.

Chewblet is a registered trademark of Follett Corporation, registered in the US.

FEATURE**The New Ice Age****ICE MAKER FOOD SAFETY FEATURES**

Brand / Model	Capacity	Anti-Microbial	Auto-Clean	First In/First Out Holding Bins ¹	Contact Info
Follett Horizon Chewblet	1,000-1,400 lbs.	No (sealed system)	Semi-Automatic	Yes	www.follettice.com
Hoshizaki KM-1340, KM-320	175-2202 lbs.	Yes	Yes	No	www.hoshizaki-america.com
ICE-O-Matic Ice Series	175-2202 lbs.	Yes	Yes	Yes	www.enodisusa.com
Manitowoc S-Series	300-2000 lbs.	Yes	Yes	Yes	www.manitowocice.com
Scotsman Ice Systems CME 506	307 lb.	Yes	Yes	Yes ²	www.enodisusa.com

¹ Dispensing the oldest ice first² If mounted on a beverage dispenser

ICE-O-MATIC
ICE0400 (interior shot)



MANITOWOC
S-Series



**SCOTSMAN
ICE SYSTEMS**
CME 506



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SANI-HANDS® II Instant Hand Sanitizing Wipes – Fast, convenient hand sanitizing for staff and patrons. Prevents transmission of germs from hands. (Reorder No. Q43884 - canister) (Reorder No. D43800 - packets)

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Donette Beattie
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Paul Motenko
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Phil Hickey
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James Greco
CEO
Bruegger's



Reinhard Dorfhuber
Senior VP Culinary
Elephant Bar



Luke Belsito
Executive Chef
Red Robin



Rick Federico
CEO, P.F. Chang's
China Bistro



Aslam Khan
CEO
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Pam Sheridan
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Pepe Lopez
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When Chris Ivens-Brown moved from London to Charlotte, N.C., 10 years ago, the city's population was just over 400,000. Today, with more than 651,000 residents, it's one of the fastest-growing cities in the Southeast.

While the city retains small-town delights such as affordable homes and a low crime rate, Charlotte has all the amenities of a major urban center: a new sports arena, an opera company, several fine-arts museums and a performing-arts center. Headquarters to Bank of America and Wachovia Bank, Charlotte is, after New York City, the nation's largest banking center. In addition, it was recently named the site for NASCAR's Hall of Fame.

The banks and big-city amenities are attracting an increasingly sophisticated population to Charlotte. And as the population becomes more sophisticated, the restaurants do as well. Ten years ago, residents in the mood to eat out had a choice of national chains or a handful of independents. Charlotte is now an incubator for small specialty chains, a solid market for national chains, and a creative hot spot for multiconcept groups such as Harper's Restaurants, which operates a dozen restaurants in and around the city.

Ivens-Brown, vice president of culinary development at Compass Group North America, showed me the culinary side of Charlotte. We visited restaurants with check averages ranging from \$7 to \$70; those located in former flower shops and churches; and restaurants whose owners hail from England, Lebanon, Long Island, N.Y.—and South Carolina.

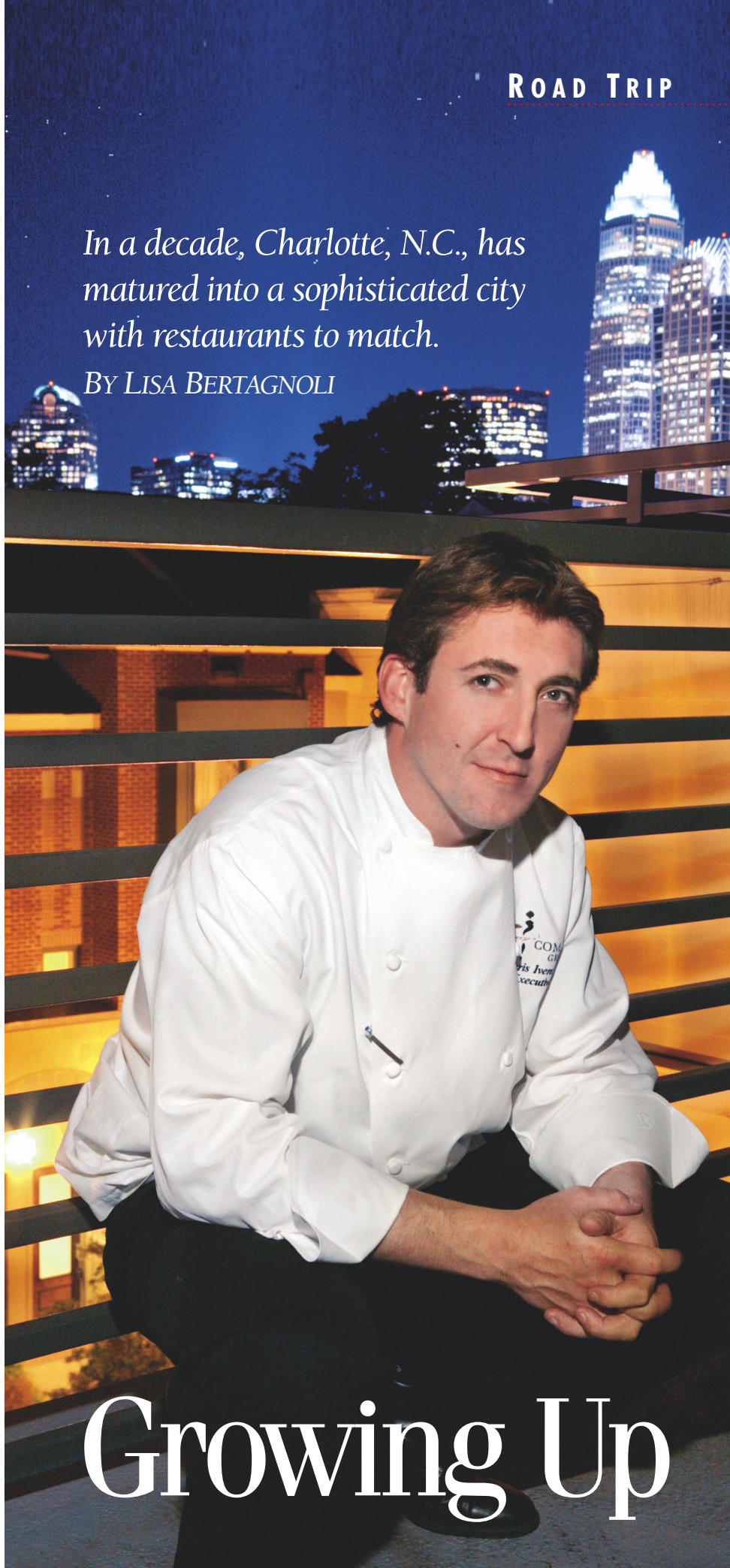
Location, Location, Location

Ivens-Brown and Ed Jones, the driver who squires us around town, pull up in a black SUV in front of Charlotte's Westin Hotel on a mild, sunny morning that underscored yet another reason people

The blossoming real-estate market is indicative of Charlotte's growth: Ivens-Brown says the value of his four-story townhouse, located in the First Ward, has risen \$150,000 since he bought it two years ago.

In a decade, Charlotte, N.C., has matured into a sophisticated city with restaurants to match.

BY LISA BERTAGNOLI



Growing Up



(From l.) Harper Restaurants' Upstream, an upscale-casual, 150-seat seafood restaurant, boasts a \$75 check average.

Zink, a bistro designed by Adam Tihany and owned by Harper's Restaurant Group, has "the best location in town," Ivens-Brown says.

Ivens-Brown in front of Hearst Tower, a 46-story skyscraper owned by Bank of America.



Charlotteans know more and expect more: "They watch The Food Network," says Mark Darville, general manager at Mimosa Grill.

move to Charlotte: the people-friendly weather. Our first stop: Ratcliffe on the Green, a 65-seat fine-dining restaurant located in a 1920s flower shop. Owner John Duncan specializes in reusing real estate: His fine-dining restaurant Bonterra, which we'll visit later, is located in an old church, and Max's, a barbecue shop, makes its home in a former transmission shop.

Downtown is rife with full-service chains including Morton's, McCormick & Schmick's, Palomino and The Capital Grille. "For a long time, it was all chains downtown," remarks Ivens-Brown, noting that The Capital Grille is the city's highest-grossing restaurant.

From Ratcliffe we move on to Bistro 100 in the Bank of America corporate center. It's a sister to Levy Restaurants' Bistro 110 in Chicago and one of downtown Charlotte's first upscale restaurants. The 200-seat bistro once hosted three or four

private parties a week but now only about once a month. A bit of remodeling would help restore the restaurant's competitive edge, Ivens-Brown says.

While still at the corporate center, we visit Sonoma Modern American Cuisine, whose leadership speaks of Charlotte's geographically diverse population. Owner Pierre Bader is Lebanese, and Chef Timothy Groody is a native Long Islander.

Sonoma, with 90 seats, sports a sleek, spare look; such an elegant atmosphere is catching on among Charlotte restaurants. Ivens-Brown attributes design's growing importance to the market's increasing sophistication. "People look for a New York-y look," he says.

On the way to our next stop, Ivens-Brown discusses the labor pool, a matter that has, until recently, plagued Charlotte restaurateurs. The situation changed when Johnson & Wales University opened its

BIOGRAPHY

FULL NAME

Chris Ivens-Brown

BORN

Leamington Spa, England, Sept. 21, 1971; raised in Upper Brockhampton, Dorset

EDUCATION

Graduated from London's Academie de Culinaire de France in 1991; additional training with Anton Aden,

Albert Roux, Michelle Roux, Michelle Bordon, Peter Cromberg and Richard Shepard

CURRENT WORK

Vice president of culinary development, Compass Group, Charlotte, N.C.; hosts *Cooking at Home with Chef Chris*, a local cooking show featuring local celebrities and government officials; works on Charlotte Shout, a month-

long celebration of the arts and culture held every fall in Charlotte.

LADDER CLIMBING

Apprenticed with Roux Restaurant Group and Academie de Culinaire de France, 1985 to 1994; spent 1993-1994 with Albert Roux in Amsterdam at the Grand Restaurant Hotel/Café Roux; executive chef at The Restaurant at Hurlingham

Club in London, 1994-1995; moved to Charlotte in 1995 as executive chef manager of Bank of America's Roux Fine Dining Restaurant, Roux's first in the United States; named vice president of culinary development of Compass Group in 2002

PERSONAL

Single with a daughter, Sophie, 10



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ROAD TRIP

Levy Restaurants' Bistro 100 (r.), which is a sibling of Bistro 110 in Chicago, was one of Charlotte's first upscale restaurants.

(Below, from l.) The owners of Ilios Noche, a modern Greek concept, relocated to Charlotte from New York.

Our black SUV, commanded by Ed Jones, takes us more than 100 miles over the course of the day.

The distinctively Southern menu at Price's Chicken Coop offers fried chicken as well as barbecue, gizzards and hushpuppies.



In 2008 the Ritz-Carlton will open a hotel in Charlotte, its first in North Carolina.

Charlotte campus in September 2004. Now, the university's culinary students "are the biggest contributor to the labor pool," Ivens-Brown says.

We stop quickly at Ri-Ra, one of a seven-unit, Charlotte-based Irish pub concept. Ivens-Brown was glad when it opened because it gave him an alternative to Champps for after-work drinks. "I paid for the patio," he jokes, referring to his frequent patronage of the place.

We cross the street to Zink American Kitchen, a Harper's restaurant. The bistro features a menu of small plates, plus seafood, steak and chicken entrees, with a natural and/or organic slant. In a prime spot, across from the Mint Museum of Craft and Design and the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center, Zink occupies "the best location in town," according to Ivens-Brown.

Location is key in Charlotte, perhaps more so than in other cities. "It's not like New York City, where you can be any-

where," Ivens-Brown says. Desirable restaurant areas include downtown, Dilworth and Southpark. "Outside of that you run a risk," he says.

More Octopus, Please

Next stop: Harper's Mimosa Grill, a popular spot that averages 200 to 300 lunch covers a day. The menu offers hearty soups and sandwiches. We're served an off-the-menu lunch of she-crab soup, beet salad and Carolina grouper with grits.

The food, genetically Southern but hardly dripping with an accent, is also part of Charlotte's culinary scene. "Chefs aren't Southern anymore. They're bringing their own types of cuisine," says Tom Condrón, executive chef at Harper's. We meet Condrón—also an Englishman—at our next stop, Arpa, Harper's 168-seat tapas bar.

"Eight years ago, you couldn't put octopus on the menu; today you can't be without it," says Condrón over a post-lunch



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By CHG

A collection of various stainless steel hardware and plumbing fixtures, including a faucet, handles, a door pull, a roller, and a drain, set against a blue background.



(From l.) Ilios Noche features contemporary decor and a bustling display.

Zebra is perhaps Charlotte's most expensive restaurant, offering what owner Jim Alexander calls the only true tasting menu in town.

Three-unit Matt's Chicago Dogs offers a coleslaw-topped dog, a tribute to a Carolina tradition.

The end of a long day: Ivens-Brown samples the fare at Ilios Noche.



Charlotte's evolving culinary scene means exotic fare like octopus is a must-have on menus.

snack of cheesecake with a praline nougat, a Catalan chocolate pot de crème, and pound cake with poached pears. Super-exotic ingredients such as blood sausage or squid ink remain a gamble, he adds.

We load into the SUV and head south of downtown to check out more restaurants: Penguin, a linoleum-floored dive known for its late-night bar food; the prototype for Cary, N.C.-based Bear Rock Cafe, a 38-unit, fast-casual bakery cafe; Bonterra, a 160-seat restaurant with 200 wines by the glass; and Price's Chicken Coop, a circa-1962 Charlotte institution specializing in Southern foods.

Ivens-Brown consults his schedule, well rumpled by this time, and guides us to Zebra. The 84-seat, fine-dining restaurant offers what owner Jim Alexander says is the city's only grand tasting menu, which costs \$70 per person with wine.

Alexander offers anecdotal proof that in Charlotte, as in other cities, restaurant traffic creates restaurant traffic. Ten months ago, The Cheesecake Factory opened in Southpark Mall across the street. "My business went up 10 percent at lunch," Alexander says.

A Family Affair

On we drive to Ilios Noche, a modern Greek restaurant with


a trendy yet comfortable design and visible kitchen. It is located in South Charlotte, an area filled with families relocated from other cities. However, "this isn't the singles town everyone says it is," says co-owner Stratos Lambos.

Lambos says his biggest surprise upon opening Ilios Noche two years ago was how well customers took to the menu. "This is a meat-and-potatoes town," he explains over an array of grilled octopus, eggplant and zucchini chips served with dill-spiked yogurt, and buttery spinach pie.

With that, my tour of Charlotte is over, but Ivens-Brown's day is not yet finished. We drop him off at Discover Place, the city's science museum and one of Compass' accounts, so he can prepare for a cooking demonstration the next morning at a local garden club, whose members won the demo in a charity auction. Ivens-Brown, like other Charlotte chefs, is charitably minded: By his calculations, his donated services raise \$80,000 to \$100,000 for charities each year.

Before he leaves, Ivens-Brown reflects on his new home city: how easy it is to get organic and exotic ingredients now, when 10 years ago "it was 'salsify what?'; how pleased he is that the city is home to so many creative restaurateurs; and how much he's come to like Charlotte.

"It's a great place to come home to," says Ivens-Brown of the city he once described as having tumbleweed-strewn streets. "Now, you couldn't make me leave." **CL**



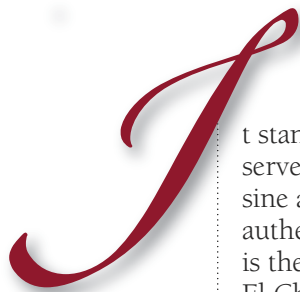
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BY DONNA
HOOD CRECCA

L&S Restaurant Concepts
Director of Operations Freddy
Magana (above l.) and
President Len Lemmer are
counting on their Hispanic
hiring practices to help them
staff Cantina Laredo franchised
units planned for Florida.

It stands to reason that an enthusiastic server with firsthand knowledge of the cuisine and a Spanish accent only adds to the authenticity of a Mexican restaurant. Such is the case at many Cantina Laredo and El Chico locations. But parent company Consolidated Restaurant Operations and its franchisees are also finding that tapping the growing Hispanic labor pool helps them better recruit and retain talent.

"We love to put a Hispanic female with a strong accent in front of our guest because it makes Cantina Laredo that much more authentic," says Len Lemmer, president of Fort Myers, Fla.-based L&S Restaurant Concepts, a franchisee that operates two Cantina Laredo locations and one El Chico, CRO's upscale and casual Mexican concepts, respectively. "The labor market is very tight right now, and we find that one Hispanic hire leads to more hires, and



these hires inevitably turn out to be very loyal, energetic employees."

About 60 percent of employees at the two L&S Cantina Laredo units are of Hispanic descent, as are six of the company's 14 managers. Thirteen Hispanic nations are represented among the employees at the Plantation, Fla., location, where the majority of workers are of Mexican descent.

Retention is higher among Hispanic employees at L&S than among Anglo workers, according to Director of Opera-

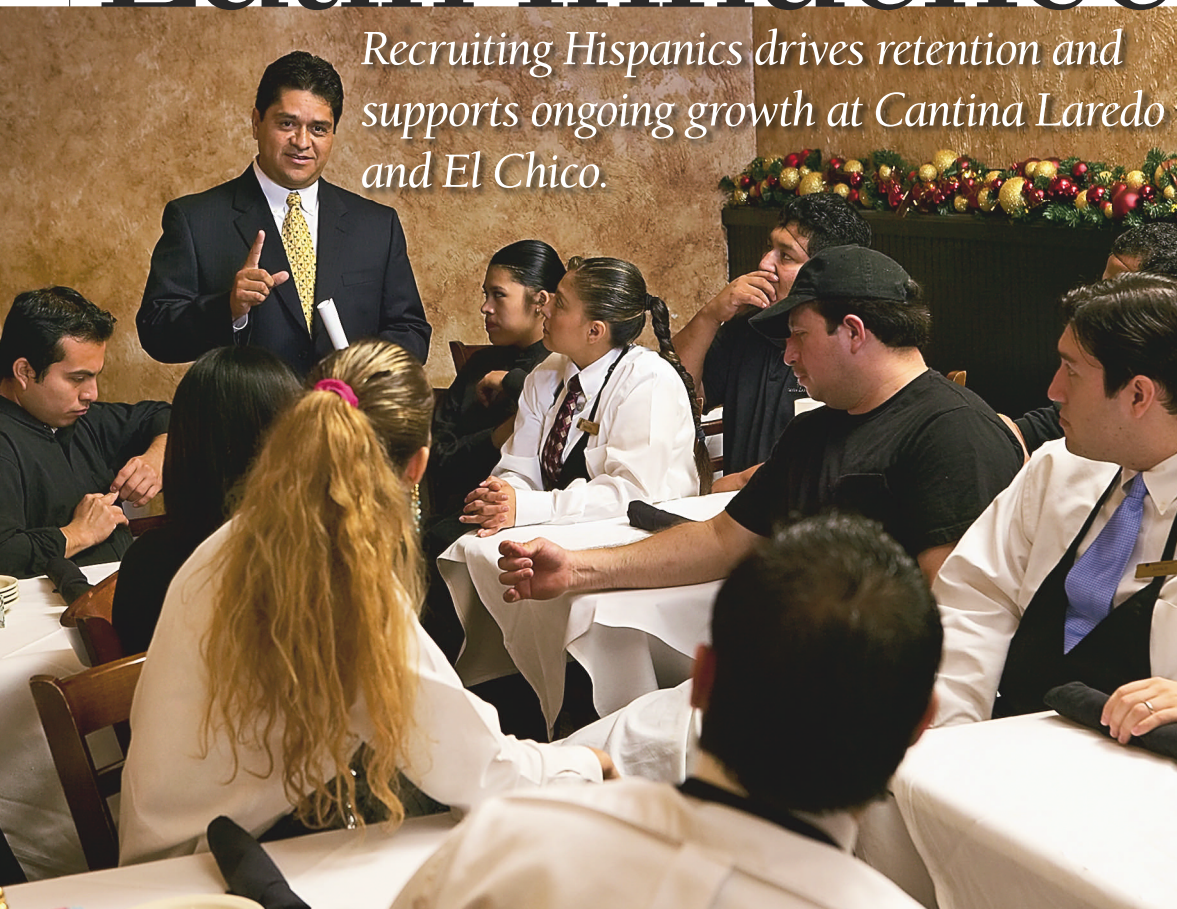
tions Freddy Magana, although actual data are not available. "Because we are welcoming and many of our employees speak Spanish—including managers—this is a comfortable place for Hispanics to work," Magana says. "Also, El Chico and Cantina Laredo are Mexican concepts, so there is comfort with the food and preparation."

Community Connections

Magana uses a grassroots approach to recruit in the Hispanic communities where L&S operates. When opening a location, he reaches out to Hispanic business organizations, churches and community groups, informing their leaders that L&S is seeking employees. Ads on Hispanic radio stations and in Hispanic newspapers

Latin Influence

Recruiting Hispanics drives retention and supports ongoing growth at Cantina Laredo and El Chico.





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Of Consolidated Restaurant Operations' 4,200 El Chico and Cantina Laredo employees, 42 percent are of Hispanic descent; 27 percent of unit managers are Hispanic.

SNAPSHOT

CONCEPTS

El Chico,
Cantina Laredo

PARENT COMPANY

Consolidated
Restaurant
Operations, Dallas

UNITS

79 El Chico,
15 Cantina Laredo

AVERAGE UNIT VOLUME

El Chico, \$1.7
million; Cantina
Laredo, \$2.8
million*

AVERAGE CHECK

El Chico, \$11;
Cantina Laredo, \$18

EXPANSION PLANS

5 El Chico units, 5
to 7 Cantina Laredo
units in 2006

*Technomic estimates

get the word out. And L&S participates in community fairs and job events.

"We find that in the restaurants or at these events, when a Hispanic manager is interviewing a Hispanic candidate, it gives us a lot of credibility as an employer who treats its people well and values everyone," Lemmer says.

Once hired, employees find training materials that visually convey operational tasks and recipes translated into Spanish to help back-of-the-house employees overcome language barriers.

L&S also offers financial support for English as a second language classes and is covering the tuition costs for a Spanish course that one of its Anglo kitchen managers is taking.

Its outreach and employment record has earned L&S kudos in the Hispanic community. The Fort Myers Hispanic Chamber of Commerce recognized Cantina Laredo as the 2004 Business of the Year.

Lemmer and Magana are counting on their Hispanic hiring practices to help them staff additional Cantina Laredo locations planned for the Florida market. Because the company is still in negotiations with CRO and real-estate developers, L&S won't disclose the number of Cantina Laredo and El Chico units it plans to open.

"We're in a tight labor market, so it's important we use the relationships we have to attract employees. We compete with agriculture jobs for the Hispanic employees, but when we show them the restaurants and they meet the workers, they see the opportunities here," Magana says.

History Lessons

When Magana joined L&S three years ago, he brought with him a wealth of experience in recruiting and retaining Hispanic employees culled during his 23 years with El Chico, where he began his career as a dishwasher. The casual Mexican concept is now owned by Consolidated Restaurant Operations, the Dallas-based company with eight concepts and 141 restaurants in 12 states from Florida to Arizona. Currently, CRO operates 55 El Chico and 12 Cantina Laredo locations; 24 and three units, respectively, are franchised.

Hiring Hispanics is part of the El Chico history. The Cuellar family, originally from Mexico, founded the concept in Dallas in 1940. Investment partners John Harkey, John Cracken and Gene Street, who formed CRO, acquired El Chico and Cantina Laredo in 1998.

Of CRO's 4,200 employees at its El Chico and Cantina Laredo corporate units,

CRO franchisee L&S Restaurant Concepts offers financial support for English classes.

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FOODSERVICE



The tradition of grassroots recruiting will help El Chico and Cantina Laredo as they continue to grow.

42 percent are of Hispanic descent; 27 percent of unit managers are Hispanic.

"We certainly don't instruct our staff to hire a specific nationality, but the Hispanic community is core to this concept," says CEO Harkey. "Thanks to the family's legacy, we have a good reputation as an employer. Our Hispanic managers and many of our Anglo managers are fluent in Spanish, and we actively promote Hispanic team members into management, so our management bench is diverse."

CRO's Hispanic employees are its best recruiters, according to Vice President of Marketing Bill Watson. "They are like ambassadors for the company. They share their positive experiences with friends and family, and those people then become candidates," he says. "When we opened new restaurants recently in Dallas and Granbury, we got Hispanic referral candidates from as far as 40 miles away."

A cash referral bonus helps ensure all employees are talking up CRO to friends and family. Employees who refer a candidate for a management position receive \$500 when the individual finishes training and an additional \$500 after six months of employment. The company paid out \$23,000 in referral bonuses in 2005.

Like L&S, CRO participates in job fairs

and trains with visual and Spanish materials. And like L&S, CRO reports that retention is higher among its Hispanic workers. Turnover is declining throughout the company, according to Harkey. Hourly turnover for 2005 was 108 percent; management turn came in at 22 percent. Approximately 40 percent of internally sourced managers are Hispanic.

Diversity Drives Retention

Hiring diverse employees correlates to lower turnover, according to People Report, the Dallas-based human-resource benchmarking firm. Turnover trends 12 percent lower on average among top-performing People Report subscribers in casual- and fine-dining chains that report high levels of diversity. What's more, the presence of male Hispanic managers positively affects retention in quick-service and family-dining chains.

"Our data indicates that as the percentage of Hispanic male hires increases, the hourly-employee turnover decreases considerably," says Victor Fernandez, research analyst for People Report. "Companies in those segments with more than 10 percent of hires being Hispanic males showed hourly-employee turnover 29 points lower than the average." Data on the impact of female Hispanic managers are unavailable.

The tradition of grassroots recruiting will also help El Chico and Cantina Laredo as they grow. Director of Franchising Adam Mandel is actively reaching out to potential franchisees in the Hispanic business community. Five franchised El Chicos are planned for 2006, including units in new markets like Georgia and Kansas, along with five corporate Cantina Laredos and several franchised locations.

"[CRO's] Mexican concepts are well-positioned in terms of what's going on demographically in Texas and nationwide with the growth of the Hispanic population and popularity of Hispanic culture and cuisine in general," Harkey says. "Our approach to hiring should enable us to staff adequately as we grow." **CL**

Training materials that visually convey operational tasks and recipes translated into Spanish help back-of-the-house employees overcome language barriers.

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Who was your server? _____

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Service	5	4	3	2	1
Cleanliness	5	4	3	2	1
Menu Variety	5	4	3	2	1

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Heavy Traffic

About 40 percent of fast-food meals go out the window.

By MARY BOLTZ CHAPMAN

More than 40 percent of quick-service occasions began at the drive-thru, a 21-quarter average shows. According to Quick-Track, a quarterly study by San Clemente, Calif.-based research firm Sandelman & Associates, 29.6 percent of occasions were eat-in; 23.2 percent, carryout; and 6.6 percent, delivery. Drive-thru has had the highest share in every quarter since Sandelman began Quick-Track in 1995, except two quarters in 1996.

The drive-thru is busiest during lunch. According to a 21-quarter average, 44.5 percent of QSR customers who used the drive-thru on their most recent occasion did so at lunch; 39.0 percent, at dinner; 10.1 percent, breakfast; and 6.5 percent,

snacks. Of all QSR occasions, 41.9 percent were lunch; 41.5 percent, dinner; 11.0 percent breakfast; and 5.6 percent, snacks.

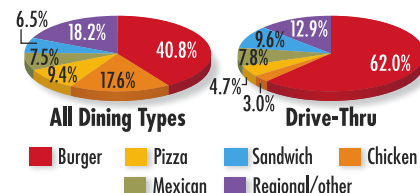
Of those customers using the drive-thru on their last visit, 39.3 percent had a hamburger; 15.7 percent ordered a chicken, submarine or other sandwich; 11.3 percent ate chicken either bone-in or in strips or nuggets; and 8.7 percent had Mexican food.

38.4 percent of respondents who used the drive-thru were alone, while 27.2 percent of all users were, a 21-quarter average shows. Likewise, average party size was also smaller for those at the window than all fast-food users (2.2 vs. 2.8), as was the mean amount spent per party (\$8.98 vs. \$13.08).

The average amount spent per person is also smaller for those using the drive-thru on their most recent occasion (\$4.03 vs. \$4.74) even though drive-thru users were less likely to take advantage of a special deal (12.6 percent did vs.

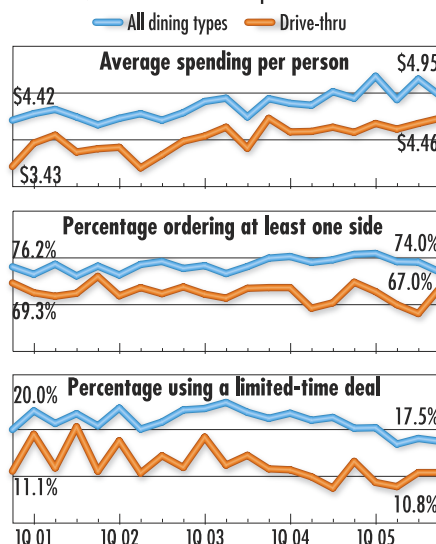
Segment By Segment

All QSR users' past-month purchase occasions, 21-quarter average



Window Shopping

All QSR users' most recent purchase occasion

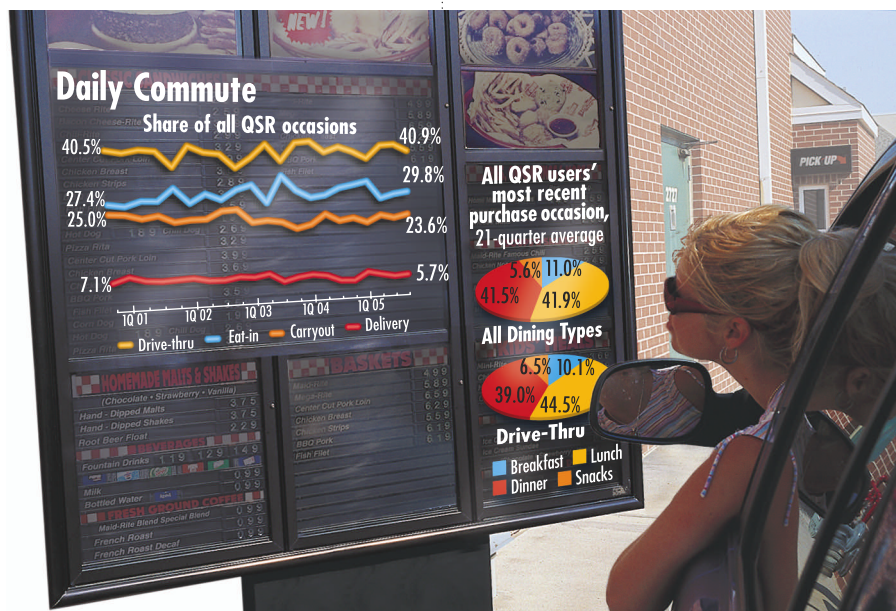


21.8 percent of all QSR users) and more apt to buy side dishes (65.0 percent vs. 57.5 percent).

Fourth-quarter 2005 data show that 52.3 percent of drive-thru users are between ages 25 and 44. Of all QSR users, 46.3 percent are in that age group. **CL**

Methodology

Customer trend data is based on the quarterly Quick-Track survey by Sandelman & Associates, a San Clemente, Calif.-based research firm. Quick-Track queries a nationally representative sample of 600 fast-food customers on a host of demographic and usage questions. The firm defines "QSR drive-thru users" as those who have purchased food via the drive-thru from a QSR at least once in the past month. Most-recent purchase data is based on all QSR users whose dining type was drive-thru on their last QSR occasion.



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Know the Territory

Asking the right questions delivers profitable strategies for protecting and growing franchise territories. If a brand is "hot," just locking up a good territory can be a huge coup to an area developer. But even with a fast-track brand, developers can leverage their commitment to build a significant number of units to maximize their opportunities. Doug Pak, chief executive officer of Frandeli Franchise International LLC, a Newport Beach, Calif.-based franchise investment, development and management company, recommends:

- Negotiate discounts on fees where possible. It's not unusual to get a 20 percent to 30 percent discount off franchisee fees when you commit to a large territory. This may range from seven to 10 units for some brands; only three to five for others.
- Get co-op advertising rights to better manage media spending in your market. Co-op ad programs, which enable two or more compa-

nies to share advertising costs, leverage your local market knowledge and the power of the franchisor's brand and marketing muscle.

- Discuss the possibility of purchasing franchisor's equity upon meeting a specific development schedule or negotiating a "put" option, which gives you the right to sell the franchised units to the franchisor at a specific price.
- Negotiate for right of first refusal on other territories that you are interested in but don't want to act on now—particularly airports, schools, hospitals, etc.

Getting the territory is one hurdle; protecting it is another. Along with a careful review of the detailed language of the contract, Pak advises that area developers ask franchisors for maximum radius non-compete protection. He also cautions developers to get a clear understanding of how their territories would be impacted if the franchisor launches or acquires a second brand.

"When you are ready to commit, don't forget to have the agreements reviewed by a seasoned attorney. A few thousands dollars now will save a lot of headaches for many years to come," Pak adds.



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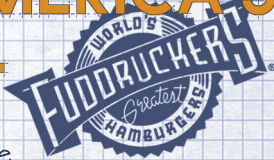
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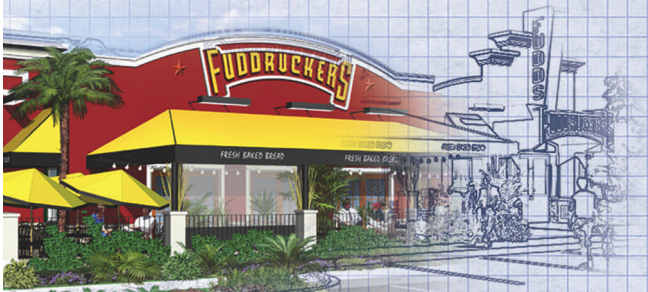


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Upward Bound

CiCi's Pizza's Bob Kulick is preparing for his greatest adventure yet—scaling Mount Kilimanjaro.

BY CHARLES BERNSTEIN



Bob Kulick, president of JMC Restaurant Distribution, the purchasing, R&D and distribution arm of 600-unit CiCi's Pizza, is preparing for the adventure of a lifetime. He and his two longtime buddies, Marc Lieberman and Sam Hess, are going to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, the largest mountain in Africa, in January 2007.

Making Friends

Taking on such a challenge is nothing new to the three friends. Kulick, Lieberman and Hess met in the mid-'70s when they were preparing to participate in an expedition taking them from Montreal to the Gulf of Mexico. During the two years of preparation and eight months on the trip, the three became close friends as they paddled canoes and hiked the 3,300-mile route.

Since that time they have gone scuba diving in the Keys, skiing in Canada, touring Napa Valley on bikes, and sailing in the Bahamas and Cayman Islands. They have also raced dirt bikes across the Baja desert, a trip that resulted in six broken ribs, a concussion, a black eye, an injured shoulder and numerous cactus thorns.

Now or Never

Last year they decided to tackle their toughest challenge yet—climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

"The months of physical preparation, both physical and mental, are well worth it," declares Kulick. "It's estimated that the mountain's glacier will be gone by 2010.

We definitely wanted to do this trip before that happens. We also had to face the fact that we're 48, 49 and 50. It's now or never."

Kulick is preparing for the 19,340-foot climb with cardiovascular workouts at least three times a week: hiking, running or biking to improve aerobic capacity. "I spend a lot of time walking up and down stairs these days," he emphasizes. "Down is just as important as up. Everyone focuses on their ability to climb. The muscles used to come down are often neglected, but they are just as important."

The 13-day trip will take Kulick and team through five different ecosystems from rainforest to arctic tundra. "One of the toughest parts of the trip is acclimating to the tough altitude," he explains. "This adventure is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and we decided to do it right. We've hired one of the best outfitters in the business. And we want a good length of time rather than a quick trip. We'll actually spend two days in one camp so that we can do better."

Long-Term Effects

According to Kulick, these "stupid guy trips" allow the three friends to stay close, and keep him energized for his family and for running a pizza chain that spans 27 states. "I really feel that I'm a better family man and a stronger leader when I recharge," he declares.

"The fun and the challenges on these trips open my mind to new experiences and often a new way of looking at life and work." **CL**



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