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A GeoEye satellite captured KFC's giant Colonel in the desert from an altitude of 423 miles.

n mid-November, KFC unveiled the latest iteration of its famous Colonel Sanders icon. What made this instance unusual is that the new logo can be seen from space.

The Louisville, Ky.-based QSR chicken chain created the 87,000-square-foot logo in six days out of 65,000 1-foot tile pieces.

It is located in the desert in Rachel, Nev., near Area 51, the infamous military base that UFO and conspiracy theorists say the government uses for alien research.

The new logo features the Colonel wearing an apron, meant to remind customers that he made the chicken by hand. KFC will use the logo in its more than 14,000 stores, on advertising, packaging, uniforms and more.

Back in October, the chain began a petition to get the U.S. Postal Service to put its founder on a postage stamp. A letter signed by KFC President Gregg Dedrick reads, "Hollywood legends, American Superheroes and Hall of Famers have graced the stamps that pass through hands of Americans everywhere, and Harland 'Colonel' Sanders deserves to stand amongst these American icons as a true testament to the American Dream."

Sanders would have been 120 years old in 2010, the year KFC is aiming for the stamp to be available. Customers can add their names to a petition on KFC's Web site.



THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION

LIVE from Chicago

Chain Leader will run a full wrap-up of Chain Leader LIVE in the January 2007 edition, but we wanted to give you a sneak peak.

Held in Chicago early in November, Chain Leader LIVE featured presentations, panel discussions and more intimate roundtable sessions to bring the ideas and insights of the magazine to life. About 100 chain-restaurant executives gathered for the curriculum and its business takeaways, as well as for the networking opportunities and unique culinary events.

Shown here, Maura Havenga, senior vice president of McDonald's Restaurant Solutions Group, told the audience about how the burger

giant turns ideas into execution; chain leaders catch up with friends during a coffee break; and a guest balances squash ravioli served by chain upstart Go Roma Italian Kitchen and a varietal selected with the help of an on-site sommelier.

Look for more pictures and conference highlights at www.chainleader.com.



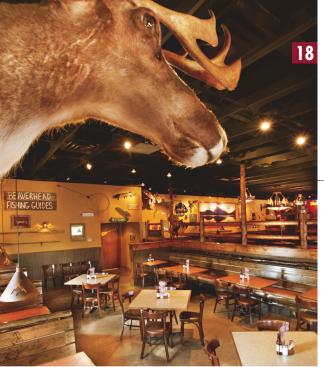
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Chain Leader Vol. 11, No. 14

STORYBOARD

14 Family Values

CiCi's Pizza's first national ad campaign emphasizes the chain's positioning as a low-priced, value-

oriented brand for families. The TV spots convey an environment that is not too loud or chaotic, a wealth of menu options and affordability. The company expects the campaign to help solidify its position as it expands from its southeastern roots into a national chain.

By Margaret Littman



RESTAURATOUR

Maximum Effect

Montana Mike's new prototype in Owensboro, Ky., emphasizes the lodge theme, a hallmark of the concept since it opened in 1998. To create a comfortable atmosphere, the design features a multitude of hunting, camping and fishing items; liberal doses of wood; and rustic iron chandeliers. The prototype store is on track to gross \$3 million, while the bulk of locations average \$1.5 million.

By Lisa Bertagnoli

TOQUE OF THE TOWN

24 Guest Work

Vice President of Product, Quality and Procurement Dustin Dixon is using customer research to determine what to keep and what to change at IHOP. He has upgraded ingredients, updated the core menu with bolder flavors and portable items, and launched limited-time offers to drive traffic and increase sales.

By Monica Rogers

COVER STORY

30 On the Fast Track

In the two years since taking the helm of Madison, Ga.-based Avado Brands, parent company of Don Pablo's and Hops, CEO Rick Barbrick has instituted a turnaround that involved hiring new management, installing operational efficiencies, refocusing menus and paying close attention to restaurant-level operations. The company has since come out of bankruptcy, has increased comp-store sales and guest counts, and is ready to launch another concept.

By Lisa Bertagnoli



FOOD SAFETY

70 Line of Defense

BD's Mongolian Barbeque and Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises have taken proactive measures to ensure food safety. BD's focuses on temperature control and avoiding cross-contamination to prevent foodborne illness, while Lettuce depends on its Allergy Alert program to help their customers with food allergies. By David Farkas



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ON THE NET

Site Relaunch

 A more functional and user-friendly www.chainleader.com

Web Exclusives

- An update on our November Cover Story: Dunkin' Brands to sell off Togo's
- Chain Leader LIVE pictures and highlights you won't see in the magazine

Cover Society

 Panera Bread CEO Ron Shaich tells what's new with the bakery-cafe leader

How to Grow to 100 Units

- Web-exclusive content and related articles on growing concepts
- Video coverage of Chain Leader's "How to Grow to 100 Units" roundtable
- California Tortilla's Pam Felix on the trials and joys of growing her spunky concept

Plus

- Senior Editor David Farkas muses about the restaurant industry in his blog, Dave's Dispatch
- Daily news
- Franchise opportunities
- Topic-specific pages on marketing, expansion, operations and more

www.chainleader.com

A Future in Flexibility

hain Leader LIVE, which we held the first week of November in Chicago, featured "live and in person" the same kind of case studies, insight and personalities we cover each month in the magazine. (There are plenty of highlights and pictures online at www.chainleader.com, and we will run a wrap-up of the event in our January issue.) While the conference theme was officially "excellence in execution," another motif emerged: flexibility—in menu development, expansion, marketing and more.



Build elasticity into rock-solid systems so staff can maneuver around corporate.

MARY BOLTZ CHAPMAN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

(630) 288-8250 mchapman@reedbusiness.com

Leadership Lessons

One of the sessions that attendees said they appreciated most was a presentation by Phil Hickey, chairman and CEO of Rare Hospitality, the parent company of The Capital Grille, LongHorn Steakhouse and Bugaboo Creek Steak House. We asked Hickey, who received our Chain Leadership award in 2005, to share some leadership

lessons from his experience and current work. He talked about things like choosing your partners wisely; always planning your turnaround, even when you're winning; celebrating small victories; and being honest, courageous, humble and open. He mentioned continual learning, like stealing ideas from one of the speakers at last year's *Chain Leader LIVE*; even the stars of the industry look for new ways of working better.

But then Hickey went a step further, looking into his crystal ball at what's ahead for Rare Hospitality and the industry at large. Anticipating that it's not going to get easier to grow restaurants profitably any time soon, he suggested that operators expand sanely and purposefully, with all the knowledge they can get. Hickey advised putting the right people in place and enabling general managers truly to be in charge of their operations. And he told the audience to focus on the menu and to be less chain-like.

Unchained Melody

Less chain-like? What? He's advising chain-restaurant operators at a chain-restaurant conference to be less chain-like? His exact words were "unchain the chain." Did we have a rebellion on our hands? Had the Council of Independent Restaurants of America gotten to him?

Hickey wasn't advocating for mom-andpop operators, for an end to duplicating brands or for creating a multitude of different restaurant concepts. He's been very successful thanks to chain restaurants, and he knows it. What Hickey was talking about was building flexibility into rock-solid systems so unit employees can do the right thing for their guests rather than relying on corporate mandates.

Wiggle Room, Not Willy-Nilly

If you thought building consistent systems and operations into your organization was hard, building flexibility is even more difficult. Your company must have a solid foundation, core values and clear goals. Every employee, from the chairman to the general manager to the dishwasher, must be focused on the same outcome and feel that they have ownership.

It's almost like rearing children. When they grow up and fly the nest, if you have raised them right and instilled a core value system, you have to trust they will do well even if they don't always make the right decision. Only it's better, because you can keep tabs on them and fire them if they continue to make the wrong choices.

more



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Chain Leader

HOW TO REACH CHAIN LEADER

PHONE: (630) 288-8201 FAX: (630) 288-8215 E-MAIL: ChainLeader@reedbusiness.com INTERNET: www.chainleader.com WRITE: Chain Leader, Attn: Reader Services 2000 Clearwater Drive, Oak Brook, IL 60523

TO SUBSCRIBE OR CHANGE ADDRESS

PHONE: (800) 446-6551 or (303) 470-4445 FAX: (303) 470-4280 E-MAIL: subsmail@reedbusiness.com
INTERNET: www.getfreemag.com/ChainLeader
WRITE: Chain Leader, Reed Business Information
8878 S. Barrons Blvd., Highlands Ranch, CO 80129-2345

FOR ARTICLE REPRINTS OR ELECTRONIC USE

PHONE: (800) 290-5460, ext. 168 E-MAIL: chainleader@reprintbuyer.com

PUBLISHER: Ray Herrmann

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Mary Boltz Chapman
MANAGING EDITOR: Maya Norris
SENIOR EDITOR: David Farkas
SENIOR ART DIRECTOR: Ala Ennes
PRODUCTION ARTIST: Krystina S. Kliman
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:

Lisa Bertagnoli, Margaret Littman, Monica Rogers

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Tad Smith
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER: John Poulin
PRESIDENT, CHICAGO DIVISION: Jeff Greisch
GROUP PUBLISHER, FOODSERVICE GROUP: Gerald J. White
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR, FOODSERVICE GROUP: NATIONAL SALES MANAGER: Craig M. Coale

REGIONAL ADVERTISING SALES MANAGERS

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST
Jeff Christerson (678) 461-4063

NEW ENGLAND/MID-ATLANTIC
Craig M. Coale (630) 288-8207

CALIFORNIA/SOUTHWEST/MOUNTAIN
ARKANSAS/IDAHO/ILLINOIS/MISSOURI/OREGON
Patrick New (630) 288-8212

WEST NORTH CENTRAL/ILLINOIS/MISSOURI/OREGON
Patrick New (630) 288-8212

WEST NORTH CENTRAL/ILLINOIS/MISSOURI/OREGON
Patrick New (630) 288-8212

WEST NORTH CENTRAL/OKLAHOMA/TEXAS

CALIFORNIA/SOUTHWEST/MOUNTAIN EAST NORTH CENTRAL/OKLAHOMA/TEX.

Susan M. Hojer (310) 314-2149 Floyd Stoner (630) 288-8208

INSIDE SALES/CLASSIFIED

Jim McMurray (630) 288-8467

PUBLISHING SUPPORT: Linda Wojak (630) 288-8201

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, EVENTS
AND CUSTOM COMMUNICATIONS:
MANAGING EDITOR, CUSTOM PUBLICATIONS:
MANAGER, INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS:
CIRCULATION MANAGER:
PRODUCTION MANAGER:
CUSTOMER CONTRACT COORDINATOR:
RESEARCH DIRECTOR:
DIRECTOR, ELECTRONIC MEDIA:

COMMUNICATIONS:
TOM PUBLICATIONS:
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ULATION MANAGER:
DUCTION MANAGER:
MACT COORDINATOR:
SESEARCH DIRECTOR:
ELECTRONIC MEDIA:
WEBSITE MANAGER:

Carole Widmayer
Alison Otto
Maria Q. Santonato
Kati Tucker
Joyce Simon
Joanne Westphal
Scott Tolan
Kim Kishbaugh
Gregory Sokolowski

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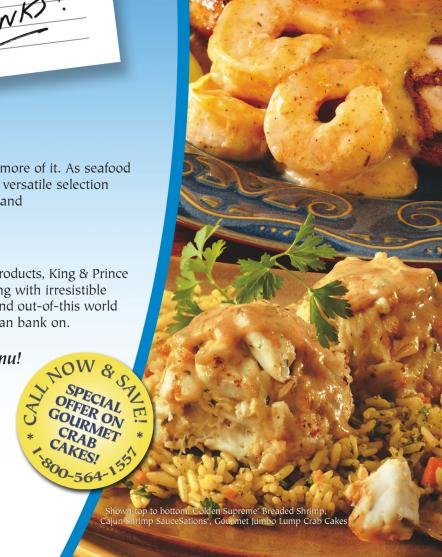
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Border Crossing

Wendy's shed Tim Horton's amid reams of paperwork.

BY DAVID FARKAS

n March 24 Oakville, Ontariobased Tim Horton's, then a subsidiary of Wendy's International, enjoyed one of the most popular initial public offerings in years. The eagerly awaited event raised about \$726 million on the sale of 33 million shares, with the stock price jumping 30 percent on the first day of trading. Washington, D.C., attorney Steven Patterson of Arkin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, who coordinated the complicated cross-border deal, explains the details.

How was this deal different from other restaurant carve-outs? Why is it still of interest?

It was a unique spinoff because it was a cross-border transaction that involved dual listing on the [New York Stock Exchange] and Toronto Stock Exchange. That made it unusual. Lots of restaurant companies operate divisions in other countries. But not many own something as significant as Wendy's and Tim Horton's. Horton's is an iconic brand in Canada.

What role did you play in arranging the transition from subsidiary to public entity?

Our role was as primary counsel. We helped coordinate all aspects of the transaction: filing of the registration statement and the application of securities. Most Canadian securities requirements piggyback off U.S. requirements. A separate disclosure document had to be prepared, however. The Canadian document was translated into French. That was part of the uniqueness of the deal.

How were Wendy's executives involved in this process?

The executives furnished the strategic and

financial reasons for the transaction. It's not a deal that happens in the background. They are fully engaged.

Did the company anticipate the noteholders' lawsuit alleging they'd be hurt financially by the spinoff?

That's not something I can comment on.

Let me ask the question this way: Can companies anticipate such lawsuits?

In any transaction like this, if the IPO occurs, it is because the board of directors

concludes it's in the best interest of shareholders. It's one of the things the board and management puts at the top of the list. Outside counsel would be asked if there were any reason to think the company might be sued.

Has the court ruled on this case?

There's been a court ruling on the case on the temporaryrestraining-order level. It's not a resolved matter.

You mentioned cross-border coordination. Can you provide some color as to

That's one of the teachings of this deal: the importance of coordinating Canadian counsel, accountants and financial advisers. Everyone is trying to get everyone up to speed.

complications that popped up?

What lessons can restaurant executives draw from this IPO?

One is the importance of thinking well ahead of time of how a subsidiary should operate as a separate company. How the parent and subsidiary depend on each other are probably in most cases pretty complex. So it's important for management and counsel to review together administrative and operational relationships.



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Kabuki seeks to provide a comfortable experience for guests both new to and familiar with Japanese cuisine.

BY MAYA NORRIS

lthough Japanese food is popular in the United States, it's still not as mainstream as Mexican and Chinese. So Kabuki Japanese Restaurant tries to cater to both aficionados and novices of Japanese cuisine with authentic and fusion fare in a casual setting.

When founder and CEO David Lee opened the first unit in Pasadena, Calif., in 1991, he set out to create "a Japanese restaurant that's affordable and reasonable that everybody can enjoy," he says. His original concept offered sophisticated yet affordable Japanese cuisine in a restaurant that featured traditional motifs such as bamboo, sliding screens and servers in kimonos. But because Japanese fare wasn't as familiar then as it is now, Kabuki struggled in its early years. By 1992, the restaurant was losing \$10,000 a month.

So in 1993, Lee slashed prices, expanded the menu to include appetizers and salads, and redesigned the restaurant to be more modern and casual.

SNAPSHOT

CONCEPT

Kabuki Japanese Restaurant

HEADQUARTERS

Burbank, Calif.

UNITS

2006 SYSTEMWIDE SALES

\$32 million to \$34 million (company estimate)

AVERAGE Unit Volume

\$3.6 million

AVERAGE CHECK

\$18

EXPANSION PLANS

4 or 5 in 2007

Modern Japanese

Kabuki's menu now offers 200 items, with 60 percent dedicated to traditional Japanese fare. Sushi makes up 40 percent of sales. The best sellers include tuna, \$5.95; salm-

on, \$4.95; yellowtail, \$5.95; and shrimp tempura roll, \$6.95, with crab and avocado.

Other popular dishes include the Spicy Tuna Salad, \$7.95, with cucumber and daikon on spring mix, served with ponzu sauce and sesame oil; and the Chilean Sea Bass, \$16.95, marinated in sake and soy sauce and served with sauteed asparagus drizzled with chile-sesame sauce.

The restaurants feature an open layout with arched windows, high ceilings, and a polished wood and granite sushi bar. Servers now wear black T-shirts and pants.

"We try to give customers a comfortable dining experience because...a lot of Japanese restaurants try to overdo it," says Director of Marketing Young Kim. "And it just intimidates the customer."

Growing Up

A Kabuki restaurant

averages 5,000 to

6,000 square feet

120 to 180 and costs

about \$1.2 to \$1.5

with seating for

million to open.

Kabuki has opened eight units in Southern California. It posted \$30 million in systemwide sales in 2005 and expects to generate \$32 million to \$34 million in 2006.

Now Kabuki is focusing on expansion. Because its customer base ranges from families with young kids to young urban professionals, it prefers locations in lifestyle centers with a mix of residential and office buildings in the immediate area.

In 2007, Kabuki will open four or five units in Southern and Northern California and Arizona. Then it expects to open three or four units a year for the next five years in markets including Texas, Washington, D.C., and Nevada. It is also investigating sites in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; Memphis, Tenn.; Seattle and San Francisco.

"All of our restaurants are self-financed. Of course, that prohibits us from opening 10 to 20 a year like other chains would. But it keeps us focused. It keeps us low

Fresh fish is delivered both traditional dishes such as sushi and sashimi as well fusion fare such as Chilean Sea Bass.

debt," Kim says. "And No. 2, we don't feel like daily to restaurants for we need to be chasing anyone or feel like we're being chased. We want to go at our own pace and do everything right."

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Family VALUES

CiCi's Pizza's first national ad campaign emphasizes its family-friendly appeal.

or many parents, eating out can be agita producing. Sure, there's the benefit of not having to cook. But in exchange for the night away from the stove, there's the anxiety about whether or not the offspring will be well-behaved, whether there will be anything on the menu they will like, and, if it is a restaurant targeted toward kids, will there be anything for an adult palate?

CiCi's Pizza wants parents to know that they can leave all that anxiety at the door.

"If kids drop something on the floor, it is not a big deal. But CiCi's is family-friendly, as opposed to kid-friendly, so the parents like going there, too," explains Louise Georgeson, senior vice president and account director at Deutsch Inc., Los Angeles, CiCi's ad agency.

For CiCi's Pizza's first national ad campaign, Deutsch created television commercials that help establish that message as part of the Coppell, Texas-based chain's positioning as a low-priced, value-oriented brand for families. Approximately 60 percent of CiCi's audience is families, higher than average for quick-serve and casual-dining restaurants, Georgeson says.

The agency created the new campaign for the 21-year-old chain to help solidify its position as it continues to expand from its southeastern roots into a national chain. With 600 units in 27 states, CiCi's estimates that it will have 1,000 units within the next five years. Recent new markets include Chicago, Las Vegas and Phoenix. Since the ads began airing in October, CiCi's has been receiving 100 inquiries per week from prospective franchisees.

By Margaret Littman

"Kids" Length: 30 seconds



1. Voice-over: Don't do that. Sit up straight. Put that down.



3. Let your kids make their own choices.



5. Let them play video games between dinner and dessert.

	pizza	
pasta	\$ 4 ⁴⁹	salad
	dessert	

7. Welcome to CiCi's, the endless pizza, pasta, salad and dessert buffet for just \$4.49.



2. Parents, step away from the controls.



4. Let them fill their cup with six different sodas.



6. And, if they want pizza with macaroni and cheese, by gum, they'll get pizza topped with macaroni and cheese.



8. CiCi's Pizza Buffet. Almost too good to be true.

Defining the Brand

"A lot of people do not understand CiCi's because they do not have this kind of restaurant in their market," President and CEO Craig Moore says of the concept, which offers a buffet stocked with salad, pasta, desserts and 16 types of pizza for less than \$5. "It was important that we give them a visual so that they can see how they would experience it if they walked in to CiCi's themselves.

"There's a time in a little brand's life when you have to do what we're doing," Moore adds. "Local media buys seem to be softening."

The chain spent "less than \$20 million" on its 2006 ad budget, an increase over the previous year, to accommodate the national ad push. The campaign includes a 15- and 30-second spot, as well as radio ads, sponsorships and bill-boards. The ads are airing on cable stations such as the Discovery Channel, Nick at Night, TNT and USA Network.

"The world has changed in television. It used to be more network than cable. Now, it is a 50-50 split nationwide. And this audience is cable higher than average," Georgeson says.

The TV spots emphasize CiCi's points of difference, from family-friendliness to affordability to a wealth of menu options. The spots use humor, but not in a way that is silly or that distract from the message.

"A lot of companies come out touting their brand from their own perspective," Georgeson adds. "We wanted to present the brand from the consumer's perspective."

So the commercials depict the CiCi's environment as not too loud or chaotic with friendly and welcoming employees, where "people treat you the way they used to," Georgeson explains. While the ads are different from Deutsch's previous effort for CiCi's (*Chain Leader*, September 2004), there is a consistency in showing how the chain is different from its competitors and in giving consumers a view of a CiCi's restaurant.

Looking Ahead

For all its national efforts, the chain hasn't overlooked those markets that—at least for now—don't have a CiCi's Pizza restaurant. If consumers see a TV commercial and head to the CiCi's Web site to find the location closest to them, they get a video message from Moore, who gives a quick tour of the concept.

"Maybe 40 percent of the nation does not have a CiCi's in their area," Georgeson explains. "We wanted to get ahead of that."

"Our goal is to be a nationwide concept," Moore says. "We are going to grow smart but not overextend."

SNAPSHOT

CONCEPT

CiCi's Pizza

HEADQUARTERS

Coppell, Texas

UNITS

600

2006 Systemwide Sales

\$500 million (company estimate)

AVERAGE Unit Volume

\$900,000

AVERAGE CHECK

\$4.50*

AD BUDGET

Less than \$20 million (company estimate)

AD AGENCY

Deutsch Inc., Los Angeles

EXPANSION PLANS

70 to 80 annually

*Chain Leader estimate

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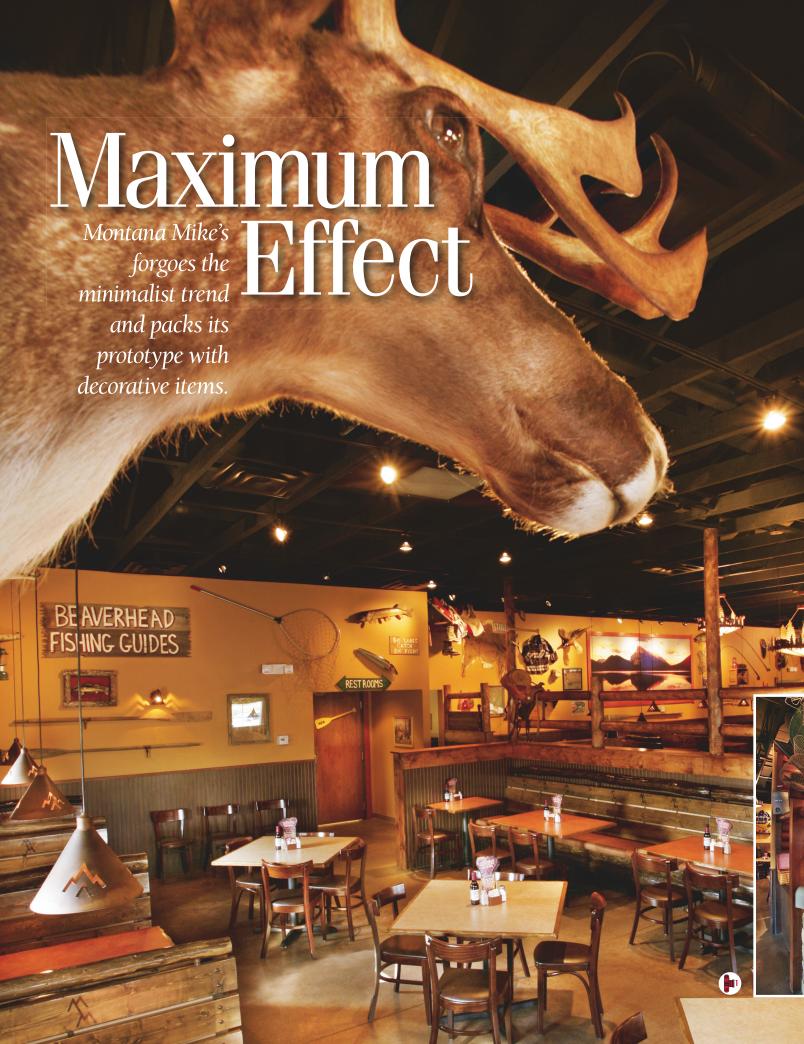


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By LISA BERTAGNOLI

he stuff that hangs on the walls at Montana Mike's in Owensboro, Ky., includes, but is hardly limited to, the following: animal heads and skins, fishing nets, fishing poles, lumberjack shirts, snowshoes, old saws, skis, ski poles, backpacks, hats, and a cot with the covers thrown back as if someone had just gotten out of bed.

Clearly, Montana Mike's isn't going for a trendy, minimal look.

Executives haven't asked customers specifically whether they enjoy the visually stimulating decor, says Madison Jobe, vice president of franchise development for Montana Mike's, a 21-unit steakhouse concept owned by Hutchinson, Kan.-based Stockade Companies. Jobe says that customers do list warmth and comfort as reasons they visit the chain.

That was one of the design directives in conceptualizing Montana Mike's, says Lynn Schwartzkopf, president and CEO of Mann & Company PC Architects and Engineers, the Hutchinson, Kan.-based firm that helped Stockade Companies create the prototype.

Lodge, Not Western

"Friendly, relaxing and inviting is what we tried to do," Schwartzkopf says. The

concept is not, however, Western. "It's not LongHorn; it's not peanuts on the floor or things like that," he says.

The initial Montana Mike's locations all were remodels, giving each a different look and feel even though they sported the same decor, Jobe says. He says that the current prototype, at about 6,700 square feet and 210 seats, standardizes the chain. The prototype also helps court new franchisees, who are interested in ground-up buildings for new retail developments.

The prototype's interior design emphasizes the lodge theme, a hallmark of Montana Mike's since its inception in 1998. In addition to the hunting, camping and fishing items, liberal doses of wood give the interior a lodge look. Tabletops, chairs and wainscoting are wood, as are the large log-shaped dividers that separate the restaurant into three distinct dining areas.

Rustic iron chandeliers with cutouts also promote the motif, as does the expansive hostess stand, designed to look like the front desk at a lodge.

Belly Sideways to the Bar

Several design changes have occurred since the first ground-up Montana Mike's locations opened; the first opened in Edinburgh, Ind., in January, and the second in Corpus Christi, Texas, in June.

Older Montana Mike's locations offer

SNAPSHOT

CONCEPT

Montana Mike's

OWNERSHIP

Stockade Companies, Hutchinson, Kan.

LOCATION

Owensboro, Ky.

OPENING DAY

Aug. 21, 2006

AREA

6,688 square feet

SEATS

206

AVERAGE CHECK

\$14.50

UNIT VOLUME

\$3 million

EXPANSION PLANS

6 or 7 in 2007, 8 to 10 in 2008







(Opposite) Montana Mike's asked local hunters to contribute trophies to the decor; the donors' names are on plaques.

(From I.) The hostess stand resembles the front desk at a mountain lodge.

The current prototype is about 6,700 square feet with seating for 210.

A wooden bear welcomes guests to the restaurant.



A lighting expert gave Montana Mike's a warm, family-friendly ambience.

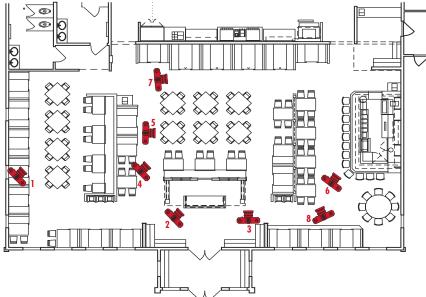
(Clockwise from top) A lighting consultant made sure the mural, the dining room's focal point, was properly highlighted.

Hunting, camping and fishing items as well as liberal doses of wood give Montana Mike's interior a lodge look.

The bar, relocated to one side of the restaurant from the center, allows smoother traffic flow and gives bar patrons some privacy.



KEY Direction of shot -Shot No. Position of camera This floor plan is designed to show the location of each key photograph. Shot numbers correspond with numbers in select photos.



beer and wine but don't have a bar. The prototype adds a bar, which is located in the back center of the restaurant in the first

At the Owensboro location, the bar is off to the side. The move has a number of benefits, says Brad Anderson, franchisee of the Owensboro location. It streamlines traffic flow from the kitchen to the dining room, gives bar patrons some privacy ("Not everyone wants to be seen at the bar," Jobe says) and allowed Anderson to install several more TV screens without eroding the family-dining experience.

Moving the bar to the side also lets a mountain-scene mural and the hostess stand act as the focal points for the restaurant, Schwartzkopf adds.

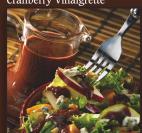
The Owensboro location also has the chain's first dedicated takeout counter, located adjacent to the bar and with its own side entrance. The takeout counter generates 6.5 percent of total business;

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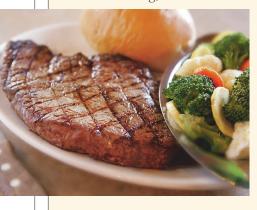
RESTAURATOUR



MENU SAMPLER

STARTERS

Cheese Fries, covered with melted Jack and cheddar cheeses and bacon, served with a side of ranch dressing, \$5.29



ENTREE SALADS

Grilled Shrimp Salad: skewer of flame-grilled shrimp dusted with Cajun seasonings, with lettuce, tomatoes, cheese, bacon chips, onions, croutons, cucumbers and garlic toast, \$7.49

MIKE'S STEAK CLASSICS

Filet Mignon: bacon-wrapped tenderloin filet seasoned, grilled and lightly brushed with butter, served with garden salad, one side and freshly baked roll, 12 ounce \$19.77, 8 ounce \$14.99

DESSERTS

Crème Brûlée Cheesecake, \$3.99





The concrete floor is stained during the pouring process, making the finish more durable.

Rustic iron light fixtures give Montana Mike's dining room a lodge-like ambience

takeout at other Montana Mike's stores accounts for about 4.5 percent, Jobe says. He says takeout has the potential to generate 10 percent of total sales.

Another change: The floor, while still poured concrete, is stained during the pouring process, not afterwards. The process is cheaper and produces a floor that wears more evenly, says Anderson.

The prototype costs \$1 million to build, compared to \$300,000 to \$700,000 or so to refashion an existing restaurant into Montana Mike's. But the numbers are worth it. The Owensboro store is on track to gross \$3 million a year, while the top 20 percent of Montana Mike's units gross \$2.4 million annually, and the bulk of locations average \$1.5 million.

Meanwhile, anecdotal evidence suggests that customers enjoy looking at the artifacts surrounding them. "They say there's a lot to look at," says Blair Patten, operating partner at the Owensboro location. As for Montana Mike's being anti-trend: The minimalist look "is cost-driven, not design-driven," Patten opines.

How do you make a signature sauce turn out the same every time?



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By Monica Rogers

volving something as monolithically middle American as 1,278-unit IHOP means somebody's got to figure out what's iconic and what's simply tired. Steeply pitched blue roofs and Rooty Tooty Fresh 'N Fruity breakfasts are enduring icons, says Vice President of Product, Quality and Procurement Dustin Dixon. But vinyl booths and "menu items that had stayed behind for many, many years" were among tired elements in need of upgrades, he says.

The Glendale, Calif.-based familydining chain conducted customer research to figure out what to keep and what to change. "We have done more guest research in the past three years than we did in the previous 46," says Dixon. "We've basically shifted from development by intuition to development based on extensive research."

Research-Driven Development

The new approach affects all food at IHOP, from breakfast commodities such as bacon and hash browns to promotional dishes to new core-menu items. For example, IHOP's move to not-from-concentrate orange juice, which will be completed in June '07, happened "because guests across the board said they wanted better juice," says Dixon. The company featured banana and cinnamon in its big-selling Cinn-A-

Dustin Dixon uses customer research to meet guest desires for both classics and new tastes at IHOP.





Stacks and Stuffed French Toast Delights promotions this year because research found those flavors scored strongest with guests. And this month's launch of eight new core menu items—a systemwide menu update—includes products designed to meet guest desires for convenient and portable foods, savory crepes, and bigger, bolder flavors. Still to come, the company will launch its IHOP 'n Go carryout program early next year with better heatretaining, clear-lidded packaging.

Tapped in June to lead IHOP through these multidimensional menu changes, Dixon strategically pinpointed which guest desires were business priorities and which could be phased in later. "Our menu was tired, and change was needed, but you can't overwhelm the system with 15 new items at once," says Dixon, who joined IHOP in April 2004 as director of purchasing and quality assurance after working in quality assurance for Applebee's International and Darden Restaurants.

Leading a development team that works closely with marketing, purchasing, training and operations, Dixon trimmed IHOP's inventory before adding to menus. "What we've found is that eliminating items to streamline the menu can be a competitive advantage," he says. IHOP's more efficient inventory system minimizes the number of ingredients, cross-utilizes and specifies the same products across the country.

Upgrading Ingredients

Beginning with breakfast foods—IHOP's core-equity priority—Dixon and team evaluated products already in the system to determine which items guests liked best. Then they moved the entire system toward use of highest-scoring products.

For example, guests wanted bacon with a sweet and smoky taste, balanced

by salt, but IHOP also had to determine what guests preferred in the thickness of the slice. With hash browns, the company found that they weren't seasoned consistently from kitchen to kitchen, so it went to a preseasoned product.

Once guests specified their favorite versions of each ingredient, Dixon and team tested them systemwide to ensure that guests used to different product in different regions liked the new standards. "In every case, the new standard was rated as better,"

Beyond breakfast, IHOP switched to shaved sirloin for its Philly Cheese Steak Super Stacker. Launched in spring 2004, the \$7.99 sandwich originally featured roast-beef strips. "But guests indicated that the roast beef was not the cut of meat they expected on this sandwich. They wanted a more traditional, pull-apart meat," says Dixon. Sales of the sandwich more than doubled after the company switched to the new meat in November 2005. "Guests found it more tender and flavorful," he says.

IHOP is now standardizing specs for chicken (limiting inventory to wholemuscle breast and chicken strips), reevaluating burger specs and looking at soups.

Shaping the Core

With these and other behind-the-scenes improvements in place, Dixon and team moved to fill gaps and evolve items on the core menu. Scheduled to launch this month, the eight-item update includes a new crepe section, two new burgers and a portable breakfast sandwich.

Sweet and Savory Crepes is a new menu category for IHOP. "We have a long history of success with crepes," says Dixon. While sweet versions have always done well at IHOP, savory iterations have come and gone. But recent research found that savory

Adding savory options to its crepe section. IHOP just launched Garden-Stuffed Crepes and Chicken Florentine Crepes (pictured) filled with vegetables, cheeses and chicken.

IHOP's new Bacon and Egg Cheeseburger bridges breakfast and lunch with one sandwich.

SNAPSHOT

CONCEPT

IHOP Corp.

HEADQUARTERS

Glendale, Calif.

UNITS

1,278

2005 Systemwide Sales

\$1.99 billion

2006

Systemwide Sales

\$2.1 billion (company estimate)

AVERAGE Unit Volume

\$1.8 million

AVERAGE CHECK

\$7.95

EXPANSION PLANS

60 in 2007

TOQUE OF THE TOWN

IHOP's Funnel Cakes Carnival and French Toast Fantasy promotions drove the most traffic in 2006.

MENU SAMPLER



with fruit, whipped topping and powdered sugar, and served with two eggs, hash browns, two strips of bacon or two pork-sausage links, \$6.99

toast stuffed with sweet cream-cheese filling, topped

O M ELETTES

Vegetarian Black Bean Chili and Cheese Omelette, with Jack and cheddar cheeses, salsa, sour cream and jalapeños, \$7.29

FAMOUS PANCAKES

Harvest Grain 'N Nut Pancakes, with grains, oats, almonds and English walnuts, \$5.49

SANDWICHES

Grilled Turkey Super Stacker: smoked turkey, Swiss cheese, lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, onions and mayo on a grilled Romano-Parmesan roll, \$6.99

COMFORT & CLASSICS

Old-Fashioned Pot Roast, with carrots, onions, gravy and mashed potatoes, \$8.59

SIGNATURE BREAKFASTS

Rooty Tooty Fresh 'N Fruity: two eggs, two bacon strips, two pork-sausage links and two buttermilk pancakes with choice of fruit topping and whipped topping, \$6.29

FRENCH TOAST, WAFFLES & CREPES

Stuffed French Toast Combo: warm cinnamon-raisin French

Slathering warm pancakes and French toast with cinnamon sugar and cream-cheese frosting was an idea that worked: IHOP's Cinn-A-Stacks promotion was one of its best sellers in 2006.

resonated with guests. Screening numerous ingredient combinations, IHOP found that chicken crepes and vegetable crepes were most popular. So savory selections rolled this month including the best-selling Garden-Stuffed Crepes, \$6.99, with Swiss cheese and eggs scrambled with spinach, mushrooms and onion. Chicken Florentine Crepes, \$7.99, feature chicken-breast strips sauteed with spinach, mushrooms



On the cusp of the IHOP 'n Go carryout program, the Ham & Egg Melt—ham, eggs, and Swiss and American cheeses on grilled sourdough—is portable and convenient.

and onions, and Swiss cheese. And Cheesy Ham and Egg Crepes, \$7.49, include ham, American cheese and scrambled eggs. All are topped with hollandaise sauce.

IHOP also launched Corn Cake pancakes, \$5.99, to replace its Country Griddle cakes. Guests said they wanted something that had a buttermilk-pancake texture with a sweet corn taste. "Country Griddle [made with cream of wheat in the mix] was our previous textured pancake and ate more like cornbread," Dixon explains.

Shaping new sandwiches, Dixon saw potential for the "natural relationship between breakfast elements and lunch elements." He merged bacon and egg with beef to make the new Bacon and Egg Cheeseburger, \$7.99. Bacon, barbecue sauce, cheddar cheese, lettuce and red onion on a Romano-Parmesan bun, bumps IHOP's new BBQ Bacon Cheeseburger, \$7.99, to premium status.

Portable IHOP

Dixon says the time was also right for creating a portable breakfast sandwich. As IHOP prepares to launch its IHOP 'n Go program in early '07, the Ham & Egg Melt, \$6.99, is the forerunner to more made-to-travel items. The sandwich includes ham, scrambled eggs, and Swiss and American cheeses on grilled sourdough bread.

According to Dixon, the goal with IHOP 'n Go is "to significantly improve carryout without taking it to an extreme or requiring significant investment by our franchisees." Menus will specify which items travel best, point-of-purchase materials will promote IHOP 'n Go, and franchisees will have the option of dedicating parking spots for carryout customers. The company has also instituted procedures for accept-

Can you count on your servers?



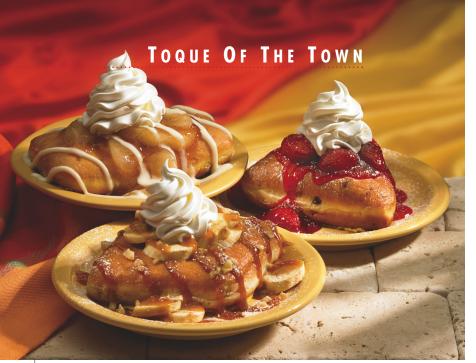
Counting drinks is more complex than ever. It's time to count on ServSafe Alcohol™Training.

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IHOP's best sales-driving promotions for 2006 were Cinn-A-Stacks and Stuffed French Toast Delights.

ing phone orders that ensure the guest is quoted the appropriate time for pickup and that the order is accurate.

Equally important to the menu strategy, limited-time offers will continue to enliven IHOP's menu five to eight times a year. While he won't say what's coming for '07, Dixon says the promotional lineup echoes '06 objectives: to drive traffic and increase sales by promoting a mix of value-priced items, new news and iconic items. IHOP's current promotion spotlights the Rooty Tooty Fresh 'N Fruity, \$6.29, the company's longstanding best-selling breakfast combo of two eggs, bacon, sausage and pancakes

From May through June, IHOP offered banana, cinnamonapple and cinnamon-raisin Stuffed French Toast because research found that banana and cinnamon flavors scored strongest with guests.

Kicking off the year with a strong value message, IHOP's first promo for 2006 was its popular All You Can Eat pancake feature.



with choice of fruit toppings. Bundled with hash browns, the meal is marketed as the Super Rooty Tooty Fresh 'N Fruity.

And one of two best-selling menu promos for 2006, IHOP's Cinn-A-Stacks pancakes, which ran from March through April, grew out of a previous promotional menu item, Cinnamon Roll French Toast. "We loved the cinnamon sugar on that and decided to smear some on pancakes, just like a hot, fresh cinnamon roll. We topped it with cream-cheese icing, and it was fabulous," Dixon says. For the promo, guests built their own meal, matching two pancakes with choice of additional items.

Profitable Traffic

"The goal with all of these promotions is not just to drive traffic, but to drive profitable traffic," says Dixon, crucial given the tough operating climate. "Profit comes from much more than just price." In the third quarter, for example, traffic from the company's Funnel Cake Carnival promotion in July and August and French Toast Fantasy promotion in September and October improved same-store sales 1.3 percent, despite pricing moderation on the part of franchisees that led to slightly decreased check averages.

One help here? "The systemwide launch of December's newly updated core menu will allow franchisees to take some slight price increases," says Mike Gallo, senior vice president and research analyst with Albany, N.Y.-based CL King & Associates, an institutional research company that covers IHOP. "All of their peers have done it, and I think it makes sense from a relative value perspective for IHOP to do this, too."

But check-average variance aside, observers such as Mark Smith, an equity analyst who specializes in the restaurant industry for New York-based Sidoti and Company, applaud IHOP's performance. "These guys have done a pretty good job despite a difficult climate," he says. "They have a good management team focused on improving guest satisfaction, solid promotions, and are committed to helping franchisees. Fifteen quarters of positive same-store-sales numbers is the proof that they're on target with their efforts."







Rick Barbrick has taken Avado Brands from bankruptcy to growth mode in less than two years. By LISA BERTAGNOLI

ate in 2004, Rick Barbrick was president of Somerville, Mass.-based Bertucci's Corporation, one of casual dining's success stories. During his leadership, Barbrick doubled EBITDA, increased unit volumes to \$2.3 million from \$1.7 million, and launched a four-year string of positive same-store sales, which began in October 1999.

Then one day, Barbrick got a call from Alice Elliot, CEO of Tarrytown, N.Y.-based The Elliot Group, a hospitality training and executive-search firm. Elliot, whom Barbrick describes as an old friend, told him that Avado Brands was looking for a CEO. "When I stopped laughing, we had a serious conversation," Barbrick says.

The job offered him CEO status, plus a challenge that was the reason for his initial amusement at Elliot's suggestion. Avado, owner of Don Pablo's, a full-service Mexican chain, and Hops, a brewpub concept, had filed for bankruptcy in February 2004. "A bankruptcy is an interesting place to be in any business, first to see if you can do it," Barbrick says.

The promise of a challenge and CEO status—prompted Rick Barbrick to move to Avado Brands from Bertucci's Corp. A visit to Avado headquarters in Madison, Ga., convinced Barbrick that the concepts were salvageable, victims perhaps only of mismanagement. In October 2004, he and his family moved to Georgia, where Barbrick began a turnaround process that involved hiring a new management team, installing operational efficiencies, refocusing menus and paying close attention to restaurant-level operations.

From Apple to Avado

Avado Brands' roots are in Apple South, at one time a public company and Applebee's largest franchisee. In the mid-1990s, Apple South owned 279 Applebee's locations; thanks to the concept's success, the franchisee's growth seemed nearly limitless.

In 1997, Apple South divested itself of its Applebee's restaurants to concentrate on other concepts it had acquired, among them Don Pablo's, Hops, McCormick & Schmick's, and Canyon Cafe Southwestern Grills. In 1998, it changed its name to Avado Brands and planned to expand with

the \$400 million net proceeds from the sale of the Applebee's locations.

Investors, however, lost confidence in the company, and share prices dropped to \$10 from \$19 in only a month. Avado sold McCormick & Schmick's in 2001 and Canyon Cafe in 2003. In February 2004, the company filed for bankruptcy.

From the Ground Up

When Barbrick came on board, he discovered everything from a bloated corporate structure to purchasing inefficiencies to neglected restaurants. "Take a broken company, and every day you turn over a rock and a monster jumps out at you," he says.

He hired a new management team, all of whom he had worked with at Bertucci's or other companies: CFO Kurt Schnaubelt and Senior Vice President of Marketing/ Strategic Planning Bob Hogan joined the company in February 2005. John Koch, senior vice president of procurement, research and development, and quality assurance, came on board in January.

SNAPSHOT

COMPANY

Avado Brands Inc.

HEADQUARTERS

Madison, Ga.

UNITS

95 Don Pablo's, 22 Hops

2006 REVENUES

\$254 million*

AVERAGE Unit Volume

Don Pablo's, \$2.2 million; Hops, \$2.3 million

AVERAGE CHECK

Don Pablo's, \$13; Hops, \$16

EXPANSION PLANS

1 Pablo's Fajita Grill in 2007, with plans to open 100 within five years

*Chain Leader estimate



The remodeling program at Don Pablo's restores the interior's original plaza look, complete with interior fountains and mosaic tile.

COVER STORY

Pablo's Fajita Grill, Avado's new concept, will feature flame-grilled fajitas in a fast-casual atmosphere. The first will open in 2007 in Philadelphia.



Taking purchasing in-house will save Avado Brands upwards of \$2 million.

Barbrick and Schnaubelt reduced general and administrative expenses by \$3 million, in part by trimming the number of corporate staffers to 91 from 128. They kept morale high by promising no further job cuts and by "telling employees they were key members of a high-performance team," Schnaubelt says. They brought purchasing in-house, a move that saved \$1.5 million in 2005 and is expected to save another \$750,000 to \$1 million this year.

A new intranet system streamlines communications between the corporate office and store managers.

The changes weren't easy, according to Schnaubelt. "It's hard on people...you have to be agile, you have to be multidisciplinary," he says.

Within the system, Barbrick closed 15 Hops and four Don Pablo's, all of which were unprofitable. This past year, he funneled \$8 million into the remaining 118 stores, which had seen years of neglect. "The deferred maintenance was staggering," Barbrick says. While most of the \$8 million went toward repairing HVAC systems, improving lighting, replacing doors and windows, and re-landscaping properties, \$1.5 million was spent on re-imaging 10 Don Pablo's in Dallas and Marietta.

Renewed attention to store-level operations has impressed longtime employees. Avado "is not run so much as a financial institution anymore as it's being run like a restaurant company," says Tonya Bosher, general manager at a Don Pablo's in Columbus, Ohio. "There's been a refocus on fundamentals, on putting the guest first. You can feel the difference."

Avado executives say they've spent "a lot of time and money" refocusing on guests. Efforts include instituting a new secret-shopper program; scores have risen 10 points, to 90 percent, since new management took over. Holding focus groups helped Avado determine where guests wanted Hops' and Don Pablo's menus—back to their original focus. Other initiatives such as Don Pablo's remodeling

MENU SAMPLER

PABLO'S FAJITA GRILL

Classic Fajita: steak, chicken, mahi-mahi or Portobello mushroom with grilled poblano peppers, grilled sweet onions, shredded cheese, lime and choice of salsa, served with Mexican rice and meatless chipotle black beans, \$5.99 small, \$7.49 regular

Fajita Salad: choice of protein/ mushrooms with grilled poblano peppers, sweet onions, Jack cheese, meatless chipotle black beans, lime and choice of cilantro-ranch or chipotle-vinaigrette dressing, \$5.99 small, \$7.49 regular

Add-ons: guacamole, 97 cents; sour cream, 79 cents; both, \$1.29

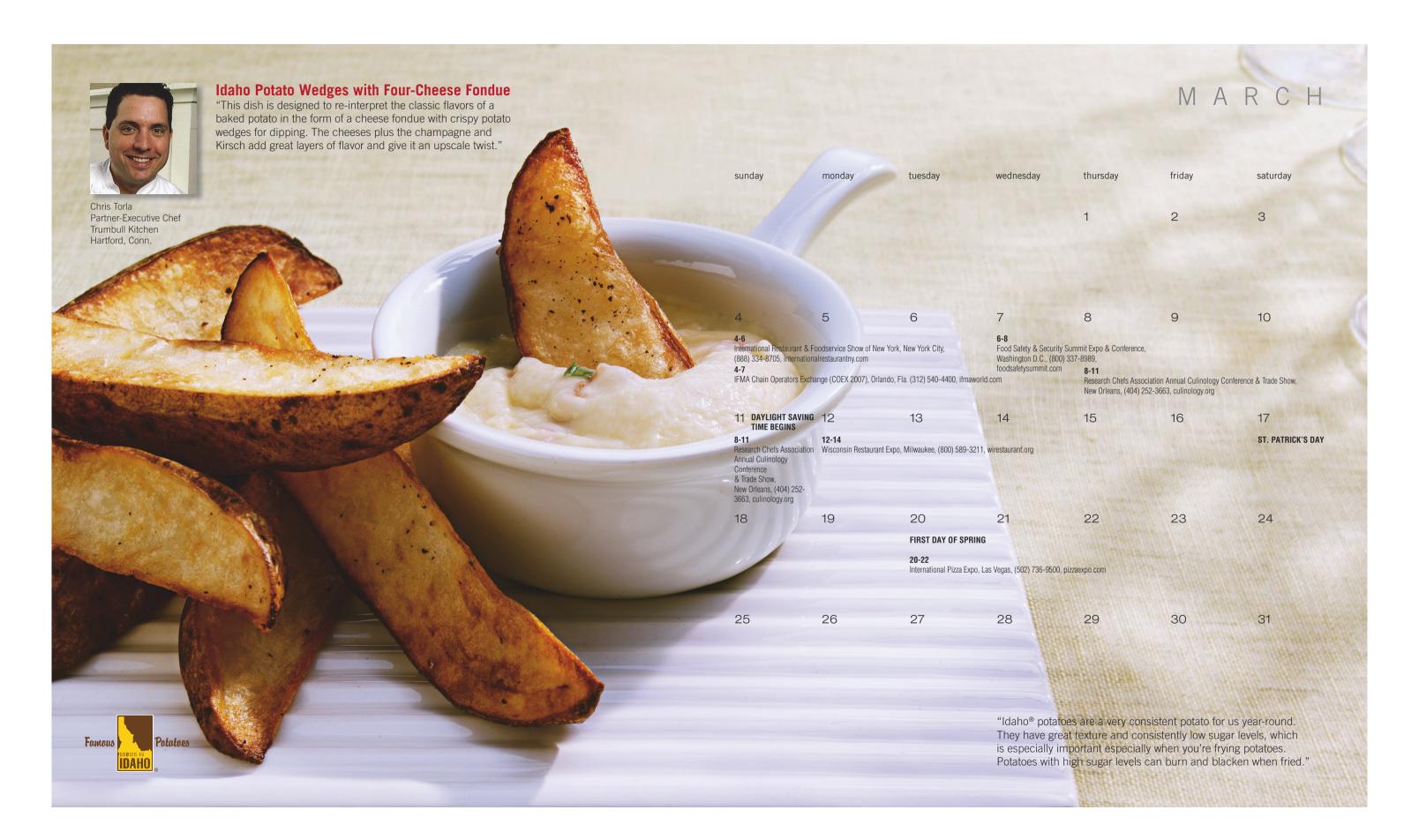
Side orders: Guacamole and Chips, \$2.99



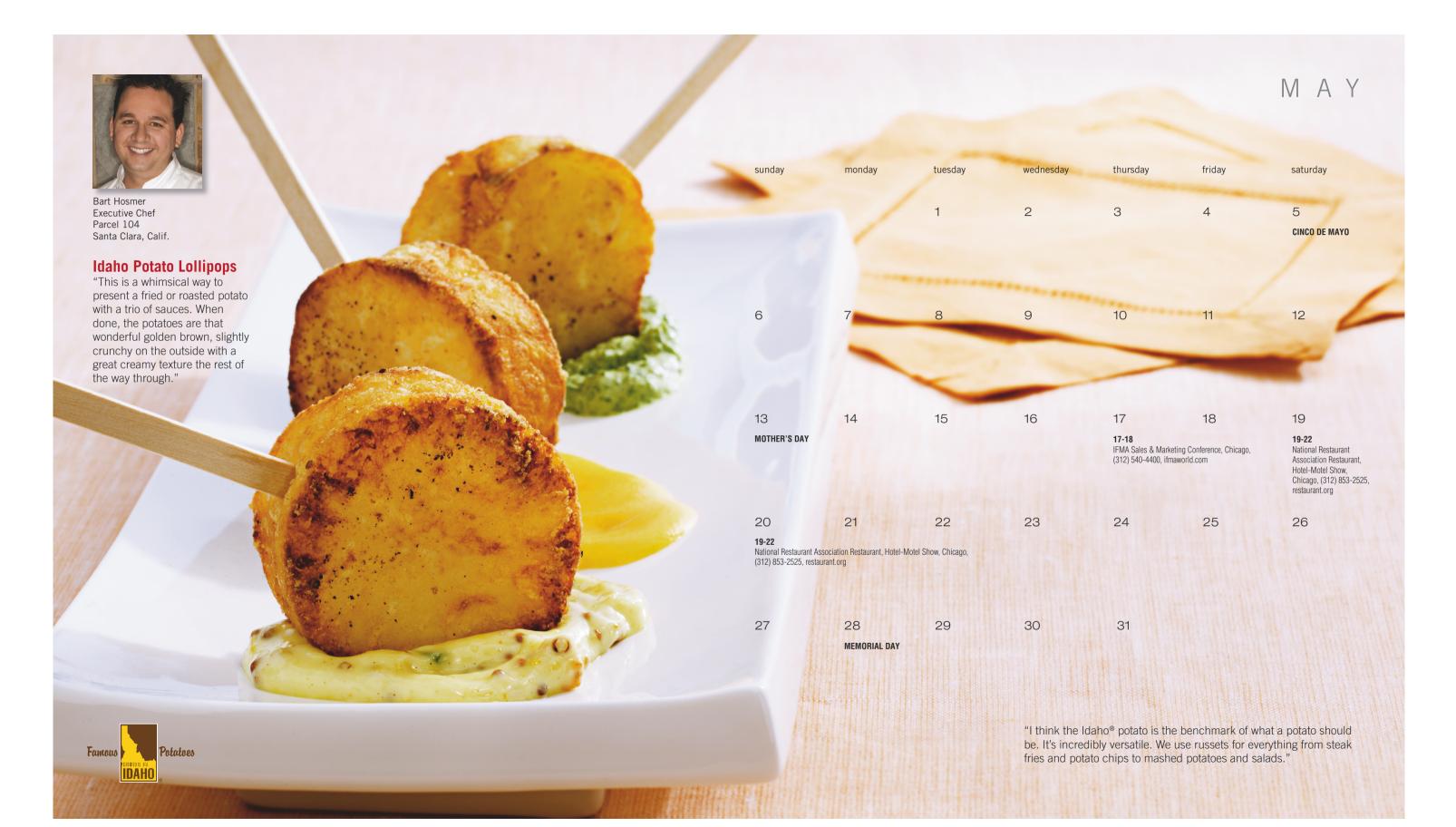
















Idaho Potato and Short-Rib Pierogi

"My grandmother taught me how to make these classic Polish pierogi, with potato in both the filling and the dough. The potato lightens up the dough, keeps it from being too elastic and adds great flavor. You can put anything you want with the potato filling: foie gras, sun-dried tomatoes and artichokes, julienned portobello mushrooms ..."



sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
			1	2	3	4
			1-4 American Cheese Socie	ty Annual Conference, Burli	ngton, Vt., (502) 583-3783	, cheesesociety.org 4-7 Council of Hotel & Restaurant Trainers Conference, Tucson, Ariz., (800) 463-5918, chart.org
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
						18-20 Western Foodservice & Hospitality Expo, Los Angeles, (800) 765-4842, westernfoodexpo.com
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
18-20 Western Foodservice Los Angeles, (800) 76	& Hospitality Expo, 65-4842, westernfoodexpo.co	m				
26	27	28	29	30	31	



"The Idaho® russet potato is nice and light, with a really good balance of starch. You wouldn't want to use a fingerling or Yukon potato for pierogi—they don't have enough starch, so you'd have to add more flour, which would mask the taste of the potato."

AUGUST



OCTOBER

saturday

friday



	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
7-9 Foodservice Distribution Co ifdaonline.org	COLUMBUS DAY nference & Expo, Louisville, Ky.	, (703) 532-9400,	10-11 Nightclub & Bar, Beverage Re Convention & Trade Show, A (888) 966-2727, nightclub.cd	tlantic City, N.J.,	12-15 PMA Fresh Summit Internation Houston, (302) 738-7100, pn 312) 821-0201, nafem.org	
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12-15 PMA Fresh Summit Internat Houston, (302) 738-7100, p	ional Convention & Expo, ma.com		17-20 Hospitality Financial & Techr (800) 646-4387, hftp.org	nology Professionals Annual Co	onvention & Tradeshow, Jackso	onville, Fla.,
21	22	23	24	25	26	27

Society for Foodservice Management National Conference, Montreal, (502) 583-3783, sfm-online.org

31

HALLOWEEN

wednesday

thursday

monday

29

30

tuesday

"The Idaho® russet is an all-around versatile potato, with a good starch point, texture and flavor profile. It's the workhorse of potatoes."



DECEMBER

	16	
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	suya Fukush ad Chef	ima

Katsuya Fukushima Head Chef Minibar & Café Atlantico Washington, D.C.

Frozen Idaho Potato Chip

"We're not scientists and we don't claim to be, but we do apply science and try to ask questions and play with new taste experiences. This is a fun dish that is a play on your eyes and also on your palate. When you put the frozen wafer in your mouth, it melts and you get a very intense, concentrated potato-chip flavor, and then it's gone. Often the magic is in the first bite."

friday saturday sunday monday tuesday wednesday thursday HANUKKAH BEGINS AT SUNDOWN 18 17 21 FIRST DAY OF WINTER 24 25 CHRISTMAS KWANZAA BEGINS **NEW YEAR'S EVE**



"Idahos are the only potato I use. We make a lot of hot mousses with potato purée sprayed from a bottle charged with NO₂ gas, and Idaho® potatoes work the best in terms of their water content and texture. I also like to add Idaho potatoes to soups for texture and thickness. To me it tastes better than using cornstarch or flour."



JANUARY

Blue Cheese Idaho Potato Chips

Yield: 4 appetizer servings

Julie Reid

Vice President of Culinary Development Ruby Tuesday Maryville, Tenn.

Ingredients

2 medium Idaho® russet potatoes (70 count), unpeeled, sliced 1/16 inch
Canola oil as needed for deep frying 1/26 teaspoon sea salt
Sea salt, as needed
8 ounces Blue Cheese Sauce (recipe follows) 1/26 cup Gorgonzola cheese crumbles 1/26 cup cooked, crumbled applewood-smoked bacon 1 teaspoon chopped fresh parsley (optional)

Directions

- 1. Prepare potato chips: Soak potato slices in ice water 30 minutes; drain well; pat dry with paper towels. In deep fryer, fry in 350°F oil until golden brown and crisp, 2 to 3 minutes.
- 2. Drain potato chips on paper towels, sprinkle with sea salt. Cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes. Once completely cooled, chips may be stored, covered, at room temperature up to 2 days, but they will be best served immediately.
- 3. Per portion: Mound 1½ ounces potato chips on plate. Ladle 2 ounces warm Blue Cheese Sauce over chips. Top with 1 tablespoon each of Gorgonzola and bacon. Place on bottom shelf of melter or broiler to soften cheese crumbles until they begin to bubble, being careful not to burn chips.

If desired, sprinkle with ¼ teaspoon parsley. Serve immediately. (May also be served in larger portions as shareable appetizer.)

Blue Cheese Sauce
2 tablespoons canola oil
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon salt
White pepper
1 cup whole milk
5 tablespoons blue cheese crumbles

- 1. Combine oil, flour, salt and white pepper in small saucepan; cook over medium heat until mixture is blonde in color, 1 to 2 minutes. Slowly whisk in milk, stirring well to prevent lumps. Stir constantly until mixture comes to boil, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from heat.
- 2. In small bowl, use fork to mash blue cheese crumbles into paste. Whisk into sauce, stirring to combine. Reserve warm. (Or, sauce may be reserved refrigerated up to 2 days. Reheat over low heat, stirring, before service. Do not microwave.)

FEBRUARY

Idaho Fingerling Potatoes with Shrimp and Quail Egg

Yield: 10 small-plate servings

David Burke

Chef-Owner, davidburke & donatella New York City

Ingredients

2 pounds Idaho® fingerling potatoes, unpeeled 1 ear corn, shucked

3 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons butter, divided 1 medium Spanish onion, ½-inch dice

- 1 red bell pepper, 1/4-inch dice
- 1 yellow bell pepper, 1/4-inch dice
- 2 shallots, finely diced
- 1 pound shrimp, cleaned, deveined, diced
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh chives
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh chervil
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh thyme
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 1/8 teaspoon ground red pepper
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 10 quail eggs
- Butter for sautéing

Directions

- 1. Bring large pot of salted water to boil. Blanch fingerling potatoes until tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Drain; slice evenly to about 1/8 inch. Reserve.
- 2. Melt 2 teaspoons of butter; brush over corn. Wrap in aluminum foil; roast in 400°F oven until tender, about 20 minutes. Cool about 10 minutes; cut kernels from ear; reserve.
- 3. In large, heavy-bottomed sauté pan over medium-high heat, sweat onion, peppers and shallots in 2 tablespoons butter until onions are translucent, about 3 minutes.
- 4. Add potatoes, shrimp, corn, herbs, cream, ground red pepper, salt and pepper. Reduce heat to low; simmer, stirring occasionally, until potatoes are tender and shrimp is cooked, about 6 minutes. Correct seasoning.
- 5. In medium sauté pan, cook quail eggs in 1 tablespoon butter, sunny-side up, until firm, about 2 minutes.
- 6. Per portion: Loosely mound home fries in center of small bowl or soup plate. Top with fried quail egg.



MARCH

Idaho Potato Wedges with Four-Cheese Fondue

Yield: 8 to 10 appetizer servings

Chris Torla

Partner-Executive Chef Trumbull Kitchen Hartford, Conn.

Ingredients

4 medium (70 count) Idaho® russet potatoes. unpeeled, cut lengthwise into 8 to 10 wedges 1/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon salad oil, divided

Salt and pepper to taste 2 tablespoons butter

1/4 cup flour

½ cup chardonnay wine

1/4 cup Champagne or sparkling wine

7 ounces whole milk

5 ounces half-and-half cream

8 ounces sharp white Cheddar cheese, shredded

2½ ounces Emmental cheese, shredded

1 ounce Brie cheese, roughly diced

1 ounce Gruyère cheese, shredded

1 ounce kirsch liqueur

1 teaspoon salt

6 ounces applewood-smoked bacon, cooked crisp and crumbled

½ cup thinly sliced scallions, divided

1/4 cup red bell pepper, 1/4-inch dice

8 to 10 ounces sour cream (optional)

Directions

- 1. Toss potato wedges in 1/4 cup oil; add salt and pepper to taste. Spread on sheet pan. Bake in 350°F convection oven until tender and golden, about 25 minutes. Potatoes may be prepared ahead up to this point and refrigerated until service.
- 2. In heavy-bottomed saucepan over low heat, melt butter and remaining tablespoon oil. Stir in flour; cook, stirring occasionally, until color is a very light brown, 6 to 7 minutes. Do not allow mixture to darken or develop nutty aroma.
- 3. Whisk in chardonnay and Champagne until smooth. Continue cooking over low heat until alcohol is cooked out, 4 to 5 minutes.
- 4. Whisk in milk and half-and-half; continue to cook until thickened, 8 to 10 minutes.
- 5. Gradually add cheeses; cook, whisking, until cheeses melt and sauce is smooth, about 5 minutes. Stir in kirsch and salt, adjusting seasoning to taste. Reserve warm.
- 6. Deep-fry potato wedges in oil heated to 350°F until golden brown and crisp, about 4 minutes. Drain.
- 7. Stir bacon and 1/4 cup scallions into cheese, reserving remaining scallions for garnish.
- 8. Per portion: Spoon 3 to 4 ounces cheese fondue into miniature fondue pot or butter warmer. Garnish

with scallions and red pepper. Serve with 4 potato wedges and, if desired, a 1-ounce ramekin of sour cream for dipping.

APRIL

Idaho Potato and White Bean Purée

Yield: 6 servings

Gerald Hirigoven

Executive Chef. Piperade San Francisco

Ingredients

1 medium yellow onion, thickly sliced

6 cloves garlic, crushed

1 sprig fresh rosemary

½ cup rendered duck fat or olive oil

2 cups dried white beans, soaked in water 8 to 10 hours minimum or overnight

½ pound Idaho® russet potatoes, peeled and coarsely chopped (about 2 small potatoes)

10 cups vegetable stock

1 tablespoon kosher salt (if using commercially prepared stock, use ½ teaspoon)

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground white pepper

25 to 30 Spanish arbequina olives, pitted, puréed in a blender with 3 to 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil (kalamata olives may be substituted)

Directions

- 1. In large heavy-bottomed saucepan over mediumhigh heat, sauté onion, garlic and rosemary in duck fat or olive oil until onions are translucent, about 5
- 2. Rinse soaked beans in colander under cold running water.
- 3. Add beans, potatoes, stock, salt and pepper to saucepan; bring to boil. Reduce heat to simmer; cook uncovered until beans are soft and tender, 1 hour to 11/2 hours. Remove rosemary. Season with salt and pepper.
- 4. Transfer soup to blender: purée on high speed 1 minute. Return to saucepan; bring to boil.
- 5. Ladle soup into bowls. Spoon olive purée into small squeeze bottle or plastic bag with one corner snipped; squeeze a swirl onto each portion.

MAY

Idaho Potato Lollinons

Yield: 6 small-plate servings

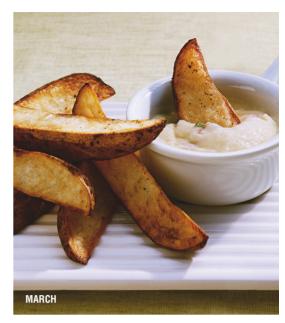
Bart Hosmer

Executive Chef, Parcel 104 Santa Clara, Calif.

Ingredients

Potato Lollipops

6 medium Idaho® russet potatoes (70 count), peeled





Oil for deep-frying Salt and fresh-cracked black pepper to taste 18 lollipop sticks 2 tablespoons minced chives

Bacon-Mustard Aïoli 2 eaa volks Juice and zest of 1 lemon

1 clove garlic

1 cup canola oil

½ cup olive oil

4 strips bacon, cooked crisp, finely chopped

2 tablespoons stone-ground mustard

2 tablespoons thinly sliced chives

Salt and fresh-cracked black pepper to taste

Cheddar Béchamel

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1 cup low-fat (2%) milk, plus more as needed for reheating 2 cups finely grated Cheddar cheese Salt and fresh-cracked black pepper to taste

Arugula Cream
½ tablespoon unsalted butter
1 medium yellow onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
2 cups firmly packed fresh arugula, washed, dried
Zest of 1 lemon
½ cup heavy cream
Salt and fresh-cracked black pepper to taste

Directions

1. Using center section of each potato, slice three horizontal 1-inch-thick slices (trim off ends of potatoes). Using a small round cookie cutter cut three circles (or use other cutter for desired shape).





Reserve ends for other use. Soak cut potatoes in cool water to prevent discoloring.

- 2. Place potatoes in pot of heavily salted water; bring to simmer. Cook until potatoes begin to soften, 5 to 8 minutes; remove from water and dry at room temperature. Potatoes should be cooked $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through.
- 3. Prepare Bacon-Mustard Aïoli: In food processor, pulse yolks, lemon juice, zest and garlic until smooth, about 1 minute. Combine oils; slowly add to egg mixture with processor running so mixture emulsifies. If mixture gets too thick, add 1 to 2 tablespoons milk or water. Transfer to small bowl. Using rubber spatula, fold in bacon, mustard and chives; season to taste with salt and pepper. Set aside in refrigerator for up to 2 days.
- 4. Prepare Cheddar Béchamel: Melt butter in small, heavy saucepan over medium heat. Stir in flour; cook to a smooth paste, about 1 minute. Whisk in milk; cook until mixture is thick and smooth, 2 minutes. Reduce heat to low, add cheese, salt and pepper; stir until cheese has melted, 2 minutes. Remove from heat; adjust seasoning. Reserve warm.
- 5. Prepare Arugula Cream: In a heavy saucepan, melt butter over medium-high heat. As butter begins to brown, add onion and garlic; cook until onion becomes translucent, 2 to 3 minutes. Add arugula, lemon zest, cream, salt and pepper. When cream reaches a simmer, lower heat; cook until liquid is reduced by half, 7 to 8 minutes, watching closely so cream doesn't boil over. Remove from heat; transfer to blender or food processor. Purée until smooth. Adjust seasoning. Reserve warm.
- 6. Liberally season potatoes with salt and pepper. Heat oil in deep-fryer to 350°F to 360°F; add potatoes and cook 6 to 8 minutes until fork tender and golden brown. Remove potatoes; carefully slide lollipop stick into each for service.
- 7. Per portion: Spoon 1 tablespoon each of aïoli, béchamel and arugula cream onto a plate. Carefully place potato lollipop so it stands secured in sauces. Garnish with minced chives. Serve at once.

JUNE

Idaho Potato Shooter with Beet "Caviar" Yield: 48 amuse-bouche servings

Mike Jackson

Executive Chef, Omni Mandalay Las Colinas, Texas

Ingredients

Beet Caviar 3 whole beets (about 1¼ pounds), trimmed, washed

1 orange, cut in wedges

8 cloves garlic

2 bay leaves

1 rosemary sprig

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 cup red wine

11/4 to 11/2 ounces unflavored gelatin powder

2 quarts canola oil, chilled to 45°F

in 6-inch-deep 1/3 hotel pan

Potato Soup

1/4 cup chopped leeks

2 tablespoons olive oil

4 medium Idaho® russet potatoes (80 count),

peeled, roughly chopped

1 bay leaf

2 quarts chicken stock

1 cup heavy cream

4 ounces crumbled blue cheese

6 ounces sour cream

Salt and pepper as needed

Fresh chervil sprigs for garnish

Directions

- 1. Toss beets, orange, garlic, bay leaves and rosemary in olive oil. Wrap mixture loosely in aluminum foil; bake at 325°F until beets have a little bit of give but are still firm, about 2 hours. Do not overcook. Remove from oven and reserve beets. Set aside roasted garlic for soup preparation. Discard orange and rosemary.
- 2. When beets are cool enough to handle, peel and chop roughly. In blender, purée beets with red wine until completely smooth and very well blended, about 2 minutes. Strain mixture through chinois; there should be about 2 cups. Discard solids.
- 3. Place beet liquid in saucepan over medium heat; simmer until warmed and alcohol taste has mellowed, about 5 minutes. Slowly sprinkle in gelatin, whisking until completely incorporated.
- 4. Using plastic syringe without needle, slowly drop caviar-sized beads of warm beet liquid into cold oil, droplet by droplet. (Oil must be cold, no warmer than 45°F; place in freezer if necessary. Beet liquid should be warm, between 100°F and 130°F.) Test a few droplets, they should bead up in the cold oil. If necessary, add additional gelatin, reheat and begin process again. Refill syringe until all liquid has been used. If beet liquid starts to set, reheat, stirring, until liquid again. Refrigerate "caviar" at least 20 minutes. Strain oil; reserve beet "caviar" beads. Reserve refrigerated up to 5 days.
- 5. Prepare soup: In a saucepan over medium heat, sauté leeks in olive oil until soft but not browned, about 3 minutes. Add potatoes, bay leaf, reserved roasted garlic and stock. Simmer over medium heat until potatoes are cooked, about 30 minutes. Remove from heat, discard bay leaf, add cream, blue cheese, sour cream, salt and pepper; blend with immersion blender until smooth. Strain; chill several hours.
- 6. Per portion: Spoon chilled soup into shot glass; garnish with beet "caviar" and chervil sprig.



JULY

Idaho Potato Panzanella

Yield: 8 small-plate servings

Kathy Cary

Chef-Owner, Lilly's Louisville, Ky.

Ingredients

- 2 pounds Idaho® russet potatoes (4 medium potatoes), peeled, cut in ¾-inch cubes Vegetable oil as needed for deep frying
- 3 pounds mixed heirloom tomatoes, cored, cut in ¾-inch wedges
- 1 rib celery, finely diced
- 1 large shallot, finely sliced
- 1/3 cup kalamata olives, pitted and sliced
- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons red-wine vinegar
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh basil
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh chives
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon cracked black pepper

Directions

- 1. Wash cubed potatoes in three successive rinses of cold water to remove starch. Pat dry with paper towel.
- 2. Deep-fry potato cubes in 370°F oil until light gold and tender, about 4 minutes. Drain on paper towels.
- 3. Combine tomatoes, celery, shallot, olives, olive oil, vinegar, basil, chives, salt and pepper. Let sit at room temperature at least 15 minutes.
- 4. Just before service, re-fry potato cubes in 370°F oil until golden brown and crispy, about 1 minute. Drain on paper towels. Salt lightly to taste. Toss warm potato cubes with tomato mixture.
- 5. Serve immediately, about 1 cup per portion.

AUGUST

For August recipe, turn to back cover.

SEPTEMBER

Idaho Potato and Black Bass Taquitos

Yield: 4 servings (12 rolls)

David Walzog

Executive Chef SW Steakhouse, Wynn Las Vegas Las Vegas

Ingredients

- 4 ounces whitefish, skinned, roughly chopped
- 2 uncooked egg whites
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 2½ teaspoons kosher salt, divided use
- 11/4 teaspoons ground black pepper, divided use
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon crushed Aleppo pepper
- 2 tablespoons canola oil plus more as needed for frying
- 5 ounces skinless black bass fillet
- 1 small white onion, 1/4-inch dice
- 1 red pepper, 1/4-inch dice
- 1 yellow pepper, 1/4-inch dice
- 2 jalapeño peppers, seeded, ¼-inch dice
- 1/4 cup cilantro leaves, divided use Zest of 2 limes
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 large Idaho® potato (50 count)
- 5 ounces Jalapeño Tropical Fruit Dipping Sauce (recipe follows)

Directions

1. Prepare fish mousse: In food processor, process whitefish until smooth. Add egg whites and cream;

mix until combined, about 45 seconds. Season with $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper. Reserve refrigerated.

- 2. Combine coriander, cumin, Aleppo pepper, 2 teaspoons salt and 1 teaspoon pepper in small bowl.
- 3. In medium sauté pan, heat 2 tablespoons oil. Season bass fillet with ½ teaspoon of the spice mixture; set remainder aside. Sauté fish until firm to touch and medium rare, 2 to 3 minutes on each side. Remove from heat; cool to room temperature, about 10 minutes.
- 4. In large bowl, separate bass with a fork into large flakes. Gently mix in fish mousse. In another bowl, toss together onion, bell peppers and jalapeño. Add half of mixture and 2 tablespoons cilantro leaves to bass. Season with lime zest and remaining spice mixture.
- 5. Using a sheeter tool (affixes potato upright on spike, then rotates it against adjustable blade to peel potato in long continuous sheet), slice potato as thinly as possible into sheet. Lay out potato sheet; cut into 12 slices, each 4 to 4½ inches long. Soak slices in tepid water 10 minutes. (Alternately, use a mandoline.)
- 6. Drain potato slices; pat thoroughly dry with paper towel. Place 1½ ounces fish mixture in center of each slice.
- 7. Roll potato sheets like cigars, brushing ends with beaten egg to create a seal. Dip the seam in additional egg wash, if necessary. Transfer, seam-side down, to small sheet tray or flat container.
- 8. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in sauté pan over mediumhigh heat. Add fish rolls, seam-side down. Sauté, rotating rolls in quarter-turns as they brown, until all sides are crisp and golden, 4 to 6 minutes. Remove from heat. Slice off ends.



- 9. Prepare pepper relish: Mince remaining cilantro. Combine remaining onion/pepper mixture along with 1 tablespoon lime juice. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
- 10. Per portion: Brush plate with Jalapeño Tropical Fruit Dipping Sauce. Arrange 3 rolls on plate; top with pepper relish. Serve with 1-ounce ramekin of dipping sauce on the side.
- Jalapeño Tropical Fruit Dipping Sauce
- 6 jalapeño peppers, seeded
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro leaves
- 34 cup plus 2 tablespoons water, divided use
- 1 cup fresh mango purée
- 1 cup passion-fruit purée (from 6 to 8 passion fruits, halved, pulp pressed through sieve)
- 1/4 cup fresh orange juice
- 1/4 cup fresh grapefruit juice
- 1/4 cup packed light-brown sugar
- ½ cup white vinegar
- 2 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1. In blender, purée jalapeños, cilantro and ¾ cup water until smooth; reserve.
- 2. In heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat, mix mango and passion-fruit purées, orange juice, grapefruit juice, brown sugar and vinegar; bring to simmer. Simmer to reduce to 2 cups, stirring occasionally, about 30 minutes. Remove from heat; cool slightly; stir in jalapeño mixture.
- 3. In small bowl, mix cornstarch and 2 tablespoons water. Stir into fruit reduction. Return to heat and cook, stirring to dissolve cornstarch, 30 to 60 seconds. Remove from heat; chill quickly in freezer for no longer than 5 minutes.

OCTOBER

Idaho Potato Risotto

Yield: 8 small-plate servings

Mark Dommen

Chef/Partner, One Market Restaurant San Francisco

Ingredients

- 8 tablespoons butter, divided use
- 4 ounces chanterelle mushrooms, cleaned, coarsely chopped
- 2 ounces applewood-smoked bacon, cut in thin strips
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped garlic chives
- 1 tablespoon roasted garlic purée
- 6 sprigs of thyme, leaves picked
- 2 shallots, minced
- 2 medium (60 count) Idaho® russet potatoes, peeled
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1 scallion, finely chopped
- 2 ounces grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese Vegetable broth or chicken broth, as needed
- ½ cup mixed micro-herbs (such as fresh chervil sprigs, tarragon leaves and chive strands)
- 1½ teaspoons lemon-infused olive oil



Directions

- 1. In sauté pan over medium heat, melt 1 tablespoon butter; add chanterelles and sauté until caramelized, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl; reserve.
- In the same pan, fry bacon until crisp; discard fat. Add bacon to mushrooms. Toss together with garlic chives, garlic purée and thyme leaves. Set aside.
- 3. Using mandoline (medium setting for julienne cut ½-inch to ½-inch) cut potatoes into long strands. Line up strands on cutting board; with knife, carefully cut into ¼-inch pieces resembling rice. (Do not soak potatoes in water after cutting; their starch contributes the characteristic creaminess.)
- 4. Sweat shallots in 2 tablespoons butter in large heavy saucepan over medium heat, stirring constantly, until soft, 3 to 4 minutes. Add potatoes; cook 2 minutes longer, stirring to coat potatoes with butter. Add milk. Stir well.
- 5. Bring to a low simmer, stirring potatoes with rubber spatula so they do not stick to bottom or corners of pot. Cook until potatoes have absorbed milk and begin to thicken, 5 to 7 minutes.
- 6. Add scallion. Taste potatoes to check texture. When potatoes begin to soften, reduce heat to low. If potatoes absorb all liquid and require additional cooking, mix in a few tablespoons vegetable or chicken broth. Continue cooking until potatoes are tender, 6 to 8 minutes more.

- 7. Add reserved mushrooms and bacon. Mix well. Season to taste with salt and pepper. As risotto begins to thicken, add vegetable or chicken broth as needed to thin. Cut remaining butter into 6 pieces. Add to potato mixture along with grated Parmigiano-Reggiano; mix until well blended. Adjust seasoning.
- 8. Toss micro-herbs with lemon-infused olive oil.
- 9. Divide risotto into 8 equal portions; serve in small bowls. Garnish each with 1 tablespoon herb salad.

NOVEMBER

Idaho Potato Gratin with Black Truffles

Yield: 4 small-plate servings

Michael Kornick

Chef-Partner, mk the Restaurant Chicago

Ingredients

- Red Wine/Porcini Sauce
- 3 ounces fresh porcini mushrooms, sliced ¼-inch thick
- 8 tablespoons butter, divided use
- 1 shallot, julienned
- 8 ounces dry red wine, such as Merlot or Syrah
- 4 ounces reduced chicken stock
- 2 ounces reduced veal stock or demi-glace
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme

½ bay leaf

1 ounce red-wine vinegar Salt and pepper as needed

Potato Gratin

- 1 ounce panko (Japanese breadcrumbs)
- 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons butter, divided use
- 1 ounce grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
- 1 medium Idaho® russet potato (70 count), peeled ½ cup heavy cream
- 3 ounces Fontina Val d'Aosta cheese, grated
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic

Pinch nutmeg

Salt and fresh-cracked pepper as needed

- 1 medium fresh black truffle
- 1 teaspoon minced parsley

Directions

- 1. Prepare sauce: In a medium saucepan, sauté porcinis in 6 tablespoons butter until soft; set aside in a bowl. In the same pan, soften shallot in remaining 2 tablespoons butter over medium-low heat; add wine, increase heat and bring to a simmer, reducing volume by two-thirds, 7 to 8 minutes. Add stocks; simmer on medium-low heat, 15 minutes, skimming as needed. Add thyme and bay leaf; cook 1 minute. Add reserved porcinis. Season with vinegar, salt and pepper. Reserve.
- 2. For gratin, melt 2 tablespoons butter in small sauté pan; add panko crumbs and cook until lightly toasted, 1 to 2 minutes. Toss with Parmigiano-Reggiano; reserve.
- 3. Butter earthenware or glass baking dish (1% inches to 2½ inches deep, 16-ounce capacity) using remaining 2 teaspoons butter.
- 4. Slice potato into ½-inch-thick slices. Combine with cream, cheese, garlic and nutmeg in large mixing bowl. Season with salt and pepper.
- 5. Slice 3/4 of the truffle paper-thin.
- 6. Layer potatoes, spreading cheese around potato slices. Add a thin layer of truffle; top with layers of remaining potatoes and truffle. (Do not mix in truffle.)
- 7. Cover dish with aluminum foil, place on sheet pan; bake at 325°F until just fork tender, 30 to 50 minutes. Remove foil; top with reserved Parmigiano-Reggiano/breadcrumb mixture. Place in a 550°F oven to brown the top, 3 to 4 minutes. Remove bay leaf and thyme.
- 8. Slice remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ of truffle paper-thin.
- 9. Garnish gratin with chopped parsley and truffle slices.
- 10. Per portion: Place 3 to 4 ounces of gratin onto serving plate; spoon 1% to 2 ounces sauce around gratin.

DECEMBER

Frozen Potato Chip

Yield: 32 amuse-bouche servings

Katsuya Fukushima

Head Chef, Minibar & Café Atlantico Washington, D.C.

Ingredients

3 unpeeled Idaho® potatoes (12 to 14 ounces each)
Oil as needed for frying (blend of 75% pure olive
oil, 25% canola oil)

Sea salt as needed

3 cups water

2 sheets (2.5 grams) unflavored gelatin

½ teaspoon white unflavored agar-agar powder

Supplies

Acetate sheets (or food-safe plastic sheets) as needed Cheesecloth

Directions

- 1. Slice potatoes very thin (about γ_{16} inch) with mandoline. Place in bowl of salted water; soak in refrigerator about 1 hour. Drain and dry well by spinning in salad spinner or shaking in towel.
- 2. Heat several inches of oil in deep fryer (or heavy-bottomed stockpot) to 375°F; fry potato slices in small batches until light golden brown, 1 to 1½ minutes, turning once during cooking. Drain on paper towels. Lightly salt to taste. Cool.
- 3. Crumble 8 ounces of potato chips into 3 cups water; cover tightly with plastic wrap. Reserve, covered, at least 48 hours in refrigerator. Reserve remaining potatoes for another use.
- 4. Cut 32 oval potato-chip shapes, 2% to 3 inches long, from acetate sheets.
- 5. Strain potato liquid through several layers of cheesecloth into small container. Discard cheesecloth and potato solids. Return liquid to refrigerator for 1 hour. With paper towel, blot excess grease.
- 6. Bloom gelatin sheets in ice water until soft, about 2 minutes.
- 7. Dissolve agar-agar in ½ cup of chilled potato water, reserving remainder. In small saucepan over high heat, bring to a boil, constantly stirring. As soon as liquid boils, remove from heat.
- 8. Remove softened gelatin sheets from water, squeezing out excess water. Add sheets to agaragar/potato mixture to melt, stirring gently until smooth. Add about 1 teaspoon sea salt.
- 9. Refrigerate until liquid begins to gel but has not hardened completely, 7 to 10 minutes.
- 10. With immersion blender on low setting, carefully and slowly beat potato-chip mixture to a

homogenized honey-like consistency; take care not to incorporate air or frozen chips will be too fragile. (Push blender to bottom of mixture and hold it still, blending for just a few seconds.)

- 11. With rubber spatula, spread thin layer of chip mixture (about ½-inch thick) over acetate cut-outs, using about 1 to 1¼ teaspoons of mixture per chip. Freeze for minimum of 2 hours. (May be stored for several weeks.)
- 12. Just before service, lay frozen chip on flat surface; carefully peel off acetate.
- 13. Per portion: Serve 1 chip as amuse bouche on frozen plate or standing up in ice. (Line small plate with napkin; place partial sheet of ice cubes on napkin; stand chip upright between grooves of ice cubes.)

Recipe developed by Katsuya Fukushima and Ruben Garcia.







AUGUST (COVER RECIPE)

Idaho Potato and Short Rib Pierogi with Caramelized Onion Sour Cream Yield: 16 small-plate servings

Stephen Lewandowski

Executive Chef Tribeca Grill New York City

Ingredients

Short Ribs*

10 beef short ribs (9 to 10 pounds total)

2 cups dry red wine

2 cloves garlic

1 shallot, minced

1 sprig thyme

1 sprig rosemary

1 bay leaf

3 black peppercorns

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1 carrot, roughly chopped

1 celery stalk, roughly chopped

1 white onion, roughly chopped

2 tablespoons tomato paste

1 quart veal stock

Caramelized Onion Sour Cream

3 large white onions, thinly sliced

1 cup water

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

16 ounces sour cream

Salt and freshly ground pepper as needed

Pieroai

4 large Idaho® potatoes (60 count), peeled and cut into 2½-inch pieces

Salt as needed

1 large egg

1 teaspoon sour cream

1 cup all-purpose flour

1/4 cup heavy cream

3 tablespoons butter, softened

Freshly ground pepper as needed

1 egg, beaten with 1 tablespoon water

Oil as needed

Minced chives for garnish

(*Note: The quantity of prepared meat and potato filling will yield enough for several batches of pierogi, from 2 to 3 times the amount needed for the pierogi dough recipe.)

Directions

- 1. Prepare Short Ribs: Place ribs, wine, garlic, shallot, thyme, rosemary, bay leaf and peppercorns in sealed container; refrigerate overnight (or up to 4 days).
- 2. Remove short ribs from marinade, reserving marinade. Pat ribs dry. In a large, heavy pot (12 to 16 quart) over high heat, heat oil. Working in batches, sear short ribs on all sides to a deep brown color, about 1½ minutes on each side. Remove short ribs: reserve.
- 3. Add carrot, celery and onion to pot; sauté until soft and caramelized, 8 to 10 minutes. Add tomato paste. Cook, stirring and scraping, until paste thickens and caramelizes on bottom of pan, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in marinade and veal stock. Add short ribs; bring to boil.
- 4. Cover pot; braise in 375°F oven until short ribs are very tender, 3 to 4 hours. Remove from oven; shred meat while still hot; reserve. Strain cooking liquid; save for other use.
- 5. Prepare Caramelized Onion Sour Cream: In large sauté pan over medium-high heat, cook onions in 1 cup water until water evaporates and onions are translucent, 5 to 6 minutes. Add oil; sauté until onions are deep golden brown, 3 to 4 minutes. Purée onions and sour cream in blender until well incorporated and smooth, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Reserve refrigerated.

- 6. Prepare Pierogi: Put potatoes in large pot with cold water to cover potatoes by 2 inches. Salt water. Bring to boil; reduce heat; simmer until potatoes are soft, 20 to 22 minutes.
- 7. Drain potatoes well, spread out evenly on sheet pan; place in a 300°F oven to dry out, 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from oven; let cool until potatoes are warm to the touch, about 10 minutes.
- 8. While potatoes are still warm, pass them through a potato ricer or food mill; set aside half for filling.
- Place remaining riced potatoes on floured board.
 Add egg, sour cream and flour. Knead dough briefly into ball until ingredients are just incorporated.
 (Dough should be a bit sticky. Do not overwork dough or it will toughen.)
- 10. Generously flour work surface. Roll dough to ¼-inch thickness. Using a pastry cutter (or small can, washed, top and bottom removed), cut dough into 48 circles, 3 inches in diameter. Roll out scraps as needed; handling dough as little as possible.
- 11. Combine reserved riced potato with reserved shredded short ribs, cream and butter. Season with salt and pepper.
- 12. Place 1 tablespoon filling on each dough circle. Moisten edge of each circle with egg wash, fold over; press to seal. (Pierogi may be frozen at this point for future use.)
- 13. In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook pierogi in small batches (about 10 at a time) until they rise to the surface, 2 to 3 minutes. Do not overcrowd pot. Stir occasionally so pierogi don't stick to pot. Remove with slotted spoon, drain well on plate lined with paper toweling.
- 14. In nonstick sauté pan over high heat, heat just enough oil to coat bottom of pan just to smoking point. Sauté pierogi in oil until golden brown, 1 to 1½ minutes per side. Season with salt and pepper. Reserve warm.
- 15. Per portion: Place 3 warm pierogi on plate; serve with ramekin of Caramelized Onion Sour Cream for dipping. Garnish with minced chives.



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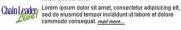
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Pablo's Fajita Grill, a fast-casual concept, will be Avado's future growth vehicle.

program are also aimed at improving the guest experience.

Minding the Stores

The re-imaging program, an ongoing project, costs about \$150,000 per store. It includes restoring Don Pablo's original "plaza" feeling, complete with fountains, an earth-tone palette, tile mosaics and exterior serape-striped awnings. Unit volumes at the 18 restaurants remodeled to date are 11.1 percent higher than the system average, Barbrick says.

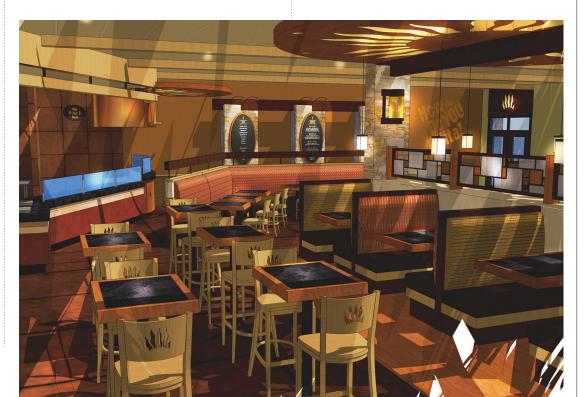
Another ongoing effort: Redoing the menus. To prove to investors that the brands were viable, Avado launched an all-you-can-eat fajitas promotion at Don Pab-

lo's in March and April 2005 that increased systemwide sales from -4 percent to 1.5 percent and guest counts from -4.8 percent to 2.4 percent over the time the promotion ran. At Hops, where the menu had strayed from its original upscale focus, the revival of 20 original menu items, among them spinach-artichoke dip and Mardi Gras Chicken, and a \$10.99 steak promotion increased sales by 4.6 percent and guest counts by 3 percent for 2005.

The corporate and store-level changes were enough to convince DDJ Capital Management LLC of Waltham, Mass., Avado's debtor-in-possession lender, that Avado was ready to move out of bankruptcy. In May 2005, the management team

Pablo's Fajita Grill's menu will feature different iterations of the Tex-Mex favorite with customers' choice of protein or mushrooms.

Fajita Grills will cost \$1.5 million to build, compared to \$3 million for a full-service Don Pablo's.





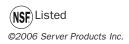
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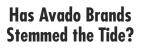




COVER STORY

Barbrick spent \$6.5 million fixing up the restaurants: "The deferred maintenance was staggering," he says.

Shrimp Veracruz is a new menu item at Don Pablo's.



Systemwide Sales (in millions)





'02 '03 '04 '05 '06 Chain Leader estimate



Avado Brands' secret-shopper scores have risen 10 points since Barbrick took the reins.

orchestrated a \$42 million debt and equityfinancing package; Avado emerged from bankruptcy as a privately held company.

Ready to Grow

Eighteen months out of bankruptcy, compstore sales at Don Pablo's are positive, rising from a low of -5.2 percent in 2002 and -4 percent for the last six months of 2004 to flat in 2005 and positive in the first quarter of 2006. Hops hit a low of -15.7 percent in 2004, rising to 4.6 percent in 2005, a trend that has continued through the first quarter of 2006. While he won't release specific figures, Schnaubelt says Hops is now outperforming the casual-dining segment, and Don Pablo's comps are in line with other casual, full-service Mexican concepts.

The turnaround is complete enough that Avado is ready to launch another brand.

The first Pablo's Fajita Grill will open late next year in Philadelphia. The fast-casual concept, featuring fajitas grilled to order over an open flame, is Avado's future growth and franchise vehicle.

(All Don Pablo's and Hops restaurants are company-owned.) Barbrick expects 100 Fajita Grills to open within the next five years. He has no plans to expand Don Pablo's and Hops in the foreseeable future.

Full-size Don Pablo's cost about \$3 million to build, while Fajita Grill stores cost about \$1.5 million. The prototype is 3,000 square feet with 90 seats inside and 30 on a patio. Barbrick estimates a \$9 check average at the grill, compared to \$13 at Don Pablo's, and unit sales of \$1.5 million, vs. \$2.2 million at Don Pablo's.

Pablo's Fajita Grill "is a viable way to increase both brands," says David Mansbach, managing director of HVS Executive Search, a foodservice recruiting firm based in Mineola, N.Y. "It just has to be a well-thought-out differentiation point so there's no confusion," or cannibalization of the full-service brand, Mansbach adds.

Barbrick deems the companywide turnaround about 70 percent complete. Improving training is on his to-do list: "I want it to be one of the most intense training programs in the industry," he says. In November, Jeanne Colaizzi, Avado's director of operations, was promoted to vice president of training.

Current challenges include continuing to instill a guest-focused culture and improving store-level operations. "We can't compete with Chili's or Applebee's on marketing, but we can out-execute them," Barbrick says. Another challenge lies in managing the restaurants, so geographically spread out that Barbrick logged 75,000 air miles this year visiting the stores.

But the worst is over. "The monsters," Barbrick says, "are smaller now."

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SNAPSHOT COMPANY Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises HEADQUARTERS Chicago UNITS 60 SYSTEM WIDE SALES \$305 million* *Chain Leader estimate

SNAPSHOT

CONCEPT

UNITS

2006

BD's Mongolian Barbeque

HEADQUARTERSFerndale, Mich.

12 company-owned, 18 franchised

SYSTEMWIDE SALES

\$63 million

LINE OF

By David Farkas

he Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta estimates 76 million people a year suffer some sort of foodborne illness while another several million adults and children have allergic reactions to or are intolerant of a variety of foods. In the majority of such cases, restaurants are blameless. But that's no excuse for being unprepared to deal with them. Consider BD's Mongolian Barbeque and Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises, where policies to keep customers safe take priority.

COO Debra Fratrik has a small request for a visitor who has called the raw-meat-and-vegetable section of BD's Mongolian Barbeque a "food bar." "Could you refer to it in your article as the 'Market Area'?" she asks as she is standing below a large sign inscribed with the two words.

The Market Area in the chain's new prototype, in Canton, Mich., a surburb of Detroit, is humming. Customers desiring the chain's signature stir-fry—and there are many during lunchtime on a Tuesday in early November—are plucking raw ingredients with plastic tongs from two cold stations and placing them in ceramic bowls. At the third cold station, they choose from among many proprietary sauces.

A few patrons refer to the recipe cards as they fill bowls; others design their own stir-fries, sometimes constructing teetering edifices of meats and vegetables. When they hit the sauce station, they ladle the liquids into small ramekins, though several people sample sauces first with tiny plastic spoons. For the amount of product that's being picked, piled and draped into bowls, the process is amazingly orderly—as if the customers are intent on keeping the three stations neat and clean.

prepare their dishes. "We don't leave the area alone," Fratrik declares.

On this particular day, the employee, dressed in a ruby-colored chef's jacket, remains in the Market Area, while other workers replenish ingredients from large plastic containers. Nothing touches their gloved hands.

Another line of defense in the cross-contamination battle is a metal separator that runs along both sides of the raw chicken bin, keeping pieces from falling into the cooked sausage in the next bin. A similar separator divides uncooked shelled eggs from vegetables. Grillers are required to wash their hands at a side-sink after breaking eggs while stir-frying.

Fratrik, who joined the Ferndale, Mich.based chain two-and-half years ago, takes credit for introducing the separators that



Both BD's Mongolian
Barbeque and Big Bowl
feature peanut sauces,
which typically accompany
Indonesian-style satays.
Because peanuts are among
ingredients triggering allergic
reactions, servers at both
chains ask customers ahead
of time if they have known
allergies.

(Opposite) To prevent crosscontamination, peanut sauces are always put on the outer perimeter of the sauces and spices station at BD's Mongolian Barbeque.

Servers at Big Bowl, a Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises concept, handwrite orders on bright pink tickets when a customer requests a special order.

DEFENSE

Still, as shipshape as the Market Area remains, Fratrik is aware of critical foodsafety issues. She is particularly concerned with temperature control and cross-contamination of raw products, which could cause a foodborne illness.

Running Hot and Cold

"I worry about temperatures," admits Fratrik, a former division president for buffet chain Golden Corral. "When you serve cooked foods, you worry about them being hot enough. Here, you worry about cold temperatures being right," she explains. Fratrik produces a clipboard on which a "market manager" has entered ingredient temperatures four times a day, beginning at 11 a.m. and ending at 7 p.m.

Cross-contamination, however, is harder to manage. "Kids really scare me, putting their hands in the food," Fratrik frets. To guard against that, the new restaurant's market manager grooms and cleans the stations while monitoring customers as they

wall off potentially hazardous foods. In addition, she formalized food-safety training for hourly workers using a Drexel University program called Food Safety First. Today, hourly employees are drilled weekly on food safety at pre-shift meetings.

Prior to her arrival, Fratrik says BD's managers were responsible for showing hourly staff how to handle food safely. "It was conventional wisdom," she recalls. A director of training is now responsible for administering food-safety programs throughout the 12 company-owned and 18 franchised units. All store managers receive ServSafe training, a certification process that must be repeated every five years.

Millions of Sick People

Conventional wisdom isn't enough to prevent foodborne illness or the lawsuits that can result from mishandling foods in high-volume restaurants. To be sure, most of the 76 million people the CDC estimates get sick each year don't blame restaurants for

FOOD SAFETY

"We tell customers using the tasting spoons for sauces not to double-dip,"

—Deb Fratrik, chief operating officer, BD's Mongolian Barbeque

A manager keeps fresh vegetables neatly arranged at BD's. The worker also keeps an eye out for customers, especially children, who may cross-contaminate products.



their illness. But when they do—and can prove it—the results can be devastating.

In June 2004, for example, now-defunct Chi-Chi's Inc. paid \$2.18 million to settle 60 claims after more than 600 people contracted Hepatitis A from contaminated green onions shipped from Mexico and served in a unit in western Pennsylvania. The outbreak was blamed for four deaths.

By contrast, allergic reactions and intolerances to foods like milk, peanuts, shell-fish, eggs and wheat seem to be attracting less attention these days. To be sure, food allergies are relatively rare. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration estimates that only 2 percent of adults and 2 percent to 8 percent of children are truly allergic to certain foods. Still, for these customers, eating in a restaurant is fraught with danger; food containing even a small portion of the

offending allergen can lead to upset stomachs and hives for some, serious illness or death for others

Stay Alert, Stay Alive

That's why people like Carrol Symank are not letting down their guards. The vice president for food safety at Chicago-based multiconcept operator Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises oversees a home-grown program called Allergy Alert throughout the company's 60 restaurants.

"Formally it has been in effect for about six years," Symank explains. "It was a collaborative effort among our partners, our vice president of operations and me [because] there was a growing concern with dining and allergies." New employees spend about an hour on allergy procedures in their initial training session.

When customers inform their servers ahead of time about their allergies, Allergy Alert procedures go into play. "We find out what type of food they're allergic to,"





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FOOD SAFETY

"The Allergy Alert ticket is bright pink, and it always gets attention in the kitchen."

—Carrol Symank, vice president of food safety, Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises



Gluten-free menus, like the one at Lettuce's Wildfire, demonstrate that some restaurants put the safety of their customers front and center.

Symank explains. "Then we can make recommendations based on what we think will fit their diet."

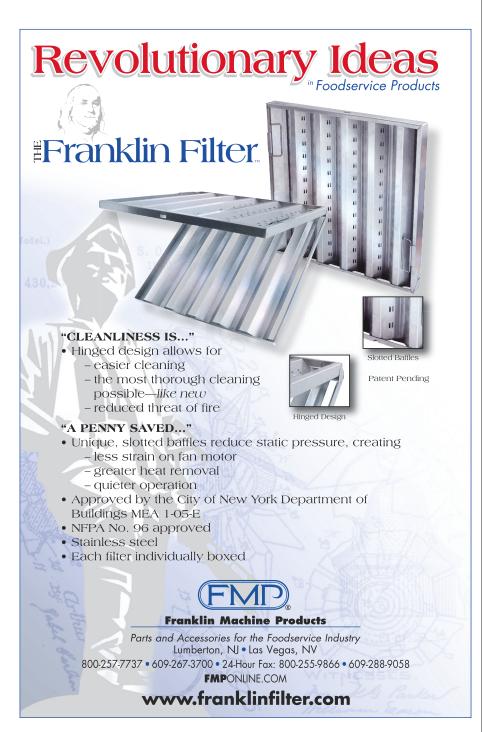
The restaurants use a handwritten ticket with the word "alert" printed on it to flag orders for people with allergies. The bright pink piece of paper lists the guest's name, where he or she is sitting and what was ordered. The manager delivers the Allergy Alert ticket to the kitchen and matches it up with the party's other tickets from the printer. Although most cooks understand how to prepare such dishes, managers have oversight in these cases.

The Personal Touch

Lettuce also addresses food-safety issues directly with customers. Something like that recently happened when a customer who dined at Foodlife, Lettuce's upscale food court in Chicago, e-mailed the corporate office describing her symptoms. "My initial protocol was to get the ingredients of the dish and give her a call and discuss her symptoms," recalls Symank, who has worked for LEYE for 18 years. "We feel like the safety of customers and employees is of highest concern. We are willing to share ingredients."

Last month, Symank got a call from a Minneapolis customer recently diagnosed with gluten intolerance wondering if she could eat at the company's restaurants. "She was being proactive about her condition. I told her we have a gluten-free menu at Wildfire but not at Big Bowl," he says. At Big Bowl, which specializes in stir-fry, an Allergy Alert ticket would be issued and a manager would oversee her dish's preparation.

Symank went the extra mile in this case. After finding out which Big Bowl the customer frequented, Symank then asked the unit's manager to call the woman to explain the procedures for accommodating customers with food allergies. "Being newly diagnosed, she needs as much assurance as she can get. Oftentimes that is through personal interaction," he says.



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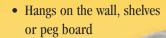
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Counter Culture

Fast-food carryout customers are more likely to come in the evening. By Mary Boltz Chapman

hile dinner comprises 49.5 percent of all QSR users' most recent purchase occasions, it makes up 57.0 percent of carryout occasions, according a 21-quarter average from Quick-Track, a quarterly survey by San Clemente, Calif.-based Sandelman & Associates. Lunch makes up 40.2 percent

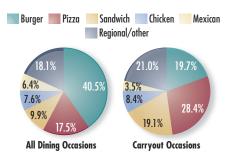
of all users' last occasions and 34.0 percent of carryout occasions.

- According to a 21-quarter average, carryout comprises 23.2 percent of all fast-food occasions. Drive-thru garners 40.5 percent; eat-in, 29.9 percent; and delivery, 6.3 percent.
- The average amount spent per person was the same for all fastfood users and those using carryout



Segment Share

Share of all QSR users' past-month purchases, 21-quarter average



on their last occasion: \$4.82.

- Guests using carryout on their last visit were more likely than all QSR users to use a limited-time special: 26.3 percent vs. 21.3 percent. Of carryout customers taking advantage of a deal, 26.9 percent learned about it from signs at the restaurant, 26.6 percent from direct-mail fliers, 25.0 percent from newspapers, and 13.0 percent from television.
- A 21-quarter average shows that 34.0 percent of QSR customers using carryout on their last occasion were with their spouse, 27.5 percent were with their children, and 27.3 percent were alone. Of all users, 30.1 percent were with their spouse; 27.4 percent, with their kids; and 26.9 percent, by themselves.
- 33.0 percent of customers using carryout on their last visit had pizza, while 25.0 percent of all users did. Only 14.6 percent of those using carryout bought a burger; 24.0 percent of all users did.
- Likewise, while 30.1 percent of all fast-food users ordered fries on their last occasion, only 18.7 percent of those using carryout did, according to a 21-quarter average.

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 carryout users" as those who have purchased food for carryout from a QSR chain at least once in the past month. Most-recent purchase data is based on all QSR users whose dining type was carryout on their last QSR occasion.



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Franchise Developer

Development Damage Control

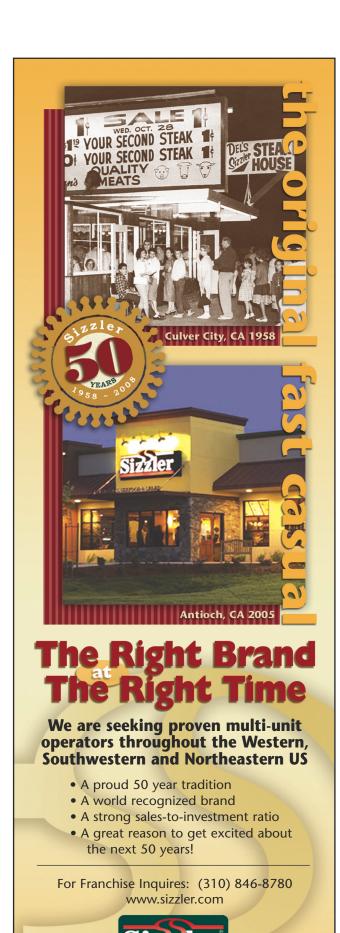
alling behind in a development schedule is a common issue faced by multiunit franchisees and area developers, says Carl E. Zwisler, a franchise attorney with Washington, D.C.-based Haynes and Boone and a former general counsel for the International Franchise Association. The repercussions can include reduced territory, losing exclusivity, penalty fees and loss of further development rights. Should you find yourself in this situation, here are Zwisler's tips for minimizing the damage.

- **Don't wait.** Contact the franchisor as soon as it becomes obvious that you're not going to be able to meet the schedule. "Approach the franchisor early so they understand what's going on," says Zwisler. Start with a phone call, then meet in person to present a written plan with your proposed terms.
- **Get everything on the table.** If there are other problems beyond scheduling, such as operational issues, now is the time to discuss them. "Get all the issues all on the table at the same time," says Zwisler. "Don't spend a month or two renegotiating the development schedule, and then two weeks later say, 'Oh, I thought of something else.'"
- Keep your territory together. "It makes sense from an economic perspective to keep the area you've developed as one entity," says Zwisler. If the franchisor insists that you shrink the territory, negotiate to lose a remote area.
- Bring in an experienced partner. Zwisler points to one recent example: When a new Dunkin' Donuts franchisee in upstate New York fell behind his development schedule and was on the brink of being shut down, the franchisee partnered with George Zografos, chief executive officer of Z Donut Co. in South Yarmouth, Mass. Zografos has 20 years experience with Dunkin' Donuts as a franchisee, and those relationships paid off. "I talked to the people and got him an extra year," says Zografos. "We met the schedule and opened the second unit on time."





When a new Dunkin' Donuts franchisee fell behind his development schedule, he brought in an experienced partner who helped negotiate a one-year extension.



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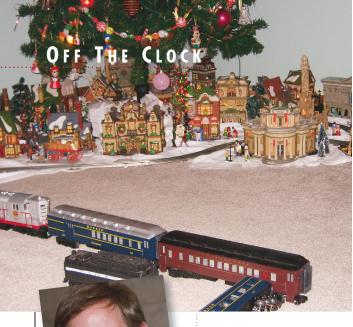




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All Aboard

or most people, decorating their tree and hanging a few wreaths is the extent of their Christmas decorating. But Harry Bond takes it further. The president of Bradley, Ill.-based Monical's Pizza sets up an elaborate train display every holiday season that elicits oohs and ahs from children and adults alike.

Bond creates a model-railroad display that includes 150 porcelain houses and buildings, 100 feet of track and three trains, taking up the entryway and living room of his home in Bourbonnais, Ill. Under Christmas trees in both rooms, the display features the North Pole in the entryway and a replica of 19th century London in the living room. A track with electric trains connects the two.

It Takes a Village

Bond starts setting up the display the first weekend in November. He, his wife, Deborah, and son, Rob, 20, work on the weekends to put it together, completing it by Thanksgiving. Even neighbors and their kids will come over to help. "It's just so neat to build things and watch the towns come together and watch the kids when they see the towns develop," Bond says.

The complex setup involves creating five levels out of plastic foam, which serves as the foundation of the display. Then Bond lays out the components of the villages including lighted houses and buildings, street lights, billboards with flashing lights, and moving features such as a ski lift, an ice-skating rink and a polar bear sledding. Then he sets up the tracks and trains,

including a 60-year-old O scale Lionel freight train.

The biggest challenge in putting the display together is hiding all the wires, Bond says. He hides some of the wires in the foam, covers them up with plastic snow and incorporates them into the village display such as hanging strands of wires between street lights.

Family Legacy

Bond credits his interest in model railroading to his father, who bought him his first train set at age 4. He was inspired to create the train and village displays after seeing his uncle set up a village with lighted houses on his mantle and seeing his next-door neighbor run an electric train under his Christmas tree. "As I grew up, I combined the village and the train and the bubble lights—all some of my favorite things from being a kid at Christmas—and it got out of control," Bond says. "What can I say."

Now Bond is passing the torch to his children. His son is creating the 19th century London display in the basement this year, while Bond expands the North Pole village into the living room. His 28-year-old daughter, Annette, and her husband, Michael, will create a simple display under their tree this year of three porcelain houses and a Lego train.

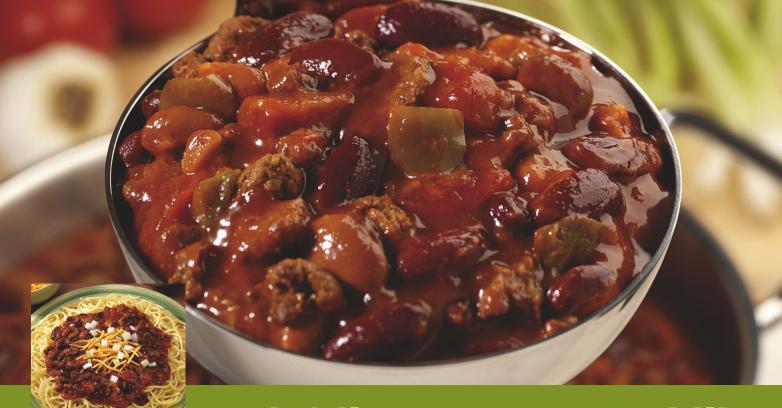
"It is a true family adventure," Bond says. "This is something they're always going to remember, and it's going to be something they're always going to want to do. So that's always a nice thing for a dad when he can say that."

Monical's Pizza's
Harry Bond
showcases his
train collectibles
in an elaborate
Christmas display.

BY MAYA NORRIS

Every holiday season, Harry Bond and his family create a model-railroad display that includes 150 porcelain houses and buildings, 100 feet of track and three trains, taking up the entryway and living room of his home in Bourbonnais, Ill.

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