

hodemahighlights



Source: Semsom restaurant

Lovers of good food, Lebanese are attached to the philosophy of the traditional restaurant, seen by many as a second home. Mezza, grilled meat, water pipes, customers often stay for hours, socializing and enjoying popular background music.

This unswerving loyalty enables restaurants serving Lebanese cooking to remain unruffled through the years and trends.

Modernizing traditional cuisine: Are Lebanese chefs ready to take the plunge?

This article was written by **Nagi Morkos**, *hodema's* co-founder and managing partner, and published in French in "Le Commerce du Levant" special issue on Beirut Food & Beverage market, May 2011

Some eateries, however, try to get off the beaten track and the classic formula. The first signs of rebellion appeared at the end of the war, with the opening of the Kabab-ji chain in 1993. With its oven visible from the street, its kebabs displayed in the window, and the young and modernized decor, Kabab-ji stood out among its competitors. Zaatar W Zeit, also offering fast food, confirmed the "modernization" trend in 1999 by transcribing its menu into the Latin alphabet. These changes, though, only affected the lower segment of the Food & Beverage market.

Al Balad restaurant, which opened in 2002, fell in line and adapted the modern twist to middle range eateries. Many, such as Café Blanc, Leila, Semsom and Zaher el-Laymoun followed suit, as well as the new-born Basma and Frida. The latter distinguishes itself by offering a fusion menu blending Lebanese and Mexican ingredients and influences.

However, these attempts to modernize have neither reached the premium tables at the higher end of the scale, which remain impervious to change and stick to a respect of tradition and of local cuisine, nor involved all types of recipes. Lebanese cuisine consists of two main categories, mezza and homemade dishes. The taste and presentation of the latter remain untouched, all efforts being concentrated on the mezza which are the most emblematic and convivial courses of Lebanese restaurants. Eateries such as Semsom or Leila try to shake up culinary traditions by coloring hummus with herbs and spices. Chef Maroun Chedid, at the helm of l'Atelier restaurant, prepares it with a base of fennel confit. The angel hair from the Lebanese dessert 'osmaliyeh' can also be found today in cheese rolls, as can grenadine in arak.

Yet these attempts remain few and far between, considering the

large number of restaurants offering Lebanese cuisine in Lebanon. This can be partly explained by the conservative nature of clients and the absence of a gastronomic culture.

This resistance to change also comes from the professionals. The first concern is the image of the cook. In the manner of grandma's homemade cooking, the chef who specializes in Lebanese cuisine is not considered fashionable. Chefs Georges Rayess and Ramzi Choueiry, the "home-made cooking" main figureheads, are not renowned for their modernity. Therefore, it is much more attractive for aspiring chefs to train to become experts in Italian or French cooking. Ali Hadla, head of the kitchen at "Le Talleyrand", regrets the fact that restaurant owners have to hire older cooks as they are the only ones able to transmit the know-how and the love of Lebanese cooking. The attraction of foreign cuisine for aspiring chefs, makes them good at "cooking everything", and thus harms local cuisine. A chef is really acknowledged for his talent when he specializes exclusively in one type of cooking, but the ones dedicating themselves to Lebanese cooking are behind the scenes. Maroun Chedid and Joe Barza, to name but a few, show attempts to rejuvenate local cuisine. However no leader has yet managed to stand out from the crowd. They are also few who have done the rounds in prestigious kitchens around the globe to nurture their creativity: in fact most cooks learn international recipes without leaving Lebanon.

In a situation where the chefs' endeavors are timid, nothing pushes the investors to be more daring either. Few are they who are ready to give sufficient freedom to a young chef in order to enable him to distinguish himself from the rest. Their first and main goal is financial profit, so restaurant owners would rather build on a fixed and predefined concept which would not leave room for improvising. The chef has the status of an employee in

most cases, which forces him to report back on everything to the investor. So why is the situation different abroad? The popularity of Liza in Paris or Illili in New York shows that Lebanese cooking can shake off its grandma's label and attract a trendy crowd. There are various reasons: the first being that international customers do not have the same eating habits or reservations as the Lebanese and therefore are not bothered by the reinterpretation of traditional dishes such as Illili's duck shawarma. The chef's social status is also more highly perceived in Western countries, where a restaurant can build its reputation solely on its chef's creativity. Finally, many Lebanese cooking professionals emigrated after summer 2006 political events. Lebanon has thus lost a large number of chefs who were willing and capable of revisiting local cuisine.

Future endeavors, both from local chefs and those returning, such as Karim Haidar who is about to open a high-end restaurant in Zaitunay Bay, will tell if modernizing Lebanese cuisine is viable or not. But for the Lebanese people, it will always be considered as «the Levantine» cooking (known as «sharki») which came from the Greeks, the Turks, the Egyptians and the Europeans. The expression «Lebanese cuisine», only used outside the country, may already be a revisited form of regional cooking.



Photograph: **Greg Demarque**, "Le Commerce du Levant"



Source: Dalfa Group

Marwan Dalloul was born and raised in Paris, France. He worked at "Abu Dhabi Investment Authority" in Abu Dhabi in 1998, and has been working with American Properties, Inc, since 1999, a real estate company based in Manhattan, New York.

Founded in 1983, American Properties acquires, develops and manages properties across the United States, Europe and the Middle East. Its primary area of focus is the United States market. Mr. Dalloul has completed several multimillion dollar real estate transactions around the country.

He received his bachelor degree from the American University in Washington, DC and then went on to receive a diploma in the Building Construction Program from New York University.

At NYU, he received honors and the Joseph Fater Award of Academic Excellence. He also received a Masters in Real Estate Development and a Masters of Business Administration, both from Columbia University in New York. He is also a member of the Real Estate Board of New York.

Interview with Mr. Marwan Dalloul

Managing partner of Dalfa Group

***hodema's* input was very important to our project: *hodema's* consultants presented us a detailed study including an exhaustive overview of Beirut hospitality industry, and developed a concept for our hospitality project that we believe will fill a gap on the current market.**

1 • Can you describe the project *hodema* is currently assisting you with?

hodema was mandated to assist us in the development of a project namely Dalfa Tower in Ain el Mreisseh. The project consists of a residential tower, a lifestyle hospitality component and a Marina. The tower is situated in a prime location in Beirut overlooking the sea. With *hodema*, we are developing a lifestyle hospitality project which will include a trendy pool club, a restaurant, a rooftop bar, a spa, a gym, and a banquet space. *hodema* is also helping us get the Marina approvals.

2 • What was *hodema's* input as your project's consultant?

hodema's input was very important to our project: *hodema's* consultants presented us a detailed study including an exhaustive overview of Beirut hospitality industry, and developed a concept for our hospitality component that we believe will fill a gap on the current market. Also, through *hodema*, we were able to access the global hospitality community.

3 • You have a real estate background; what were your motives in entering the hospitality business?

First, we were looking to diversify our product offering. Second, we think that developing a hospitality venture will add value to our residential project. Indeed, this will enable us to provide residents with high-end services among which concierge and room service.

4 • In your opinion, what are the opportunities and threats of the real estate market in Lebanon?

The main threat for the country is its political instability, and probably the insecure future of the countries in the region which has a direct influence on our economy. However, I do believe that Lebanon holds a great number of opportunities thanks to the demand generated by Lebanese residents and expats.

5 • What do you think of Beirut hospitality market today?

Today, the hospitality market holds room for improvement. I firmly believe that long term political stability in our country will have a positive impact on attracting international and renowned hospitality brands and operators to venture in this market.

6 • Do you think there's a need for lifestyle hospitality projects in Beirut?

Yes, I believe so. Lebanon and Beirut specifically, lack lifestyle hospitality projects, and it is precisely the type of concept we are tackling with *hodema*.

7 • Do you have other projects that are currently underway?

We have one in Lebanon: we are currently developing a real estate project which will include a hospitality component in Hamra area.

Boutique hotel project Beirut, Lebanon

hodema assessed a historic old House in Beirut encompassing four rooms and two Food & Beverage outlets. The scope of work consisted of reviewing the initial project, and conducting a preliminary feasibility study of the hospitality project. At a later stage, *hodema* supported the owner in the loan negotiations, and assisted in the operator search for the hotel and Food & Beverage outlets.



Source: *hodema*

Mixed-use project Beirut, Lebanon

hodema was approached by the Board members of a mixed-use project under development in Beirut Central District to assess the venture. *hodema* performed a peer review of the completed studies, as well as an assessment on the project's general concept definition and sales mix. Finally, *hodema* provided the board members with the necessary recommendations for the project's phasing and sales mix.



Source: *hodema*



Source: *hodema*

Yacht Club Beirut, Lebanon

hodema carried out a general assessment on a yacht club located in Beirut. The assessment covered the premises, operations, concept, communication, branding and marketing strategies, financials, and strategic vision. The study was followed by recommendations for the improvement of the project's operations.

Food & Beverage cluster Beirut, Lebanon

hodema was approached by a Lebanese investor to develop a Food & Beverage cluster in Mar Mikhael area including a courtyard surrounded by several old houses. Thus, an overview of the Food & Beverage market in the selected region was performed, followed by an assessment on the location as a Food & Beverage destination. *hodema* also developed three different Food & Beverage concepts to be integrated in the cluster. As a final step, *hodema* conducted a preliminary feasibility study for each of the concepts.



Source: *hodema*

High-end Italian restaurant and coffee shop Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

hodema performed an overview of the high-end Italian restaurants and coffee shops market in Jeddah prior to developing the concepts for a high-end Italian restaurant and coffee shop located in La Marina. As part of its scope, *hodema* presented a preliminary feasibility study for both concepts. In parallel, *hodema* provided the client with technical assistance throughout the project's execution phase, dealing with interior, graphic and kitchen designers, contractors, suppliers and recruitment agencies. *hodema* was also in charge of setting up the outlet's operation starting with the human resources structuring and staff job descriptions' elaboration.



Source: Architect Gilles Quiffet

Sushi-Japanese restaurant Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

hodema developed a concept for a mid to high-end flagship sushi-Japanese restaurant in Riyadh. *hodema* started by performing an overview of the Food & Beverage market in Riyadh with a focus on sushi-Japanese restaurants. As part of its mission, *hodema* also helped assessing and choosing the most suitable location and presented the client with a preliminary feasibility study allowing a better understanding of the capital investment involved, the operational implications and the venture's returns.

High-end retail outlet Beirut, Lebanon

The owner of a high-end retail outlet requested *hodema's* support for the development of his project in Jnah area, and the elaboration of the bank file for the subsidized loan application. *hodema's* mission was to review and assess the existing studies, conduct a business plan, and support in the loan negotiations with the banks.



Source: *hodema*

Retail outlet Beirut, Lebanon

The owner of an existing renowned retail outlet in Greater Beirut requested *hodema's* help in assessing the brand's concept, branding application and premises. *hodema* also provided strategic support, operation set-up, and conducted management training sessions to cover human resources, finance and sales.



Source: *hodema*



Source: SABECO

Shaikh Nawaf Mubarak Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was born and raised in Kuwait. He completed his Bachelor degree in Political Science and General Management from Kuwait University in 1994.

He is currently the Chairman of Standard Arabian Business and Enterprises Company (SABECO), a Holding group with interests in real estate, building and infrastructure works, interior decoration and design, retail business, in addition to its recent involvement in the Food & Beverage industry.

Food & Beverage has always taken Shaikh Nawaf's interest, as he has extensively travelled the world for food tasting purposes before investing in the field. His favorite food is the simple cuisine, which respects tradition and authenticity.

He is also fond of pets, and his interests and hobbies include the arts; Shaikh Nawaf is keen on paintings, photography, antiques, music, interior design and decoration.

Interview with Shaikh Nawaf Mubarak Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

Chairman of Standard Arabian Business and Enterprises Company (SABECO)

***hodema* has wisely advised us on the direction to choose and the steps to undertake in order to build a successful venture in a difficult, yet very challenging field.**

1 • How did you first hear about *hodema*?

I read a report about the opening of new Food & Beverage outlets in Saudi Arabia under the guidance of *hodema*. Hence, I realized that *hodema* could be the consultant we were looking for.

2 • What are the projects *hodema* is assisting you with?

hodema is currently assisting us in the opening of two Lebanese franchises in Kuwait. Both brands are part of Food & Beverage groups with a solid history in opening and managing successful ventures. Our restaurants will be located in one of Kuwait's new and upbeat Food & Beverage venues.

We are also working on four original Food & Beverage concepts that are currently being developed by *hodema*. They will all be located in a cluster located on Kuwait's seafront, and will offer a wide and eclectic variety of "easy eating" food. The project's layout design is created by a leading Lebanese architect and it promises to set new standards on the Kuwaiti restaurant scene.

3 • In your opinion, what is *hodema*'s added value in the development of your restaurants?

hodema has succeeded in providing us with an accurate

assessment on the Food & Beverage market in Kuwait in a short period of time. It has wisely advised us on the direction to choose and the steps to undertake in order to build a successful venture in a difficult, yet very challenging field.

4 • What is the positioning of your restaurants and who is your targeted clientele?

Our restaurants cater to the mid to low-end market segments. We target all people living in Kuwait and mainly those looking for delicious food and good atmosphere.

5 • How do you describe the current Food & Beverage market in Kuwait?

The Food & Beverage market in Kuwait is energetic, competitive, creative, aggressive, and demanding. However, it lacks restaurants with high standards that offer both pleasant ambiance and good cuisine. We aim to achieve that perfect combination of food and mood in our future restaurants.

6 • How are Lebanese born brands contributing to the development of the

Kuwaiti Food & Beverage market?

Today, Lebanon has become the Middle East reservoir of new restaurants concepts locally born and bred. Lebanese people have created successful restaurants in Beirut and were able to successfully franchise their restaurants in Kuwait and the GCC while properly transferring their knowledge and know-how.

The pioneers offered Lebanese cuisine which is very much appreciated here, and major Lebanese food franchise restaurants are present in Kuwait.

Additionally, several Lebanese franchise restaurants that do not serve Lebanese food have been developed on the Kuwaiti market thus challenging international competition.

The success of Lebanese born brands is also due to the similarity in taste between the Lebanese and the Kuwaiti people. Lebanon and its restaurants are very well known from Kuwaitis for ages due to their frequent travel to Lebanon and their continuous presence there.

7 • What are the challenges of investing in franchised brands?

The main challenge is to maintain a solid and efficient business relationship with the franchisor. Another one is to offer identical dishes with identical tastes using the exact same ingredients.

Finally, it is to convince the franchisor to adapt and tune his concept to meet the local specific taste should the need arise, without of course changing the concept's core values.



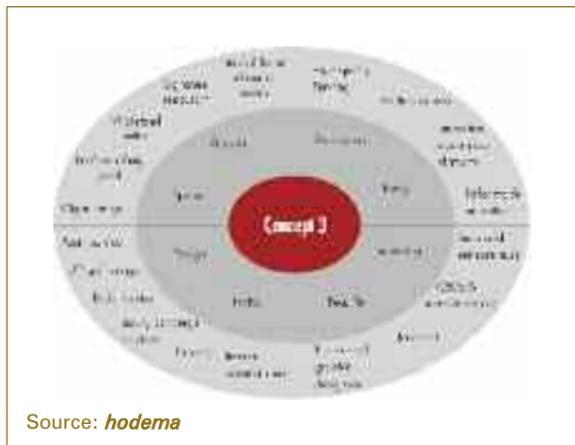
Source: *hodema*

Lebanese café restaurant chain Beirut, Lebanon

hodema was requested by the owners of a Lebanese café restaurant chain to review and assess two of its outlets located in Batriarkiyeh and Ain el Mreisseh areas in Beirut. The assessment was performed on the outlets, operation, central kitchen, concept and branding, locations, and financials. *hodema* provided necessary recommendations, and supported the clients in elaborating their human resources strategy. As a second phase, *hodema* elaborated the brand's operation, human resources, finance and control, and sales & marketing manuals, and followed up on other manuals outsourced to third parties.

Real estate project Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

A property owner requested *hodema's* assistance in the development of a real estate project in Jeddah's Rawda area, on a 1,700 sqm plot of land. *hodema* performed a flash assessment on the location, identifying upcoming competition and future projects, and presented options to the owner on possible venture concepts to be implemented on the plot of land. After a final short listing of two concepts, *hodema* further developed those concepts and carried a flash preliminary feasibility study for each option.



Source: *hodema*

Coffee house chain Lebanon

The owner of a renowned coffee house chain appointed *hodema* to review and assess the brand's outlets' operations and branding. Following this assessment, *hodema's* consultants reviewed the existing franchise proposal and operating manuals, and provided strategic development and geographical planning for his brand. *hodema* was also assigned to act as the brand's exclusive representative with potential franchisees outside Lebanon.

Restaurant club Dubai, United Arab Emirates

An international high-end fashion brand has commissioned *hodema* to develop a set of manuals for its restaurant club in Dubai including human resources, operation, and finance and control manuals. *hodema's* task also included the follow-up on the elaboration of other manuals outsourced to third parties such as architecture and interior design, branding, IT and legal affairs.



Source: *hodema*

Mixed-use project Batroun, Lebanon

hodema was mandated by the landlord of a major estate in Batroun to assess the location of a 30,000 sqm plot of land. *hodema's* scope of work consisted of an overview of the project's identified competition (hotels, beach clubs, spas, Food & Beverage concepts integrated in resorts, etc.) followed by recommendations. A business plan and financial projections were thus presented, and a concept was developed for this mixed-use project. As a second phase, *hodema's* consultants will provide the client with follow-up and technical assistance.

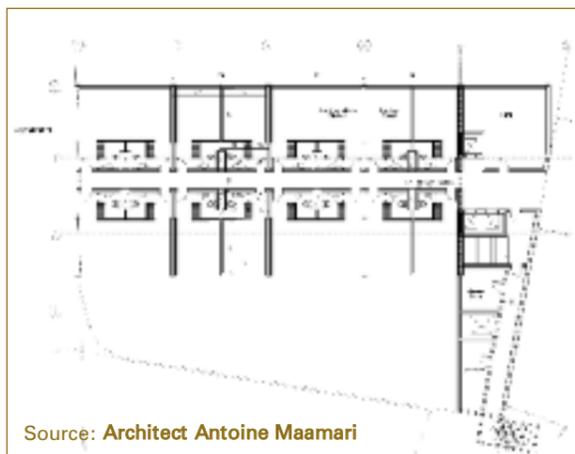
Traditional French bakery-pastry Beirut, Lebanon



Source: Squares Architecture and Interior Design

Budget hotel project Beirut, Lebanon

hodema was approached by the property-owner of a 4,300 sqm plot of land in Beirut to develop a budget hotel project. *hodema* performed a market study on the hospitality industry in Greater Beirut, an assessment on the land, an overview of budget hotels market in the region, and a concept development. In addition, *hodema* elaborated a business plan and financial projections, and helped the client in the operator search for the project.



Source: Architect Antoine Maamari



Source: Ajman Digital Studio

Prince Mohamed Bin Nawaf Al Saud graduated with a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Boston University in 2004.

He is currently working in the banking sector. He holds the position of "Head of Capital Markets" at Nomura Saudi Arabia, and brings over 7 years of experience in investment banking. His interests include travelling, sports and fine dining.

Princess Lolowa Bint Nawaf Al Saud graduated with a B.S. in Business Management from Babson College, Massachusetts, in 2005.

She is currently working in the banking sector holding the position of "Head of Private Banking – Ladies" of SABB bank in Saudi Arabia, and brings over 4 years of experience in investment and private banking. Her interests and hobbies include travelling, diving, skiing, reading, sports and eating!

Interview with: Prince Mohamed Bin Nawaf Al Saud

Head of Capital Markets of Nomura, Saudi Arabia

Princess Lolowa Bint Nawaf Al Saud

Head of Private Banking-Ladies of SABB bank, Saudi Arabia

hodema has made a name for itself in the Food & Beverage industry. Their specialty and focus in this industry sets it apart from other consulting firms.

1 • What are your objectives in entering the Food & Beverage industry and how will you cope with your current professional activities?

We are aiming to start a successful, sustainable and profitable business venture by entering into the Food & Beverage industry through introducing a concept that is currently missing in the local market.

The business is a joint venture where we would not be handling the daily operation and management, but our input and investment would be essential to guarantee the success of the project.

We believe that developing and launching this venture will be achieved if time management skills are properly applied.

2 • Can you describe the project you are currently developing with *hodema*?

The project is a joint venture with a foreign company that will introduce a new brand and concept to the local market. The project will focus on a very high level of cuisine, atmosphere and clientele.

3 • What made you choose *hodema* to be

your project's consultant?

hodema has made a name for itself in the hospitality industry and more specifically in Food & Beverage. Their specialty and focus in this industry sets it apart from other consulting firms.

4 • What are the main attributes that differentiate your concept from other restaurants on the local market?

Our concept and brand are a first in the market. The quality and freshness of the food offered will be superior to that of the local competition. Overall quality of seating, food, ambiance, and services offered are all missing elements on the local market. We aim at increasing standards in Jeddah and Riyadh, and matching our offering to that of some existing restaurants in regional platforms such as Dubai or Beirut.

5 • How do you position your restaurant and who is your targeted clientele?

Our restaurant is positioned on the high-end international spectrum of restaurants. It will particularly attract young Saudi individuals and professionals who

are familiar with the original concept, but also well travelled and exposed Saudis between 25 and 65 years old, as well as expatriates looking for a truly differentiated dining experience in the kingdom.

6 • How do you describe your contribution in the development of the Saudi Food & Beverage market?

We are entering the market with a new concept, menu items, and food quality. I believe this would enhance the competition in terms of food offering and quality. Furthermore, our development will cover the two main cities of the kingdom, creating an impact over a wider share of the population which will establish and strengthen further the name of the brand as a main player on the market. Finally, we wish to change the perception of the food service industry by making sure our staff members are proud and satisfied to work for such a venture.

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Source: *hodema*

High-end steakhouse

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

A Saudi restaurant owner appointed *hodema* to assess his high-end steakhouse located in Jeddah. The scope of work included an assessment on the premises, the location, the concept, the branding, and the financials. The purpose of this review was to provide the client with strategic and operational recommendations prior to undertaking any further steps regarding the outlet. *hodema* also worked on the preliminary feasibility study, including investment breakdown, cash flow assumptions, breakeven point and payback considerations. *hodema* assisted the client in every step, providing technical guidance, follow-up on suppliers and contractors, and recruitment consultation.

Food & Beverage outlet and catering

Kuwait, Kuwait

hodema was appointed by Kuwaiti restaurant owners to review and assess their Food & Beverage outlet which includes a bakery and catering services in Kuwait.

hodema's assignment also included the elaboration of recommendations to improve the operation and allow the development of other outlets in and outside the city. In addition, *hodema* developed the brand's set of operating manuals and assisted in the implementation of manuals outsourced to third parties.



Source: *hodema*

Coffee shop chain

Lebanon

hodema assisted the owner of a Lebanese coffee shop chain in the creation of a franchise department. The scope of work covered an assessment on its current franchise offering proposal. A strategic development and geographical planning were also conducted, in addition to a financial analysis of the projected franchising income. In addition, *hodema* was appointed by the owner to be the exclusive representative of the brand with potential franchisees in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Operational training for a Food & Beverage outlet

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

hodema was mandated by the Saudi owner of a Food & Beverage outlet in Jeddah to elaborate training modules, organize, and conduct on-site training sessions for the restaurant's Food & Beverage service staff. *hodema* was also in charge of managing food tasting sessions for the new elaborated menu.

Babysitting agency

Beirut, Lebanon

hodema was commissioned to perform an overview of the babysitting services market in Beirut. *hodema's* mission also included the development of a concept for a babysitting agency that would fill the gaps of that sector in the Lebanese market, and the elaboration of a preliminary feasibility study.

Lifestyle hospitality project

Beirut, Lebanon

The owner of a plot of land requested *hodema's* support for the development of a lifestyle hospitality project in Ain el Mreisseh. *hodema's* consultants started by reviewing the initial project and assessing the location. As part of the mission, they also provided an overview of the hospitality industry in Beirut with a focus on the lifestyle hospitality market, developed a concept, and a preliminary feasibility study. *hodema* helped the client in the establishment of his management structure and on his search for operators.



Source: Architect Youssef Haidar

Food retail project

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

A renowned food retail chain commissioned *hodema* as consultant to its Food & Beverage project. *hodema's* scope of work consisted of a market study on food retail businesses in Saudi Arabia with a focus on Jeddah, Makkah, Riyadh and Madinah cities. *hodema's* mission included focus groups organization and supervision, and strategic recommendations for developing the client's franchise in Saudi Arabia.

"Margherita pizzeria del quartiere dal 1959" opens its first franchise in Jeddah

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

"Margherita pizzeria del quartiere dal 1959" opened its doors last February in Jeddah. The Lebanese born Food & Beverage brand was developed as a turn-key project by *hodema*. Located in the Bin Sulaiman Center's Food & Beverage cluster in Khaldiyah, "Margherita" offers a long-sought dine-in experience in the city which reproduces the experience of the original outlet located in Beirut's Gouraud Street. It also introduces bar dining, a premiere in Jeddah, where customers come to enjoy their meals while witnessing pizzaiolos mastering the pizza dough and working the burning oven. *hodema* was also involved in the creation of the brand's franchise team, as well as the identification and selection of a franchisee and operation team in Saudi Arabia.



Source: Al Mathaaq

"Semsom" opens its first franchise in Jeddah

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

End of March, Jeddah's Food & Beverage scene witnessed the opening of another Lebanese born brand, "Semsom", a restaurant offering modernized Lebanese cuisine. *hodema* identified and selected the franchisee and operation team in Saudi Arabia. "Semsom" features a wide range of Lebanese dishes, some of which are prepared and served "with a twist". It is the first contemporary Lebanese restaurant to open in the city of Jeddah.



Source: *hodema*

Special issue on Beirut Food & Beverage market 2011

After the success met by its 2010 special issue on Beirut Food & Beverage market, *hodema* renewed the experience in 2011 and scanned, once again, the dynamic Food & Beverage industry in the Lebanese capital. The issue was published in collaboration with the Lebanese economic magazine, "Le Commerce du Levant".

In barely a year, numerous Food & Beverage outlets opened, closed or relocated. The 2011 edition focuses on the challenges of this extremely dynamic market, one that is ruthless with failure as it is generous with success.

As a first in this issue, we have gathered a jury of recognized culinary experts who voted for the "sure bets" and selected their "personal favorite" restaurants among the numerous outlets which are listed in a directory according to the type of food they offer.

Hamra: a winning comeback



Source: Special issue on Beirut Food & Beverage market 2011, published in "Le Commerce du Levant", May 2011



Photograph: Greg Demarque, "Le Commerce du Levant"

AHIC 2011

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

For the third consecutive year, *hodema* participated in the 7th annual Arabian Hotel Investment Conference (AHIC) as Gold sponsor.

AHIC 2011 took place from April 30 to May 2, 2011 at Dubai's Madinat Jumeirah Conference Centre. As member of AHIC advisory board, *hodema* helped in shaping the conference's themes and seminars' content. Karim el Asmar, *hodema's* co-founding partner, moderated a panel session entitled "Regional Leaders: a focus on MENA's Emerging Markets", which gathered Mr. Neil George, Vice President Acquisitions & Development of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Mr. Guy Crawford, Chief Executive Officer of Jumeirah Group, Mr. Selim el Zyr, President & CEO of Rotana, and Mr. Hawazen Esber, Chief Executive Officer of Bena Properties. The main focus of AHIC 2011 was to bring international hotel and regional industry experts together to debate the changing sector landscape, and to help identify intelligent and targeted investment opportunities. In 2011, AHIC brought together over 500 senior executives from over 30 countries.



Photograph: Simon Charlton



Photograph: Simon Charlton

CATHIC 2011

Istanbul, Turkey

hodema participated in the Central Asia & Turkey Hotel Investment Conference 2011 (CATHIC), as part of its continuous presence in international conferences and exhibitions. Karim el Asmar, Founding Partner, and Nada Alameddine, Regional Director of Sales & Marketing, represented *hodema* at this fair which took place in Istanbul on February 7th, 8th and 9th 2011. El-Asmar moderated a panel on "Outward Investment Opportunities: Iran & Syria For The Serious Investor". The panelists, among which were consultants and directors of international and regional hotels, shared their experiences about the opportunities and risks related to the Middle East region.

Horeca 2011

Beirut, Lebanon

hodema exhibited in Horeca's 18th edition for the 6th consecutive year, in the consultants' section. This annual hospitality and food exhibition, which took place from March 29 until April 1, 2011 at Biel featured numerous sections among which were catering, supermarket & laundry equipment supplies, furniture, fixtures & design, tableware, uniforms, technology, packaging, consultants, recruiting & franchise, schools & universities, cleaning & maintenance.



Photograph: Dominique Akoury

hodema publishes, on a regular basis, articles in Hospitality News and Le Commerce du Levant. For more info on *hodema* services, projects and published articles please visit our site www.hodema.net