

The Sultan Group opens two new restaurants

A second Prime & Toast restaurant, as well as a fifth Wasabi outlet, are expected to open respectively in the Qibla region and on the Kuwaiti Corniche in the second quarter of 2012. Prime & Toast, a casual dining restaurant, offers breakfast and brunch items ranging from eggs to American steaks, in addition to sandwiches, salads, soufflés, waffles and pancakes. Wasabi is an upscale fine dining Japanese restaurant serving traditional Japanese cuisine. Both Prime & Toast and Wasabi restaurant chains are owned and managed by the Epicure Group, the food and beverage division of The Sultan Group, based in Kuwait.



New burger joint

Zeebrgr is a new burger joint, which opened in Kuwait end of 2011. Located at The Palms Hotel in Al Bida Road, the restaurant offers international dishes, among which are internationally flavored gourmet burgers. Zeebrgr is open for lunch and dinner.

zeebrgr.com



Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa is scheduled to open in spring 2012 in Taawan Street, Kuwait City. The hotel will feature 307 rooms and suites, 80 serviced apartments and 12 chalets. Guests will also have access to a 200-meter private beach, extensive conference and banqueting facilities, six restaurants and lounges, a Talise spa, a swimming pool and a children's play area. This project is spread on a surface of 32,516 square meters.

jumeirah.com



Americana Group introduces Darden Restaurants

Darden Restaurants, the Orlando-US based owner of the Red Lobster and Olive Garden brands, signed a deal with Kuwait's Americana Group to open and operate 60 restaurants in the MENA region over the next five years. Red Lobster, Olive Garden and LongHorn Steakhouse are among the brands that Americana Group will add to its franchise portfolio, which already includes 1,200 restaurants across the region including Pizza Hut, Krispy Kreme and Hardee's. Darden owns and operates 1,800 restaurants in the United States and Canada, serving more than 400 million meals a year to over 170,000 people.

darden.com - americana-group.com



Alshaya Group opens Chicago's Potbelly Sandwich Shop

After launching two Potbelly stores in Dubai, the first Potbelly branch opened in Kuwait in January 2012 at the Avenues Mall. Potbelly serves special sandwiches, salads, freshly baked cookies, hand dipped shakes, non-fat frozen yogurts and homemade desserts. By bringing Potbelly to Kuwait, the franchise operator, Alshaya Group, is increasing its presence even more with the latest addition of popular restaurant brands to its portfolio: The Cheesecake Factory and Shake Shack.

potbelly.com - alshaya.com

Keeping it in the family

Mishal Al Hajery manages the restaurants division of Kuwait's Al Hajery Company. A family business established in 1946, it deals in pharmaceuticals, medical and scientific equipment, perfumes and cosmetics, consumer healthcare and electronics, as well as food products and restaurants. Al Hajery was also instrumental in helping his mother, who owns The Danish Bakery, expand her business by changing the bakery's look over the last three years.



Describe The Danish Bakery's concept and growth?

In 1991, my mother created The Danish Bakery and began preparing cakes, sweets and savories using the best ingredients available. The reputation of the bakery soon spread by word-of-mouth and the bakery continued to develop its menu. We now cater for private functions and special events. Our aim was to transform our family operated business into a professional organization. The Danish Bakery has recently relocated into a bigger venue with a state-of-the-art kitchen, a retail area and a café with a private outdoor garden.

What challenges are you encountering managing the food and beverage division of such a diversified company?

Besides the common risk factors of finding the right people and training them, the main challenge, in my opinion, is to be professional from A to Z. We have to focus on our long-term goals and strategy without ever losing the personal touch that the bakery is known for. We also have to remain true to the core values my mother first developed in 1991, namely working with the best available business associates to ensure best product quality, attain client satisfaction and achieve sustainable growth.

How do you see the future of the food and beverage market in Kuwait?

I believe that the Kuwaiti food and beverage market is reaching saturation. Kuwait is home to some of the world's largest global restaurants and retail groups. The market has been filled with international franchises. It is now witnessing the emergence of a very ambitious and innovative generation of Kuwaiti restaurateurs. They have created concepts strong enough to franchise outside of Kuwait. Operating expenses are on the rise, rentals are increasing and we are now seeing a battle for the survival of the fittest. The years to come will bring the market to maturation. However, the weak will disappear and the strong will get bigger. I hope there will still be room for well-studied and properly targeted food and beverage concepts.

What are your current and future projects?

Our first development phase is to expand The Danish Bakery in Kuwait and adapt the concept to malls and other public venues. Phase two will see the development of our franchise in the GCC.

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