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KUA 'AINA. This creative, fast-casual restaurant concept was established in Oahu, Hawaii in 1975 by Terry Thompson. There are three restaurants still owned by the Thompson family in Hawaii and over 20 Kua 'Aina restaurants operating under license in Japan.



They serve lava-grilled sandwiches, unique burgers and salads in a friendly and escapist atmosphere, with authentic Hawaiian-style décor and uniforms and the guests are served with the *Aloha* spirit. The name, pronounced koo-a eye-na, translates as "back country" but usually used to describe a country bumpkin. For native Hawaiians, it refers to those who respect and keep the spirit of the ancient lands alive.

It's always nice to write about those achievers in our industry that have been long time friends of ours. In this case – it's Michael Gottlieb. Kau 'Aina was launched in the UK in 2011 by Edward Bardos and Paul de Francisi. Following on that success, they are opening a 2nd location this September. Edward and Paul have been joined by Michael Gottlieb as the UK Kua 'Aina Non-Executive Chairman. The team plans to open 8-10 locations in London over the next few years and anticipate future growth in the rest of the UK and Europe.

LONDON EXPECTED TO BE TOP INTERNATIONAL DESTINATION IN 2014. In the recently released MasterCard Global Destination Cities Index, it appears London will again - for the third time in four years - have the most international visitors of any major city worldwide. Using data from 132 of the most visited cities around the world, the index found that London is projected to receive 18.7 million international visitors in 2014. The next four cities were Bangkok, Paris, Singapore and Dubai.

TGI FRIDAY'S SELLS FOR \$800 MILLION. TGI Friday's, one of the pioneers in the international expansion of full-service restaurants, has been sold by parent Carlson Restaurants, Inc. to private equity firms TriArtisan Capital Partners and Sentinel Capital Partners. The chain, which had system wide sales in 2013 of \$ 2.7 billion was sold for \$800 million.

CHINESE EQUITY FIRM BUYS PIZZA EXPRESS. One of China's largest private equity firms, Hony Capital, has acquired UK-based, **Pizza Express**, at a price that values the chain at over \$1.5 billion. This is said to be the largest restaurant transaction in the European restaurant sector in the past five years. Pizza Express has now opened over 500 stores and has 22 stores in China.

PLANNING INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION. **The Three Stooges Burger House**, owned by C3 Entertainment, has plans to expand internationally through franchising. The concept will feature American cuisine with Three Stooge videos and a main mini-stage for customer's photo opportunities with their favorite stooge ** The 17-unit, London-based, healthy fast food chain, **Leon**, has recently opened at Heathrow Airport. They have expressed intentions of planning international expansion.

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS. The 9-unit, Boston-based steakhouse operator, **Smith & Wollensky**, will be opening their first international restaurant next March in London ** with 75 units in the US, **SmallCakes** has signed their first international franchise agreement with Saud Alnuaimi, to develop three stores in the UAE ** Marbella, Spain's **La Sala** will be opening in Essex, England ... with plans to open four additional sites in the next 2 years ** Texas-based, flex-casual chain, **Mama Fu's Asian House**, plans to open 10 locations in the Middle East in the next five to eight years. The first unit will be in the UAE ** **Les Gourmets des Ternes** has opened its first international restaurant in London. This independent restaurant was opened in Paris in 1962 ** New York restaurant **Junoon** will be opening its second restaurant later this year in Dubai.

ON THE MOVE:

- **WASABI.** This UK-based, fast casual sushi chain - with 38 UK units - is opening its 2nd New York City restaurant in 2015.
- **CKE Restaurants.** As the parent to the **Carl's Jr.** and **Hardee's** restaurants, they have announced they have opened their 600th international location in Kazakhstan. The international plans call for 1,000 Carl's Jr. and Hardee's by 2017.
- **16 Handles.** They have signed a development agreement with Abu Issu Marketing and Distribution to open 150 stores in the Middle East over the next 10 years.
- **Applebee's.** They expect to open an average of seven new locations each year until 2017 in the Middle East, where they now have 34 outlets.
- **Five Guys.** They have opened their first UK unit in 2013 and hope to have 20 UK sites within end of 2014. They have acquired 11 sites so far.
- **Sukiya.** According to *Want China Times*, Zensho Holdings, Japan's largest restaurant chain operator and parent to Sukiya, has opened its first location in Taiwan. The plans are for 100 stores in Taiwan ... and this is but a part of their overall international expansion program.
- **Jamie Oliver's Italian.** According to the *Globe and Mail*, Jamie Oliver plans to expand his Jamie's Italian across Canada. He has a deal with Canadian restaurant group - King Street Food Company.
- **Wing Stop.** With 600 locations worldwide, they have just opened in Jakarta with Indonesian company PT Mega Mahadana Hadiza, with plans to open 100 locations over the next seven years.
- **Hard Rock Café.** Now owned by the Seminole Indian tribe of Florida and with 175 locations in 50 countries, they have just opened in Anchorage, Alaska.
- **Just Falafel.** This Dubai-based, international, fast casual chain - already with locations in the US - has plans to open 50 locations within the New York area.
- **Daniel Boulud.** Famed chef Boulud, with restaurants in NY, Palm Beach, Miami, Las Vegas, London and Singapore, is said to be looking for a location in his native Lyon, France.
- **Noodle Box.** This Australia-based chain opened its first restaurant in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in partnership with Al Himmah Group. They plan three more to open this year.
- **Real Madrid.** Spanish football giant Real Madrid opened the world's first Real Madrid Café in Dubai.
- **Wingstop.** This Dallas, Texas-based chain, with 640 locations worldwide, has just opened the first of 50 planned restaurants in the Philippines.
- **Ham Holy.** With four stores in Italy (Milan and Rome), they are opening their first restaurant soon in the UK.

ON THE MOVE:

- **Rossopomodoro.** The sister restaurant to Ham Holy and with eight units already in the UK - they will be opening another UK restaurant this year.
- **Big Fernand.** This French burger brand, with four stores in France, will be opening this October in London.
- **Gordon Ramsay.** His Bread Street Kitchen, a British-European themed eatery, will open in Hong Kong this fall.
- **TGI Friday's.** Now operating 63 restaurants in the UK, they have recently opened in Gloucester, England at Gloucester Quays Outlet Center.
- **Tim Horton's.** This giant Canadian coffee and doughnut chain, with 3,610 stores in Canada and 870 stores in the US, has announced plans to add 300 locations in the US over the next five years.
- **Smashburger.** With their partner, Corporacion Hamburgo, they recently opened their first restaurant in San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador. The plans are for three locations in the country over the next 2 years.
- **Gokoku.** The Japan-based restaurant company, Pierthirty, is opening this sushi and Japanese food eatery in Hawaii this October. Pierthirty owns 130 restaurants in Japan.
- **Kanada-Ya.** This Japanese ramen restaurant will be opening their third restaurant worldwide, when they open in central London this August. They hope to expand further across London and Europe.
- **Rebel by STK.** This will be the name of the casual dining version of the premium steakhouse STK chain, when it opens soon in London. STK is part of the New York-based hospitality firm, The One Group, led by Englishman Jonathan Segal. They expect to open 50 worldwide sites under STK brand and 100-150 Rebels.
- **Chez Sushi.** Currently with two outlets in the UAE and a new franchise in Bahrain, they have partnered with Oman Holdings International to open in Muscat.
- **Fatburger/Buffalo's Café.** An agreement has been signed with Eftech Lifestyle SDN BHD to open 10 cobranded locations in Singapore.
- **Cheesecake Factory.** They have signed an exclusive licensing agreement with Hong-Kong-based Maxim's Caterers Ltd. to develop at least 14 restaurants over the next 10 years in Hong Kong, Taiwan, China and Macau.
- **Pie Face.** Landmark Hospitality has entered into an exclusive franchise agreement with Pie Face Holdings to launch and operate over 100 of the pizza specialty cafes in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain over the next ten years.
- **Galito's.** Tablez Food Company has announced a franchise agreement with this South African casual dining chain to open 25 stores in India and the UAE over the next five years.

WORLD'S MOST EXPENSIVE CITIES FOR DINING OUT. According to new research by TripAdvisor, they have determined the most expensive cities in the world for an average evening meal for two with wine:



1. Stockholm, Sweden - \$172.11
2. Oslo, Norway - \$156.82
3. Sydney, Australia - \$124.77
4. London, England - \$123.22
5. Helsinki, Finland - \$113.97



QUOTABLE QUOTES: As a typical Gemini, I'll admit often getting out of focus. Its always good - particularly in the restaurant business - to recall the famous quote of Pulitzer prize winner, Herbert Bayard Swope: "I cannot give you the formula for success, but I can give you the formula for failure, which is - try to please everybody."

KOREA'S GIANT "CAFFE BENE." This coffee chain launched in Korea in 2008 and has now close to 1,300 stores in Korea and China. With the name *bene*, the Italian word for good, they created an Old World, relaxed, European ambiance.



In addition to coffees and tea, they feature breakfast waffles, pastries and Korean honey bread. They entered the US in 2012, with New Jersey and New York as their initial expansion area ...and plans to add 180 stores in the area over next three years. Their aggressive US expansion plans are to create through franchising a coffee chain as well known in this country as **Starbucks** and **Dunkin' Donuts**.



PIE IN THE RUSSIAN SKIES. The Russian fast food chain, **Dodo Pizza**, is offering pizza delivery by drone. Typically, a pizza agent in an orange vest will be at a local park taking orders from hungry students. A bit later, a tiny copter comes into view and lowers a pizza to the customer, on a piece of extended rope. The company, headquartered in the northern Russian city of Syktyvkar, hopes to expand delivery by drone to 18 other northern Russian cities, flying pizzas to beaches and university campuses.

POTPOURRI: Starbucks plans to put wireless charging stations on tabletops and counters in all its US shops. Eventually, all company-operated Starbucks stores will offer wireless charging ** Despite its uneven political climate and a political environment that has grown tense over recent months, a new report by The NPD Group, which provides global foodservice market research, finds that quick-serve brands are finding success in Russia. The 7 percent increase in foodservice visits in Russia in the last quarter of 2013 makes it number 1 in traffic growth among the nations NPD tracks ** Spain-based **100 Montaditos** has appointed Francisco Javier Cernuda as CEO of its American restaurants. Currently operating 300 restaurant worldwide, they have 16 operating in the US ** The 25th annual Restaurant Finance & Development Conference will be held this November 10-12 at the Bellagio Hotel, Las Vegas. Check it out at: www.restfinance.com/RFDC ** **Burger King** continues to expand its web-or phone- based delivery system. It started in Washington, DC in 2012 and is now operating in over a dozen major US markets ** We're delighted to report that our friend, Ned Lyerly, has been appointed to the newly created post of President of CKE Restaurants (operator of **Carl's Jr.** and **Hardee's**) international division. Ned has been with CKE for three decades.

BRAZIL'S - "VIVENDA do CAMARAO." This fast-casual shrimp chain, Brazil's first seafood chain, opened its first restaurant in Sao Paulo in 1984. Now operating 161 stores across Brazil and Paraguay, they have just opened their third US location in Boca Raton, Florida ... where they are known under the English translation of **Shrimp House**.



They will serve only imported, farm-raised shrimp from Brazil. More than 20 dishes are priced under \$12, from traditional Brazilian dishes with rice and shredded potato chips or french fries. They have plans for major international expansion.

NATIONAL RESTAURANT AWARDS. In this seventh year of the UK *Restaurant Magazine* awards to the Top 100 Restaurants in the UK, just made on June 30, we are delighted to furnish the Top Five:

1. **Gymkhana**
2. **The Clove Club**
3. **The Ledbury** (again)
4. **The Hand and Flowers**
5. **Pollen Street Social**

The voting panel is made up of 150 restaurateurs, chefs, food critics and journalists.

TORONTO'S - "SIGNS RESTAURANT AND BAR." This restaurant employing members of the deaf community opens soon in Toronto, Canada. The diners will have assistance from a booklet illustrating how to sign menu items. They will serve contemporary Canadian and international dishes. The restaurant owner hopes the restaurant will be a place where not only the deaf can work and dine but also a place for the hearing to learn about the deaf community.



A WEE BIT OF HUMOR: It was mealtime during a flight on a British Airways plane: "Would you like dinner?" the flight attendant asked the man seated in the front row. "What are my choices?" the man asked. "Yes or no," she replied.



SOUTH AFRICA'S - "OCEAN BASKET." In 1995, brothers Fats and George Lazarides, together with partner George Nichas, opened their first seafood restaurant, **Ocean Basket**, in Pretoria, South Africa. There are now 176 franchised outlets throughout nine countries in Africa, Europe and Dubai.

The concept is based on "bringing seafood to the man on the street." They have plans to almost double their store numbers to 300 by 2017, as it rolls out a plan to grow its footprint locally and internationally.

RECOMMENDED READING: For many of us, *The Economist* is must reading ... for its weekly and astute reviews of world affairs. The latest issue (July 19-25) has a provocative article on page 29 on "food names" that is worthy of your consideration.