

Ocean Basket breaks onto new shores, refreshes offering

Ocean Basket comes of age this year, bringing massive transformation and an exciting new journey for both franchisees and the consumer - a journey that promises brand longevity and exceptional growth for the local brand that has successfully taken to the highly competitive global stage...

In 1995 Ocean Basket democratised seafood. It took something that had been out of the reach of the man on the street and made it accessible to all. It was different, fresh, fun and relaxed. Simplicity was the glue that held it all together.

Most importantly, it was uncompromising: only the best was good enough for its customers and the brand was founded on an obsession to serve, to create happiness and to see people uplift themselves; that innate generosity that still exists today.

SA fell in love with the brand, both for what it brought to the consumer and what it offered the business owner or franchisee.

From one store in Menlyn, Pretoria, in 1995, Ocean Basket today is a franchise consisting of 203 stores in 16 countries, including Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Malta and Cyprus, with expansion plans firmly in place for a further 76 stores, many breaking into new markets in Kazakhstan, Oman and Qatar.

The group imports and supplies 6,500 tons of seafood each year to stores globally.

This operation needed a leader whose expertise lay in business, innovative thinking and people productivity. Enter Grace Harding who says the brief to her was simple: Focus on partners' success and build a loved and respected brand.



Harding says: “From day one we wanted to create opportunities and to help contribute to an entrepreneurial culture in SA. The success of every single store and its owner is what we focus on. This success is coupled with a determination to build a brand globally. Trusted, consistent, relevant and distinctive.”

With this objective has come much change. The entire offering is being refreshed, with the foundation intrinsics firmly in place: “We are driven by success – the success of our franchisee/licencee partners – and being relevant to all of our stakeholders. Our aim is to be the brand of choice; the employer of choice; the business of choice and the seafood restaurant of choice.”

At the core of this new strategy is the franchisee: “We need to ensure the success of our franchisees by creating a globally relevant and meaningful brand and systems and infrastructure that supports them. That is the primary responsibility of a franchisor.”



This month sees the launch of a new CI, innovative menus, new food offerings and a contemporary new in-store design.

Ocean Basket stores attract high volumes of foot traffic, serving more than 18 million customers annually, which means they’re able to turn tables quickly: “This ensures high turnover for our operators, so we’ve designed stores for longevity and the ability to adapt to the specific needs of the target market, making them easy to maintain and robust enough to handle the foot traffic.”

Ocean Basket marketing lead Jean Sloane adds: “Our new look stores are modular and modern without losing the charm and simplicity that have driven the brand’s success over the years.



“Our menu and stores cater for a variety of dining needs, from a casual lunch with friends, to a quick sushi meal or a large family celebration, ensuring that our stores are busy throughout the day.”

Sloane explains that the company’s focus on one core protein – seafood – has allowed its operations to be uncomplicated and easily managed, complying with the highest health and safety standards: “More than 20 years of focused experience has helped us to refine our system, creating simplicity and easy-to-deliver delicious meals.”

Harding sums it up: “Everything we do is about sustainability. For two years we have been setting the foundation in place, creating the right infrastructure and making sure that our franchisees will succeed into the future. Now is our time.”

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