

Script: “Trending Egyptian Food Brands”

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*MUSIC: FADE IN: Sophonic Media-Powerful Inspirational Music. (0-45 seconds from the start of the soundtrack)*

Food businesses have recorded a remarkable growth throughout the last decade and many evolved into big chains. This growth included the introduction of new cuisines that have not been very common in Egypt. What is distinct about the food market that it does not require a big budget at the launching phase.

*Sameh El Sadat (SS): “When we started in 2008, each one of us invested around 100,000 pounds.” (:05)*

This is Sameh El Sadat, a co-founder of T.B.S. ( The Bakery Shop), telling the story that began in 2008. (In the middle of the SB).

*SS: “Which for us today, eh, when we look back, it seems to be a very small amount compared to how the business has grown now selling for over 100 million.” (:09)*

T.B.S. is not just the abbreviation of The Bakery Shop. It bears the first letters of the three founder’s names, who are Tarek El Nazer, Basel Mashhour, and Sameh El Sadat, who themselves thought of the items that distinguishes their brand till now.

*SS: “So at the beginning, it was a little bit expenses to put people on board with very high, you know, retainers and stuff, so we did it ourselves with the help of friends and family members who know how to do designs.” (:13)*

On the other hand, some food outlets can even start as home-based businesses.

*Suleima Ben Halim (SH): “When we first started... All of this started with 300 daily and that was at the beginning, when we were first launching. When we started, it was my mom’s old kitchen machine, some ingredients we went and bought from a store near us, and just some old family recipes. And, this is how it started. So I think to start something from the house is very easy but to build it up and to open an outlet, you would need financials.” (:19)*

That is how Suleima Ben Halim has quickly started two years ago Nino’s, a pastry shop specialized in Cupcakes in the Sixth of October that is one of Cairo’s decent suburbs.

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Studio One - Lights. (0-35 from the start of the soundtrack)*

However, Sameh think that opening a food outlet demands a lot of effort and planning, which can make it sometimes a bit difficult.

*SH: "First of all, it requires investment, and it requires operational know-how. It require also finding locations, which is not very easy, keeping locations relatively in line with the sales level so that the operation can be profitable." (:20)*

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Studio One - Lights. (0-35 from the start of the soundtrack)*

Creativity is the key for most food outlets to succeed and to get a wide reputation. Mori Sushi has been the first to take the initiative and risk of introducing the sushi market to Egypt.

*Mireille Aziz (MA): "They have chosen the sushi because they believe that it's not a familiar cuisine, the Japanese, the sushi, you know, it's a Japanese cuisine, so it's not familiar in Egypt. We were the first that introduced sushi in Egypt, so, when, especially Egypt when you get something new, it gets the buzz immediately." (:12)*

*NAT SOUND: Knife cutting food.*

That's why Mori Sushi had to do some effort to appeal to the Egyptian customers by coping with their taste.

*MA: "As you know people, people in Egypt don't eat the raw thing, we (and) sushi is all about raw, raw fish, raw tuna, and so on. So we tried to play a little bit around it and make it a little bit fried, and make some spices, some sauces, Teriyaki sauce. And, we played with the Japanese spices, not the Egyptian spices." (:27)*

Mireille Aziz, marketing specialist at Mori Co., describes that they also manage to preserve the original ingredients and taste.

*MA: "Actually, we are still importing some stuff because in Egypt, we don't have all the materials, so yes we do import some stuff." (:9)*

*MUSIC: FADE-IN: Studio One - Barcelona Nights. ( 0-35 from the start of the soundtrack)*

Croissant is very popular in Egypt but it used to be available in pastry shops and cafes in a very plain form. T.B.S. was the first to specialize in croissant, and western bakeries.

*SS: "We wanted to attribute new croissant to the market. That's why we wanted to make sure that people understand that we can provide them with the product, that when they travel abroad to France or anywhere, they will find similar croissant in Egypt." (:21)*

The taste of their baked doughnuts is phenomenal, and attracted many who didn't prefer doughnuts so much.

*SS: "Initially, we started with two kinds of chocolate, ehh, the brown chocolate and the white chocolate. And, we used to get very high-quality ingredients from abroad, like from Belgium, from Germany. Very high quality*

*chocolates. Customers' response was very good, so we kept it and we have always been known for having these good doughnuts in our shops" (:25)*

*NAT SOUND: The oven finishing the baking and getting closed.*

On the other hand, it has been the first shop in Egypt that gives the chance to its customers to customize their own sandwiches, getting bread freshly baked in front of them, along with other bakeries.

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Alumo - Positive Feeling. (0-25 from the start of the soundtrack)*

Nino's is not just a business for Suleima, who is an undergraduate student at the American University In Cairo, as she is in the first place passionate about baking.

*NAT SOUND: The dough mixer.*

*SH: "We base our cake ideas on our clients' hobbies, their passion, the stuff they love, and we take that and we try to collaborate all their hobbies and interests and love into one cake or into something that we will represent them, and they will see themselves in it." (:21)*

*NAT SOUND: The jars and bags of decorating material.*

Nino's Kitchen has plenty of decorating material, as cupcakes should not just have a delicious taste. They need to have a very beautiful icing and design, which requires special skills.

*SH: "In baking, you don't necessarily need a background. You just develop it over time. For the decorating, you don't need a background but you need to be creative, to be in one way or another, you need to be an artist. You need to have a sense of art within you because if you don't, then you will not be able to create a beautiful cake or you will not be able to play along the creativity of cake. You're just gonna have a normal cake." (:24)*

Cupcakes was first introduced in Egypt by Nola Cupcakes in 2011, but have later spread all over pastry shops.

There are now many brands and home-based businesses that offer exclusively cupcakes, which has inspired Suleima of the idea.

*SH: "It is a new market, not like before, it wasn't much of a thing. Like in the past, you have cakes, regular cakes, you go pick a custom cake from the book and you get it. But now, because I think in the past you did not have so many options. You didn't have so many flavors to put into cupcake and have so many pies and custom cakes created on your own. This wasn't there." (:28)*

*MUSIC: FADE IN: Sophonic Media - Powerful Inspirational Music. (0-25 from the start of the soundtrack)*

The best fact about these creative Egyptian food chains is that they were developed by skillful and aspiring Egyptian chefs.

*SS: "There is a lot of talent in Egypt and there is a lot of people who can provide you with a good service."*

(:4)

For Mori Sushi, the challenge was much higher, as modifying an original recipe to be compatible with the prevalent taste is not easy in terms of getting a wonderful outcome.

*MA: "We have almost 120 chefs in Mori for the sushi. Of course at the beginning, we had Japanese and we still have some of them here but you know the Egyptians know how to do things. They, they.. We have a very good number of Egyptian chefs, who know exactly how to roll." (:22)*

MUSIC: FADE IN: Studio One - Barcelona Nights. (0-30 from the start of the soundtrack)

Nevertheless, the real reason behind the success of food business in Egypt is that food is an integral feature in the Egyptian culture.

*SH: " Arab World, food is a priority. It is one of the most important things, especially family gatherings.*

*You will never find a family gathering on juice or just gathering. It has to have food." (:9)*

Therefore, it is easy to predict that there will be many upcoming food outlets that can succeed and enjoy a wide reputation, which contributes to the diversification and modernization of the food sector and cuisines in Egypt.

This documentary was produced by Noha El Tawil for the Audio Production course at the American University In Cairo taught by Professor Kim Fox in Spring 2015.

Music credits go to Studio One for Lights and Barcelona Nights, to Basspartout for digital dreams, to Sophonic Media for powerful Inspirational Music, and to Alumo for The Positive Feeling.