

Building a new brand – Mediterranean style

(November 2006) Irish architecture, design and project management company Douglas Wallace has completed designs for a new Greek food brand. Body Fuel is a chain of multi-format restaurants set to rapidly expand both in Athens and further afield. The opening of the latest format, Body Fuel Lounge, has caused quite a stir in recent weeks.

The brainchild of the Body Fuel brand, Greek entrepreneur Marcellos Kerasato chose to develop this new brand with Douglas Wallace, a progressive practice with offices currently in Dublin, Galway and London specialising in retail leisure, commercial and residential environments. The Body Fuel project was undertaken by Douglas Wallace's London studio.

The vision for the Body Fuel brand creation was to follow the lead shown by Pret a Manger in the United Kingdom. Kerasato developed a multi format strategy that includes take-away offers in downtown locations through to eat-in restaurants located in health clubs and destination leisure venues.

Douglas Wallace is a dynamic, exciting and exceptionally creative company who have seen enormous success in both the Irish and European markets over recent years. Hugh Wallace is Chief Executive of Douglas Wallace. 'The scale and depth of our team now allows us to compete effectively for international projects. We are currently working on exciting and challenging projects in countries such as Greece, Latvia, Malta, and Poland', he says. "We are increasingly recognised for good design work that adds a competitive edge to our clients' business in both traditional and emerging International markets".

Marcellos Kerasato studied Hospitality in Switzerland in the late 1990's. Upon his return to Greece he quickly recognised that, although the Mediterranean country is a nation revered for its cuisine and culinary delicacies, no business was offering contemporary fast food in a healthy way. "The Greek food market is very much a growth industry", he says. "Yet there is nothing in the way of good quality branded food offers. I wanted to create something for 21st century Greek society. Body Fuel offers good quality food and service in a friendly and fresh environment. Each format has been designed to be modern and pleasantly affordable. These values are what tie the multi-format structure together – it fits in very well with contemporary Mediterranean lifestyle", he says.

The Body Fuel brand, pitched as an exclusive, stylish and upmarket offer, sees particular value in the design of each restaurant. Every design is created to give each individual location a sense of individuality and personality whilst retaining the key Body Fuel brand values.

Body Fuel in its current guise is aimed specifically at the Greek market but Kerasato has definite plans for international expansion in the near future. He recently signed a lucrative deal which sees Body Fuel partner the Holmes Place healthclub brand. "As part of the company strategy I am keen to continue my relationship with Holmes Place and other major healthclubs

around Europe. I see the health club location is very compatible with the Body Fuel offer”, Kerasato says.

Sue Wheldon, an Architect and Strategic Development Director of Douglas Wallace, worked closely with Marcellos Kerasato since he originally conceived the Body Fuel concept. Sue has spent much of her career working in the retail and leisure sectors – specialising in the strategy and creation of branded environments for international clients. “What is powerful about Marcellos is that he is building his relatively new brand, aiming at a 21st Century market”, she says. “His keen awareness of the importance of design has resulted in the creation of stylish yet affordable environments. For him the quality of design is as important as that of his food and drink and that is sure to place him head and shoulders above his competition”.

The development of Body Fuel Lounge is a departure from the original ‘fast-food’ outlets. “The Lounge format is aimed at a market which is crying out for a stylish venue to hang out for lunch, tea, cocktails or evening dinner. Body Fuel Lounge is seen as the new flagship for all the formats”.

Kerasato saw the choice of location for the Lounges as fundamental to their success. The location of the first Body Fuel Lounge was strategically chosen in the new Athens Mall recently developed by Lamda. “Athens Mall has become a magnet for people from all over Greece and is very entertainment orientated. I saw the Mall as an ideal location for the flagship Lounge – it is quickly becoming a popular attraction for everyone in Athens and the surrounding areas”, Kerasato notes.

The Lounge format has been given a stylish, contemporary design treatment building on the original colours and material palette of the Body Fuel brand. This palette derives for the most part from the notion of nature – a theme reflected both spatially and via Body Fuel’s food offer. The use of aubergine, lime green and natural materials give each individual restaurant a contemporary twist. Earthy materials reflecting the Greek landscape such as the use of orange, olive, wood and slate is a theme that remains consistent across all formats.

Kerasato is about to launch Body Fuel Grill which will offer healthy, cooked food offered in a more funky, youthful take on the Body Fuel identity and potentially aimed at the cinema-going crowd.

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