



FRANCHISE FOCUS

How Paris Baguette CEO plans to open 1,000 US locations



Editor's note: This is a series focusing on a specific franchises. If you think your franchise should be featured, email Cherryh at CherryhC@networldmediagroup.com

While conducting market research over two years throughout Asia in search of new territories for Le Pain Quotidien, CEO Jack Moran stumbled onto Paris Baguette, a fast casual bakery that had been serving breads, pastries and cakes since it opened in 1942, in Seoul, South Korea.

"I was knocked out by the quality and breadth of the baked goods selection," said Moran, who first discovered Paris Baguette in Singapore and encountered it again in Seoul. He was so knocked out that he accepted the role of Paris Baguette's CEO last year after spending nearly 11 years in various leadership positions at Le Pain, ending his tenure there as CEO.

"The strength of the cake category really blew me away," he said about the brand that has 75 units in the U.S. but more than 3,000 locations throughout France, Korea, Singapore, Vietnam and China. He's come on board to grow the U.S. footprint, planning to open at least 1,000 U.S. stores by 2030, with 38 opening this year.

"(When) I learned that the company wanted to grow aggressively in the U.S. I saw this as an amazing opportunity and wanted to be a part of it, so I made sure I was involved," Moran said. "Our 2019 growth goal is to increase our U.S. cafe count by 50 percent and to increase the number of U.S. franchised cafes by 120 percent.

In order to grow the footprint, the chain will first have to increase the brand's awareness in the U.S., which is one reason it has recently launched a mobile app.

"Consumers rely on mobile apps for so much today, and our participation in the digital world will make the introduction to new locations, menu items, and special promotions without a customer even having to walk through the door," Moran said about the app developed in partnership with Punchh, an app company based in San Mateo, California. "Our regular Paris Baguette guests know exactly what they want, and many prefer to have their order waiting for them when they arrive. They want the ease of ordering and paying on their phone and the new app has to the ability to execute this service."

The app will also help the company expand its reach beyond the new store locations.

"As we open more Paris Baguette locations, we create more regular guest visits," Moran said. "This expands our customer base and creates more app users."



Catering to U.S. guests

Moran admitted that international expansion isn't easy, describing it as time-consuming, inefficient, frustrating and involving a lot of hard work.

"You and your management team cannot be afraid of jet-lag or being away from home for extended periods of time," he said. "However, the rewards, both spiritual and financial, can be vast — if you are up for the challenge. One must have an appetite for international expansion in order to pursue it."

Another important factor is learning what your new guests want. As far as the U.S. menu goes, Moran said the chain's baked goods and cake business is already robust, so the focus will be on developing more savory options for both breakfast and lunch.

"Some of the product selection in the Eastern markets cater a bit more to Asian tastes, but the general experience in both Europe and Asia are the same," said Moran, which should prove true for U.S. customers.

Not content to put all his eggs in one bread basket, Moran and his team will also introduce U.S. customers to a more upscale version of Paris Baguette — Maison de PB — which is on target to make its debut with two Singapore locations by the end of the year.

"Our goal is to have one or two in all of the major global cities in which we do business," he said. "Consequently, we are looking to open one in Manhattan in 2020."