

Trimaran Capital Partners Agrees to Acquire El Pollo Loco

2005-09-28

Trimaran Capital Partners announced today it has entered into a definitive agreement to purchase El Pollo Loco, the nation's leading quick-service restaurant chain specializing in marinated, flame-grilled chicken and other Mexican-inspired entrees, from American Securities Capital Partners L.P.

The transaction, whose value was not disclosed, is expected to close during the fourth quarter.

El Pollo Loco's management team, headed by President and CEO, Stephen E. Carley, will continue in their current positions and will be investors in the transaction.

Headquartered in Irvine, California, El Pollo Loco, Spanish for "The Crazy Chicken," currently has 328 restaurants located in California, Arizona, Nevada and Texas and a strong pipeline of Company-owned and franchise restaurant commitments in California, Colorado, Illinois, New England, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Texas and Washington, D.C. By offering a broad menu of chicken-based, health conscious lunch and dinner items, El Pollo Loco restaurants appeal to a wide range of customers, diverse in age, income, location and ethnic makeup.

"We are strong believers in the demographic trends supporting this segment of the restaurant industry," said Andrew Heyer, a co-founder and Managing Partner at Trimaran Capital Partners. "El Pollo Loco represents an exciting opportunity to invest in a company with a significant position and brand loyalty in its existing markets and attractive growth prospects in new markets. These strengths are underscored by America's evolving preference for ethnic food, trends in home meal replacement and trends towards healthy eating, and the growth of the U.S. Hispanic population."

"In addition, this investment exemplifies Trimaran's investment strategy, as we partner with El Pollo Loco's 'dream team' of managers who have done an exceptional job of growing this concept. Together, we look forward to accelerating the chain's growth as we seek to bring the authentic and healthy choices offered by El Pollo Loco to more of the U.S."

"Trimaran has an excellent track record of pinpointing key trends that serve as exciting growth engines," said Mr. Carley. "We believe Trimaran's operating experience in the restaurant, Hispanic and health food sectors will complement our team as we work together to grow the exciting El Pollo Loco concept to the next level."

According to Technomic, Inc., Hispanic food is the leading ethnic cuisine measured in sales. The ethnic food category is growing at 4-6% annually, far outpacing the 2% overall industry growth rate. Three-quarters of ethnic food spending comes from mainstream America, rather than core ethnic consumers. In addition, the percentage of dollars spent on food away from home is expected to increase from 46.7% in 2004 to 53.0% by 2010, according to the National Restaurant Association.

Trimaran Capital Partners has succeeded in utilizing similar investment themes in the past. Trimaran currently owns Charlie Brown's, a leading casual steak restaurant chain in the Northeast, that possesses a similar growth strategy of extending a dominant regional concept into new markets. Another Trimaran portfolio company, Urban Brands, Inc., is the operator of Marianne, founded in 1969, a leading retailer of misses and plus-size women's apparel and accessories for Hispanic women. Similarly, Trimaran's interest in healthy food and healthy eating dates to its founding of The Hain Celestial Group, a leading natural and organic beverage, snack, specialty food and personal care products company in North America and Europe with well-known brands such as Celestial Seasonings(R) and Terra Chips(R).

About El Pollo Loco

El Pollo Loco, pronounced "L Po-yo Lo-co" and Spanish for "The Crazy Chicken," is the nation's leading quick-service restaurant chain specializing in flame-grilled chicken and other Mexican inspired entrees. Founded in Guasave, Mexico in 1975, El Pollo Loco's long-term success stems from the unique preparation of its award-winning "pollo" -- fresh chicken marinated in a special recipe of herbs, spices and citrus juices passed down from the founding family. The marinated chicken is then flame-grilled, hand cut and served hot off the grill with warm tortillas and a wide assortment of side dishes and salsas prepared fresh every day. Rounding out the menu are fresh flavorful entrees inspired by the kitchens of Mexico, including Signature Grilled Burritos, Pollo Bowls, Pollo Salads, Tacos al Carbon and Quesadillas. And of course, there is a fresh salsa bar featuring El Pollo Loco's famous House Salsa, alongside its Avocado, Chipotle and Pico de Gallo salsas. All are made fresh daily.

About Trimaran Capital Partners

Trimaran is a private asset management firm, headquartered in New York, with assets under management and committed capital in excess of \$3 billion. Since 1995, Trimaran has completed 60 private equity investments totaling over \$1.3 billion of equity capital. Trimaran partners with outstanding management teams that lead companies with strong growth prospects, as evidenced by the fact that four of its portfolio companies -- ITC Holdings Corp.; Reddy Ice Group, Inc.; Accuride Corporation; and FreightCar America, Inc. -- have had successful IPOs since April 2005. Trimaran's restaurant and consumer portfolio companies include: Charlie Brown's Inc., a leading, casual steakhouse chain with 58 units in the Northeast; Fortunoff, a retailer of fine jewelry and home furnishings in the New York area; Urban Brands, Inc., operator of two specialty apparel concepts, Marianne and Ashley Stewart, that primarily sell plus-sized apparel and accessories for Hispanic and African-American women; and Reddy Ice Group, Inc., the nation's largest producer of packaged ice. Previous Trimaran investments include Golden State Foods, one of the oldest and largest suppliers to restaurants and franchisees of the

McDonald's Corporation, and Domino's, Inc., the leading pizza delivery company in the United States.

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

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