

## Sophie's Cuban Cuisine Opens First Franchised Restaurant

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Sophie's Cuban Cuisine Franchising, Inc. announced today that their first franchisee, Tom Chamberlain of Hayworth, NJ, has opened the first franchised Sophie's Cuban Cuisine restaurant.

Tom's restaurant is at 141 Fulton Street in downtown Manhattan, NY. Mr. Chamberlain, who had a long executive career with Affinia Hospitality Group, said: 'After spending my whole professional career in the Hotel Business, the opportunity to join an established family business in a strong emerging lunch concept was quite appealing. I have been encouraged by the positive early response from the local population and office workers. This association with the Sophie's brand should provide financial independence for me and my family.'

Sofia Luna, co-founder and President of Sophie's, said that the first franchises would be granted to qualified candidates in New York City so that their restaurants would have the benefit of Sophie's strong brand equity in New York as well as close hands-on guidance. She is confident that the Sophie's concept will soon appeal to people in high traffic locations across the country. Sofia says that franchisees will be selected carefully so that the chain will always retain its family feel. 'Tom met all of our key criteria for acceptance as one of our first franchisees. His passion for our food and his strong service orientation fit right in with our culture. We look forward to a long and mutually rewarding relationship with him.'

Sophie's Cuban Cuisine restaurants have been delighting hungry lunchtime crowds since 1997 when the Luna family opened their first restaurant in Lower Manhattan near the World Trade Center.

Sophie's features the best of the leading current restaurant trends in one restaurant, tasty 'comfort food' with a Cuban neighborhood feel, freshly made, healthy foods, a fast cafeteria-style line where guests see what they will be eating, and superior customer service where everyone is treated like a friend or neighbor. Take out and delivery orders represent a large portion of overall sales.

The restaurants offer freshly made, savory, authentic Cuban specialties such as Ropa Vieja (Shredded Beef Stew), Camarón al Ajillo (Shrimps In Garlic Sauce), Maduros (Fried Sweet Plantains), Papa Rellena (Mashed Potatoes Stuffed With Ground Beef Stew), Ox Tail Stew, plenty of Arroz con Frijoles (Rice and Beans), and of course, the traditional Cuban Sandwich.

Luna estimates that initial development costs for a Sophie's in New York City range from \$365,000 to \$ 611,000 (including the Initial Franchise Fee and excluding real property) depending on factors such as the size and shape of the space and whether it had previous restaurant use.

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