

Consolidated Restaurant Operations Opens First Cantina Laredo and El Chico Restaurants in United Arab Emirates  
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Consolidated Restaurant Operations, Inc. (CRO) announced today the openings of the first Cantina Laredo and El Chico restaurants in United Arab Emirates. El Chico opened at Jumeirah Beach Residence in Dubai, the world's largest single-phase mixed use development with 25,000 residents in 40 towers along the prestigious Dubai Marina. Cantina Laredo opened at Khalidiyah Mall in Abu Dhabi, the capital of UAE.

The restaurants are the first of more than 100 CRO locations planned to open in the Middle East region.

During 2006, Dallas-based CRO entered into a 105 restaurant development agreement with Saleh Bin Lahej Group, a well-regarded foodservice operator based in Dubai. Saleh bin Lahej is slated to open III Forks and Silver Fox fine-dining steakhouses in addition to Cantina Laredo and El Chico restaurants.

The opening event for El Chico and Cantina Laredo was hosted by John D. Harkey Jr., CEO Consolidated Restaurant Operations and Mohamed Saleh Bin Lahej, Vice Chairman Saleh Bin Lahej Group. Dignitaries and partners were among invitees for the first meal at the Mexican restaurant.

Commenting on their decision to partner with Saleh Bin Lahej in the region, Mr. Harkey said, "Over the past 10 years, the Saleh Bin Lahej Group has had tremendous success with a number of international franchises. Their experience, combined with the region's exponential growth and demand for choice and innovation, makes the partnership with Saleh Bin Lahej a very attractive and significant decision for us."

El Chico is the iconic Tex-Mex, family-oriented restaurant with a heritage dating back to 1940. The authentic and colorful restaurant caters to families looking for freshly-prepared, original-recipe, savory Mexican food in a welcoming, casual atmosphere.

The varied menu of El Chico features signature Top Shelf tastes and traditional Mexican dishes including everything from fajita, enchiladas and burritos to Sirloin & Camarones.

Cantina Laredo offers gourmet Mexican cuisine, and caters to patrons looking for a more sophisticated dining experience. Cantina Laredo offers vibrant contemporary dining that rewards guests with a gourmet taste of Mexico. The restaurant also boasts authentic in-house sauces and incomparable table-side preparation of various dishes.

Originated in 1984, Cantina Laredo is the premier brand in the gourmet Mexican dining market. Since 2002, Cantina Laredo has grown from two restaurants in Dallas to 26 restaurants in six U.S., Cairo, Egypt and now UAE. Cantina Laredo is the largest gourmet Mexican restaurant concept in the United States.

"The partnership between the Saleh Bin Lahej Group and CRO has given the region its first authentic taste of Mexican cuisine. We pride ourselves in bringing true taste sensations to the region for over a decade and El Chico Cafe and Cantina Laredo add their unique personalities and flavors to our expanding portfolio of restaurants," commented Mohammed Saleh Bin Lahej, Vice Chairman, Saleh Bin Lahej Group.

"The UAE is one of a number of locations where we plan to launch El Chico and Cantina Laredo over the coming seven years, including all the other Emirates, Egypt, Pakistan, Malaysia and Brunei to name but a few," commented Osama Salhin, President Saleh Bin Lahej Group.

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