



THE MARKET

Primi Piatti is one of those brands that defy classification. Although both the name and the menu are Italian, it is not simply another pizza chain. Nor is it characterised by red and white checked tablecloths or posters of Italy. Instead it is an opportunity to share the Zanasi family's passion. Passion for food, for service, and for exceeding expectations. It is an opportunity to share in their "urban energy". Primi Piatti is the embodiment of this passion, a fierce determination to do things better than anyone else. It is evident in every aspect of the brand, from the front of house staff to the restaurant design, the food and the marketing. It is so much a part of the Primi philosophy that "Work is love made visible" is emblazoned across the backs of bright orange overalls worn by all the staff.

As Francesco Zanasi puts it: "When I die I don't want to be remembered for having run a restaurant, I want to be remembered for having changed people's lives, having made a difference".

ACHIEVEMENTS

While most restaurant or franchise owners would characterise their success in terms of total turnover or number of branches opened or return on investment, Francesco's approach is quite different. He sees his greatest achievement as empowering the hundreds of people that have passed through the Primi family.

The Primi approach has been to turn a traditionally unionised and unmotivated labour force into a performance driven team by empowering the individual and creating a goal-driven reward structure. In so doing Primi has virtually rewritten the rules on running a restaurant in South Africa. They have demonstrated that passion starts from within, and that by empowering even the most junior member of staff you can create a dynamic and unrivalled energy. In so doing, they have come up

with a business model that is not reliant on low input costs, in particular cheap labour, traditionally the mainstay of the hospitality industry. The results are self-evident—strong franchise growth and a group turnover that last year exceeded R150 million.

Another source of pride is the adoption of HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points), a stringent hygiene and food safety programme used by leading food manufacturers. Working jointly with Swift Micro Laboratories and the CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research), Primi Piatti aims to become the world's first HACCP accredited restaurant franchise by the end of 2005.

HISTORY

A chance holiday in Cape Town was the start of a life-long love affair. The Zanasi family decided to relocate and the popular Nino's restaurant on Greenmarket Square was born. Nino's rapidly became a Cape Town institution, with father and brothers constantly trying to outdo each other. (Even today, they prefer to use each other as yardsticks of quality and performance.)

One of the regulars at Nino's was Peter Castle, who had himself owned a number of restaurants over the years. He recognised the raw passion and

energy that was the foundation of Nino's success. The two pooled their resources, and Primi Piatti was born—a combination of Peter's business and financial acumen and the Zanasi family's passion for food and service.

Right from the outset the goal was to create a dining experience that they could replicate. To achieve this they looked at every single aspect of the business, making processes simpler and more robust without sacrificing the passion and commitment that comes from the personal touch.

The first store to open was at the Cape Town Waterfront. The two existing Nino's branches were quickly incorporated into the group, and a fourth store opened in Constantia in 2000. They were now ready to extend the concept to other centres, and the first completely franchised operation was opened in Rosebank at the beginning of 2001.

Stores in Durban, Bloemfontein, Pretoria, Johannesburg and Botswana followed, and by the end of 2004 there were 16 Primi Piatti restaurants nationally, 12 of which are franchise operations.

THE PRODUCT

Although Primi is a franchise operation, it is no ordinary franchise. As Francesco puts it: "It's our





name on the door, and we won't allow anyone to mess with that name".

When you join the Primi family it's a commitment. An investment of both time and money. Franchisees must commit to a hands-on involvement in the daily running of the business and at least two franchisees are required to sign the franchise document—one to manage the kitchen and the other to take responsibility for the front of house. It's not for the faint-hearted. As the franchise document says, Primi Piatti is at war with mediocrity. "There's no way you're going to come out alive if you don't go in there with everything you're capable of giving, and more".

So what is Primi Piatti selling? Food? No. Despite the fact that Primi Piatti is Cape Town's favourite restaurant, it is not simply in the business of selling food. It is selling a complete eating experience. Portions are generous, the atmosphere is relaxed, and the environment is stripped of all pretension.



All food is cooked on the spot, right down to the mushroom sauce. Nothing is made in advance. Nothing is reheated. (There are one or two exceptions, for example the basil pesto, which is made only from basil grown on the Zanasi family farm using seeds flown in from Liguria.)

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Primi Piatti franchise has grown by about two restaurants a year, the most recent being Hout Bay, Cape Town, which opened on Christmas Eve 2004. A new branch of Primi Piatti will open on the Cape Town foreshore early in 2005, bringing the total number of restaurants to 17.

However, Francesco stresses that they are in no rush to expand. New restaurants will only be opened when they find suitable partners; people that share their energy and enthusiasm, and are prepared to invest the same level of commitment as the founding partners.

The creation of a strong contemporary lifestyle brand has allowed for the extension of the brand to other initiatives. The Primi umbrella now includes two hotels (the Primi Royal and Primi Seacastle—situated at opposite ends of Camps Bay, Cape Town), the Primi Lab, which produces a range of foodstuffs, and Primi Life, a retail lifestyle store which sells branded gear and food products.

PROMOTION

It is perhaps an indication of the strength of the Primi brand that it has never made use of traditional advertising, preferring instead to rely on the experience of customers and the power of word-of-mouth.

Of course, that is not to say that Primi Piatti does no marketing at all. They are acutely aware of the importance of the brand, and go to extreme lengths to grow and protect the Primi name. However, they do so in a manner that is uniquely Primi.

The marketing goals are to create awareness of the Primi brand, to position Primi as an exciting and non-conventional brand, and to position Primi Piatti as a serious restaurant rather than just another chain.

The 2005 marketing strategy has three broad arms:

1. Strategic branding, to make the brand seem bigger than it is. Branding initiatives for 2005 include branded vehicles, graffiti walls, new updated signage which reflects the unique character of every restaurant, and sponsorship of key strategic events.
2. Localised promotions which focus on building a presence in the communities where Primi restaurants can be found. This includes targeted cinema advertising which will only appear in movie houses located close to a Primi Piatti restaurant. The advertisements feature Nino talking about the food, and the love that inspires every meal.



3. In-house activities which focus on the brand intrinsics, the quality behind the urban energy. In particular there is a focus on communicating the Primi Piatti restaurants' cooking techniques, staff development and training program, as well as the impending HACCP accreditation

BRAND VALUES

Simply stated, "If it's not your best effort, it's not Primi".

Primi is much more than just a logo or a name. It's not even simply good food or good service. It's the pursuit of quality in every arena. From ingredients to food preparation, kitchen hygiene to restaurant design. Everything is about being the best. That's the Primi passion!

The brand attitude is confident, unconventional, passionate and energetic. It's called urban energy, a confidence in knowing how to create the perfect dining experience.

THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT PRIMI PIATTI

- There are currently 16 branches of Primi Piatti, of which 12 are full franchises
- You can even eat at a Primi Piatti in Botswana
- There are 1,200 orange overalls currently in service
- Unlike most restaurants, all Primi Piatti's are designed from the kitchen out
- Each year Primi Piatti uses 35,000 litres of olive oil, enough to fill a small swimming pool
- Primi Piatti also gets through 70 tons of mozzarella and 250 tons of imported whole peeled tomatoes each year