

good model brings GREAT RESULTS



FRANCHISE SYSTEM OF THE YEAR COLUMBUS COFFEE SHARES ITS PASSIONS

⇒ What does it take to succeed in the competitive hospitality market these days? According to Graeme Tait, it's not enough to offer fantastic coffee and delicious food, great customer service and an enticing and friendly store environment. 'You have to have a business model and systems that ensure that you deliver that customer experience consistently – and that you do so profitably and sustainably. That's what we've worked hard to develop at Columbus Coffee, and it's just been recognised by the judges at the Westpac New Zealand Franchise Awards who have named us Supreme *Franchise System of the Year* for 2009/10 (see page 24).

'Winning the top franchise award in the country at our first attempt is a great thrill,' says Graeme, who is the company's managing director. 'Columbus Coffee is a New Zealand born-and-bred franchise and to win in the face of tough competition from international brands is recognition that our team and our franchisees have created something really special.'

Columbus Coffee was also well-represented in the *Franchisee of the Year* section at the Awards: Ryan Clarke of Columbus Onehunga and Jayson Hayde of Columbus Smales Farm in Takapuna were among the top finalists in the Food & Beverage category on the night.

EARNING CUSTOMERS' TRUST

The first Columbus Coffee opened in Auckland's High Street in 1995, developed by David Burton and Frances Hollis (who also established the Burton Hollis coffee company). It was a groundbreaking concept that introduced international café culture to New Zealand. Aimed at being 'a whole coffee experience' with award-winning architecture and interior design, the walls of the new store were lined with retail coffee products and over 20 varieties of freshly-roasted coffee beans or blends. Fifteen years on, Columbus Coffee has grown to 27 cafés throughout New Zealand and has evolved its products and services to meet the needs of today's demanding customers while keeping true to its coffee heritage.

'The attraction of Columbus Coffee is that we offer more than just fantastic coffee and food,' says Graeme. 'We offer a place where our customers come to meet friends or business colleagues or take time out, with the confidence that they will consistently receive a high level of quality and service wherever they are. We have earned our customers' trust.'

Like the original café, Columbus Coffee outlets tend to be a community hub with people saying 'Meet me at Columbus'. 'Our stores see a wide variety of customers passing through them each day and it's not unusual to see the same customer a number of times in a day,' Graeme smiles. 'As everybody's lives become more mobile, cafés have become places where meetings take place and business gets done.'



MINISTER OF COMMERCE SIMON POWER (LEFT) AND WESTPAC'S STEVE JURKOVICH (RIGHT) PRESENT THE *FRANCHISE SYSTEM OF THE YEAR* AWARD TO COLUMBUS COFFEE MD GRAEME TAIT, FOUNDER DAVID BURTON AND BUSINESS MANAGER NATHAN BONNEY

NO REINVENTING THE WHEEL

For new franchisees, joining Columbus Coffee means you do not have to reinvent the wheel. 'Whatever your background, as long as you have a passion for café life, a commitment to customer service and the ability to recruit and manage a strong team, you can create your own future,' says Graeme. 'You'll benefit not just from an established brand but also an award-winning franchise system.'

But you don't have to take his word for it – here's what

the judges said in naming Columbus the Supreme *Franchise System of the Year*: 'Columbus demonstrated highly effective work systems coupled with very sound leadership. The entry had a strong focus on performance management, supported by a comprehensive suite of measures showing impressive levels of performance across all results areas.' They also described Columbus as 'a small close-knit community which encourages social interaction and monitors staff well-being to enhance satisfaction and engagement.'

That sense of community is clear in Graeme's own description. 'Every franchisee in the group knows what it is like to be new and to face the challenges of growing a business. They are happy to share their knowledge and experiences for the benefit of all, so networking is a valuable part of being in the Columbus Coffee team. This approach extends to staff, too. We put a great deal of effort into building a passionate coffee culture within our organisation and our baristas respond well to it, which is why they have done so well in the National Barista Awards. We are known as an authentic coffee company and that helps franchisees attract and retain good baristas – an essential part of running a first-class café.'

Opening your own Columbus Coffee outlet requires an investment of between \$300,000 and \$400,000. This covers the franchise fee, training, store fit-out, equipment, initial consumable stock and a start-up advertising package.

'It's a sizeable investment but it offers rewarding returns,' says Graeme. 'And there are opportunities in most parts of the country. For example, it was only last year that franchisees Nigel Heney and Alister Lilley opened their Columbus Coffee café in Ashburton and they've already been named Top Café in the region. In fact, they've had to increase the size of the store to accommodate customer demand.'

'That's the sort of reception Columbus Coffee is receiving all over New Zealand,' Graeme smiles. 'If you'd like to be part of our growth – and you share a passion for café culture – give us a call.' ■

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