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CONTACT: Liz Robinson
All Points Public Relations
(847) 897-7497
lrobinsons@allpointspr.com

Chef Anthony Russo Unveils Strategy to Bring Russo's Restaurants Concepts to Asia

Fast-Casual New York Pizzeria and Upscale Coal-Fired Italian Kitchen Targets Malaysia, Singapore and The Philippines for Expansion

HOUSTON – Chef Anthony Russo, the creative culinary mind, founder and CEO of chef-driven concepts Russo's New York Pizzeria and Russo's Coal-Fired Italian Kitchen, has announced a growth strategy to expand the brands' international footprint after successfully launching more than 48 locations worldwide with an additional 35 in development.

This growth phase comes on the heels of recent Middle East development including openings in United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait. The brand is targeting Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore as priority markets for future multi-unit deals, and to kick-off the brand's plans, Chef Anthony Russo will be meeting with interested and qualified investors while at the Franchising & Licensing Asia expo. The event will be held at the Marina Bay Sands Convention Center in Singapore and runs October 12 –14.

"Growing in Asia has been on our minds for awhile and now is the time," said Russo, who has spent nearly a decade leading both Russo's Restaurants brands through strategic international growth. "Following some incredible development in the Middle East, we're confident our brands bring communities together no matter the country. Plus, our franchise opportunities can't be beat – we have exciting opportunities in lucrative international markets for franchise growth."

Franchisees have found success in Russo's proven concepts, which boasts more than 32 years in the pizzeria business. The New York Pizzeria is family-style casual, and the Coal-Fired Italian Kitchen is a bit more upscale casual. Franchisees who searched for an authentic New York Pizzeria experience have found just that in Russo's, and have begun expanding into multiple units.

"Franchising with Russo's has been an amazing experience for me and my family," said Guillermo Medellin, who owns three Russo's Restaurant franchises and recently won the brand's "Franchisee of the Year" award. "I looked at over 200 different franchises, but Russo's fit the business model I was looking for."

The average sales volume per unit is \$1.1 million. The most recent Russo's opening saw a weekly sales income between \$35,000-\$60,000, with food costs accounting for about 22 percent.

Russo's New York Pizzeria and Russo's Coal-Fired Italian Kitchen trace their origins to a tight-knit family where the kitchen was the center of all activity. As a young child, Russo helped his grandmother roll dough for cannoli, carefully wrapping it around four-inch wooden broomsticks to get the right shape before cooked. By the age of 12, Russo was learning authentic Italian recipes. Earning the Chef's distinction as an 18-year-old, Russo honed his skills as a culinary expert working in his parent's fine Italian restaurant, and then opened his own pizzeria.

Chef Russo's creativity and commitment to expanding his menu to meet growing consumer demands, and to strengthen the depth and breadth of his authentically Italian selections, continues to strengthen the brands. He clearly demonstrates and reflects the growing trend among diners for chef-driven concepts with authentic recipes and chef-inspired culinary cuisine.

The family-centered restaurants surround diners with warm, inviting décor to enjoy heart-healthy menu items made fresh without preservatives, additives or trans fats. Beyond the brands' specialty pizzas, menu items include fresh salads, soups and made-from-scratch sauces and pastas. Authentic Italian cannoli, fresh-baked, Italian flatbread sandwiches and, of course, hand-tossed pizzas are just some of the distinctive craveable items on the menu.

To learn more about Russo's franchise development opportunities, visit <https://russosfranchise.com>.

About Russo's Restaurants

Russo's Restaurants is a 48-location national and international franchisor of the fast casual and casual dining brands Russo's New York Pizzeria and Russo's Coal-Fired Italian Kitchen. Based in Houston, Russo's Restaurants is composed of a mix of corporate and franchised locations across Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Tennessee, Florida and Hawaii. Russo's has entered international markets as well, with locations in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah, in the United Arab Emirates. There are an additional 30-plus units in development both in the United States and internationally. Chef Anthony Russo has created his concepts from years of applying his unique, family recipes featuring New York-style pizza, along with a broad variety of handcrafted pasta creations, calzones, salads, sandwiches, soups and desserts, reflecting his commitment to his New York roots where food and family come first.

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