

A Valuable Insight into the Lebanese Restaurant Sector

The food and beverage industry has been historically important to the Lebanese economy and remains to this day a major source of revenue. The food and beverage market is extremely dynamic and its contribution to the country's GDP is very significant reaching 11 percent. The sector's dynamism does not affect the economic figures only as it boosts the nation's image as well. The success of this sector reflects the high standards of the Lebanese professionalism and know-how as well as the shimmering and electric lifestyle of the people.

The health of the Lebanese food and beverage industry is resulting from the continual motion of supply and demand; the two most important factors and the main driving force for any industry to move forward. Supply is steered by local and foreign entrepreneurs and subject to fierce competition. However, the market always manages to set the balance in terms of seating stock and its conversion to the demand/supply ratio since new rivals always replace less fortunate operators who leave the business to keep competition. Even though, the Lebanese market has three main categories of clients (locals, expatriates, and tourists) that creates demand and keep investment appetite.

Development opportunities

Restaurants are available in every city and village in Lebanon. Some regions have even been historically known as restaurant locations, namely the Beirut Central District, Hamra and the Keserwan coast with its renowned sea resorts, as well as the seasonal regions of Bhamdoun and Aley. However, during the past decade, new districts have emerged and have contributed to the growth of the catering business in Lebanon. In Beirut, the frenzy started at Monot and spread to Achrafieh, Verdun and Gemayzé, and then it went north to Byblos, where the old souks became the target of restaurant investors, and Batroun. Antelias is currently the new darling of investors. And market observers expect the Jounieh oldsouks to become a new restaurant and pub cluster like Gemayzé.

Employment

Lebanon's diverse atmosphere makes it an important destination that is rebuilding itself after continued turmoil. The country offers the world renowned Lebanese cuisine, a flourishing nightlife and glamorous nightclubs. Significant private investment is currently being



Zeituna Bay Beirut

made in the modernization and expansion of the catering business and international hotel companies have returned to Lebanon. The hospitality industry is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, private employment sector in Lebanon. The restaurant community in Lebanon recruits more than 80,000 men and women, 95 percent of them Lebanese at an average of 18 employees per entity. The Lebanese restaurant industry alone employs more than 80,000 employees, 70 percent of them aged below 50. The future of this business seems promising.

"The restaurant community in Lebanon recruits more than 80,000 men and women"

Expansion

Lebanese cuisine is spreading its wings and going international and the number of Lebanese F&B entities exceeds 10,000 in more than 150 countries around the world. From the GCC to the MENA countries, Eastern Europe, Northern, Central and Latin America, Africa, Australia and Japan, the restaurant business has no limits. This geographic expansion is due to the winning strategic expansion such as full ownerships, affiliations and management agreements as well as the joint ventures and franchise deals of over 100 brands. ■

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لطالما شكلت صناعة الأغذية والمشروبات جزءاً مهماً من الاقتصاد اللبناني. وقد حافظت هذه الصناعة على موقعها حتى يومنا هذا كمصدر دخل رئيسي. تتميز سوق الأغذية والمشروبات بديناميكيته ومساهمتها الكبيرة في الناتج المحلي الإجمالي للبلاد فيشكل 11 في المئة منه. ولا يقتصر نجاح هذا القطاع على الأرقام الاقتصادية فحسب بل يعزز أيضاً صورة المجتمع اللبناني. ويعكس نجاح هذا القطاع المعايير العالية للكفاءة المهنية للمجتمع اللبناني ومهارته ونمط حياته المشع والمليء بالحياة. من ناحية أخرى، تنتشر المطاعم في كل مدينة وقرية من لبنان وتُعرف بعض المناطق بكونها موقعاً سياحياً مثل منطقة وسط بيروت والحمراء وساحل كسروان المشهور بمنتجاته البحرية بالإضافة إلى المناطق الموسمية كبحمدون وعاليه. وقد ظهرت في العقد الماضي مناطق جديدة ساهمت في نمو قطاع المطاعم في لبنان بما فيها مونو والأشرفية وفردان والجميزة بالإضافة إلى المناطق الشمالية مثل جبيل التي أصبحت أسواقها القديمة هدفاً للمستثمرين. ومؤخراً انضمت أنطلياس إلى مجموعة المناطق التي يتوافد عليها المستثمرون.