

# Fatburger comes to Pakistan

The fast-food and restaurant market in Pakistan can be recognised as a driving force for new investments. The billion dollar market of Pakistan isn't only seeing growth of local food outlets but also attracting international food chains. Fatburger – Santa Monica, California-based fast-food chain is the new addition at local food market.



Fatburger has over 95 locations in the US. In addition to its California roots, Fatburger has a strong presence across America. The fast-food chain has its franchises in Canada, Dubai, Hong Kong, Macao, Beijing, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Jakarta. Pakistan will be the latest addition to its portfolio and has a franchise at Dolmen City Mall, Karachi.

Samiullah Mohabbat, CEO of BIL Foods Limited said, "We are introducing healthy and juicy burgers in town keeping in mind the health-conscious lifestyle increasingly appreciated by Pakistanis. Fatburger serves this purpose and I believe it is today's requirement."

This is the first time the concept of lean beef is being introduced in the market and will only be provided to customers on a "freshly ground and cook-to-order" format.

"The beef comes all the way from the

US and is halal - a Muslim slaughter house called Midamar is our supplier," he asserted, in order to clarify any misconceptions people might have. He also admitted that the franchise's first outlet was meant to open in Lahore at MM Alam Road but as fate had it, Karachi became the first destination. "We received a better offer in Karachi, so we came here first," he concluded.

They plan to open a total of five outlets in three major cities of Pakistan; the entire investment adds up to Rs 500 to 700 million.

The launch on January was attended by foodies, as they made their way through the colourful entrance of the mall and followed the red carpet to the second floor, they were welcomed by the extravagant red and yellow Fatburger theme - red balloons, waiters sporting red aprons and red and yellow decor. It took approximately six months to design the entire vicinity and it was done by Hong Kong based designer Robert Lee; wooden ceiling and flooring added warmth to the cosy environment.

Staying true to the traditions set by Yancey - R&B music playing in the background for customers — the crowd in Karachi was greeted by an on-

going rehearsal by Lahore-based band Chaar Paye on Bee Gees Stayin' Alive. The band also made its debut in Karachi at the event with a few original Punjabi numbers.

Although the chain's menu includes four different sizes of burgers internationally, in Pakistan they will only stick to three — single, double and triple. "We have to keep a market-competitive price range [affordability factor] in mind," Mohabbat justifies the decision. On the side, home-made onion rings imported from Spain will be served along with a choice of lemonade, soda or chocolate and strawberry milkshake.

"We've been making the same burgers for years and the recipe hasn't changed," says Andrew A Wiederhorn, Chairman and CEO of Fatburger North America Inc, who was also present at the opening. "We went global in 2006; opening outlets in Canada, then China and then in Dubai. Today, we have over 140 outlets across the globe."

Pakistan's strategic location makes it a regional hub and principal gateway to the Central Asia republics. The country has a long-standing link with the Middle East and South Asia and provides comprehensive duty-free facilities to the investors. Explaining what attracted BIL investments towards Pakistan, CEO Samiullah Mohabbat said good quality telecommunications and IT services, comprehensive road, rail and sea links, long-standing corporate culture in Pakistan make the country an attractive market for investment.

Report by Sadia Qamar. ♦



It will be the first time that this kind of meat will be offered in the country. Photo courtesy: Athar Khan/ Express.