

QSR

How CEO Kevin Bazner and his team are pushing the brand 100 years on

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START TO FINISH

Michael Haith

CEO

TERIYAKI MADNESS

What was your first job?

I was a dishwasher in a restaurant at 15 years old.

What's your favorite item on the Teriyaki Madness menu? The Spicy Chicken is my favorite, no question.

What's your favorite cuisine outside of Teriyaki Madness?

I like all food; I try and eat at least once a day.

Who inspires you as a leader?

I get my inspiration from my franchisees. They have the courage to take a shot at owning their own business and at making life better for themselves and their families. I want to shout out my wife and kids, too.

What's the best piece of advice restaurant leaders should hear?

After doing this for over 20 years, I've found that by helping employees and franchisees get what they want, I get what I want.

What are some of your interests outside of work?

I like to try new things and master them. Right now I'm trying to work on my tan.



MICHAEL HAITH SAYS HE LIKES TO BE "LEFT OF CENTER," WHICH MAY EXPLAIN THE OFFBEAT NATURE OF HIS OFFICIAL HEAD SHOT.

When I was 28 years old, I was a waiter in a restaurant that began franchising, and I bought a Pour La France! catering franchise and built that for a number of years.

Eventually, I was approached by Teriyaki Madness to help them expand outside of Las Vegas, and by that time I was busy with six companies. Teriyaki Madness had done a great job of rolling out a new concept and attracting their first few franchisees. They showed me their franchisees' P&L sheets and I said, "OK, I'll help you expand nationwide."

When I bought the company about three-and-a-half years ago, I set out to recruit the best possible team I could find. It's always a challenge to build the best team and make sure you get the right people and you have the resources that franchisees need to be successful. I am so proud of the team that we've built; we've got folks who are experienced and who really care about the health of the franchises, about the integrity of the food that we serve, and about pleasing our customers.

We want to give people their shot at the American dream, whether they are immigrants or first-time business owners or are looking to become part of their community. If a franchisee is willing to work hard and they're approachable and they match our culture, we think we can make them really successful.

I've always believed that the personality of the leader is essentially the culture of the organization. We are irreverent. We are left of center. We like to ruffle a few feathers. There's so much noise out there. How can we position ourselves where people can identify with the culture and become raving fans?

We will expand anywhere that we can support. Our goal is to grow to 500 units in the next 10 years; aggressive but thoughtful growth. Being able to focus on something that you know is going to be successful is satisfying. I think customers just appreciate our mission: to provide really simple ingredients done really well in a healthy manner that's convenient.