

## Hummus takes center stage at Nanoosh

**N**EW YORK – Healthy is hot this year and hummus, a Mediterranean dip made from chickpeas and tahini (sesame seed paste) with

**Concept focuses on Mediterranean fare**



olive oil, lemon juice and garlic, has become one of the fastest growing items in the retail market, inspiring one entrepreneur here to come up with a healthy casual restaurant focused on Mediterranean fare.

The concept of a former Israeli-born investment banker turned restaurateur, David Kostman, Nanoosh recently opened its fourth location in Manhattan and has plans for major growth beyond the Big Apple.

His goal is to roll out Nanoosh nationally and ultimately globally in the next five years, concentrating on cosmopolitan centers in areas with heavy foot traffic, as well as

in university communities and high-tech areas.

“We started working on the concept in 2006 with the idea

**NANOOSH**

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### Where will consumers eat today?

**A look at the concepts drawing them in from NY to New England**

The world is changing at warp speed, affecting lifestyles and eating-out patterns. Today's concepts are creative – seeking to draw consumers constrained financially to return to dining out in new and different ways. We look at three – Nanoosh, a high style fast casual concept with a healthy focus; Tossed, a small chain that's reinvigorating its brand; and Harry's, a new take on burgers.

### Growth plans call for entry into cosmopolitan markets as well as college/university & high tech



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of bringing tasty and healthy Mediterranean cuisine, mainly hummus-based dishes and salads, to the mainstream US casual restaurant scene,” Kostman says.

The trigger for the idea came from the rapid growth of hummus in the retail grocery sector.

Hummus, he points out, is full of protein and iron. “You can stuff it with mushroom, chicken and peppers. It's a full meal.”

With an average per person check of \$12.50 to \$13.50 in the full service model and \$10.50 in the counter-only unit, Nanoosh has broad appeal to sophisticated urbanites in search of a quick, healthy and attractively presented meal or snack.

The menu consists of 85 percent organic ingredients, chic and modern design, and affordable pricing. “When we began, we saw a need for a place with a nice modern am-

bience doing this from the organic side.”

The first unit opened in October of 2007 with casual table service and beer and wine. A large counter service-only variation with 60 seats was also introduced for the quick lunch market in central business areas. “We want to feed 200 in two or three hours,” Kostman says. The newest opened on the Upper West Side and Union Square this summer.

“We see room for more in Manhattan and we're looking at one West Coast city and one in the Northeast,” Kostman discloses.

The menu offers a wide variety of salad options (\$6.95 to \$8.75). Hummus plates made with fresh organic chickpeas are \$6.25 to \$8.75 and a selection of wraps range from \$6.95 to \$8.75. “Food can help us live a healthier and more fulfilling life,” he observes.

Unlike many Middle Eastern/Mediterranean concepts, Nanoosh does not offer falafel (“It's deep fried,” says Kost-

man) or shawarma. “We did not take that approach. Our experience is really different because of the ambience.”

Stores range in size from 1,000 to 2,000 sq. ft. for ground floor sites. Table service units have 35 to 45 seats while the counter service location on Madison Ave. has around 60. “We are also looking at much smaller locations for the counter service model,” says Kostman. “We are quite flexible and could open smaller or larger stores depending on the availability and specifics of the area.”

Tom Johnson, a New York restaurateur and architect, designed the original unit and sought to combine a Mediterranean feeling with a chic/modern and simple setting that would appeal to the core demographic, he adds.

“In the sit-down locations we are trying to convey a warmer/neighborhood feel, while at the counter service sites, the feel is more industrial with strong light and a fast pace.”