



## **Blaze Fast-Fire'd Pizza Announces International Development Agreement with M.H. Alshaya Co.**

*Plans to Open 100 Locations in the Middle East and Northern Africa*

July 17, 2017 – Los Angeles, Calif. – Blaze Fast-Fire'd Pizza, the nation's leading fast-casual artisanal pizza chain, today announced that it has entered into an exclusive development agreement with the Kuwait-based M.H. Alshaya Co. to build and operate multiple Blaze Pizza restaurants across the Middle East and Northern Africa. The agreement provides for the development of 100 restaurants in 11 countries including the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt, and Morocco, with the first five restaurants scheduled to open in Kuwait and the UAE in 2018. The Alshaya agreement marks the first expansion of Blaze Pizza outside of North America and represents the largest development deal in the brand's history.

"Blaze Pizza is a very exciting and disruptive brand that fits nicely into our restaurant portfolio alongside Starbucks and Shake Shack," said Mohammad Alshaya, Executive Chairman of M.H. Alshaya Co. "With its simple approach to fast, authentic, customizable pizza, we see a tremendous opportunity to build Blaze into the dominant pizza brand in the Middle East and throughout the region."

The build-your-own pizza chain, known for its chef-driven recipes and casually hip restaurants, recently opened its milestone 200th restaurant and has agreements in place to open more than 400 additional locations across the U.S., Canada, the Middle East and Northern Africa. The agreement with Alshaya includes the development of both traditional and delivery-only formats.

"There is really only one 'best way' to take your brand overseas and that is to partner with Alshaya," said Rick Wetzel, co-founder of Blaze Pizza. "For some time, we've been receiving requests to bring our brand to the Middle East. Now that we've partnered with Alshaya, we're happy to say that we will be there soon."

### **About M.H. Alshaya Co.**

M.H. Alshaya Co. is a leading international franchise operator for over 80 of the world's most recognized brands including Starbucks, Shake Shack, The Cheesecake Factory, P.F. Chang's, Victoria's Secret, Pottery Barn, H & M and Mothercare. The company currently operates more than 3,500 stores across the Middle East, Europe, North Africa, Russia, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). M.H. Alshaya Co. is the retail business of the Alshaya group of companies,

a family-owned business which was founded in Kuwait in 1890 and today represents one of the most dynamic companies in the Middle East. Learn more about Alshaya at [www.alshaya.com](http://www.alshaya.com).

### **About Blaze Pizza**

Blaze Pizza is a modern day “pizza joint”, serving up artisanal pizzas that are both fast and affordable. With fans lining up each day for their custom-built pizzas, freshly made salads, blood orange lemonade and s’more pies, the innovative fast-casual concept has quickly become one of the hottest restaurant chains in the country. Each Blaze Pizza restaurant features an interactive open-kitchen format that allows guests to customize one of the menu’s signature pizzas or create their own, choosing from a wide selection of fresh, “clean” ingredients – all for about \$8. The generously-sized personal pizzas are then sent to a blazing hot open-flame oven – the centerpiece of the restaurant – where dedicated pizzasmiths ensure the thin-crust pies are fast-fire’d and ready to eat in just 180 seconds. Restaurants make fresh dough from scratch using a proprietary recipe developed by Executive Chef Bradford Kent (the “Pizza Whisperer”), which requires a 24-hour fermentation period to produce his signature light-as-air, crisp crust. For pizza fans with specific dietary needs, Blaze Pizza offers gluten-free dough and vegan cheese.

Recently named ‘#1 Brand of the Year’ in the 2017 Fast Casual Top 100, the fast-growing chain currently operates over 200 restaurants in 32 states and Canada, including the major metropolitan areas of Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Dallas, Las Vegas, Boston, and Toronto. Founded by Elise and Rick Wetzels (co-founder of Wetzels Pretzels), the concept is backed by founding investors that include LeBron James, Maria Shriver and Boston Red Sox co-owner Tom Werner. For more information, visit [www.blazepizza.com](http://www.blazepizza.com) or [www.facebook.com/blazepizza](https://www.facebook.com/blazepizza) or [click here to view a company video](#).

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