

# Best Japanese Dining Experience 2017 - GCC

**Sumo Sushi & Bento is a growing franchise of authentic Japanese restaurants originally established in Dubai. We spoke to Darami Coulter, Global Marketing & Communication Manager, to learn more about the firm and how it works to consistently offer the very best experience to its guests.**

Founded in 2000, as the original homegrown Japanese casual dining restaurant, Sumo Sushi & Bento has been serving the best sushi in Dubai and throughout the GCC for more than 16 years, providing a unique family friendly, authentically fun Japanese restaurant. Now offering franchise opportunities globally, the firm continues to expand and offer this delicious experience to more Sumo Super Fans everywhere, as Darami explains.

"The original Japanese family friendly restaurant, Sumo Sushi & Bento now has 14 outlets distributed across the UAE, Bahrain and Oman and is expected to have 50 units throughout the GCC by 2021. Unlike the average suburban sushi outlet, Sumo Sushi & Bento's reputation has been built on our constant quest for perfection, authenticity, enjoyment and our ambience. Our philosophy of service comes from our mission statement; 'Bringing Happy to Japanese Dining: Good People, Good Food and Good Fun' and our core values; Integrity, Creativity, Quality, and Simplicity that drive everything we do. Our team runs all of our initiatives, drivers and operational measures of success through both of them on a regular basis. This shows in our customer service, we believe happy employees equal happy and satisfied customers."

"With a consistent drive to set a new standard in Japanese dining, we revamp our menu every year, to ensure we serve some of the most unique Japanese food in the city. Armed with Samurai-like knives, the Chef's imaginative creations include an array of items for sushi beginners and enthusiasts alike. Ensuring an even larger variety to our guests and a leading position in the competitive market, Sumo Sushi & Bento specializes in the creation of customized Sushi Sandwiches, Poke Bowls, Salmon Lovers Bento and other Japanese specialty rolls. Prepared fresh with exceptional care by the sushi chefs, the products offer great flavours, consistent freshness, positive health benefits and an authentic food experience at affordable prices."

In the hospitality market, staff are crucial to any firm's success; as such, Sumo Sushi & Bento works hard to ensure it attracts and retains the very best talent in the industry, as Darami comments.

"Central to our success is our strong focus on our company culture, and as such we strive to always be engaging with our team. This is the part of our mission statement that starts with Good People and ends with Good Fun. We believe in hiring from within and promoting as much as possible with our own team. We have team members on our top level leadership team that started as servers in our restaurants."

"Our HR team works closely with our team members offering team building activities, pathways to Sumo success, volunteer opportunities and as much fun as we can have together. Laughter is encouraged while doing a quality job. Our philosophy is everybody matters, from the maintenance crew to the CEO, we all are equal and matter to the company and its growth."

As a growing brand, Sumo Sushi & Bento has locations throughout the UAE, Bahrain and Oman currently. All of these regions are growing, however, the UAE has an incredible focus on continued growth, and as such Darami is keen to highlight the various plans and approaches her firm uses in this market.

"Within the UAE market, one of the things we notice with the enormous focus on growth is the amount of food choices and options that are available. However, with a strong brand, good customer service and excellent food we believe there is still opportunity in this market to grow and meet the demands of our customer base. Our newest location in Dubai Silicon Oasis and the incredible social media inquiries for this location has solidified our belief that the growth opportunity for us still exists."

"Fundamentally, our unique proposition in the very competitive UAE market goes back to our mission statement

and core values. Using those as our compass for driving our constantly updated menu offerings, we offer new dishes every single month, our new Sumo sustainability initiative, our high standards for food safety and quality products, and of course our overall experience from our personalized in-house call center to our delivery drivers who deliver with a smile. We will not use an external delivery service because we believe our delivery drivers represent us, the same way that our in-restaurant servers do and we do not want to leave that experience up to a delivery service. We also have a strong family friendly atmosphere with unique healthy kid's meals created specifically with kids in mind, along with kids eat free days and fun activities throughout the year."

Overall, Darami is excited for the future and is eager to discuss Sumo Sushi & Bento's plans for further growth and expansion in order to build upon the phenomenal success of the this vibrant and dynamic brand.

"Looking to the future, our brand is expanding globally. We currently have 14 locations open, with the 15 opening this month and three more scheduled to open this year. We are expecting to have 50 locations throughout the GCC by 2021. Our global expansion emphasis is on the United States, India, Canada and Mexico over the next five years."

"While we work on expansion, one key initiative that we are focused on over the next five years is moving to a sustainable company using responsibly sourced vendors only. We have begun this initiative with our tuna product. All of our tuna throughout the UAE is responsibly sourced through a sustainable fishery in the Maldives. They use only pole and line fishing to harvest the Yellow Fin Tuna, no nets used and no drag line fishing, ensuring that there is minimal damage to the ecosystem. Our next initiative will be to ensure that our Salmon is sustainable. As well as launching our biodegradable, recycled delivery packaging later this year."



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