Left to right - Dr Lim and Dr Aung Than welcome you to their restaurant

Leading A Burger Revolution

What happened when two medical doctors decided to team up and take their first plunge into the world of franchise? They became the first franchisees of the most exciting fast-casual burger franchise concept to hit our shores: Wayback Burgers.

Franchise Asia speaks to Dr. Lim Liat Woi and Dr. Aung Than (Drs) about their experience being first-timers in the franchisee world, and Christine Lee (Christine), General Manager of Wayback Delights about the brand and its franchising programme.

Can you share how Wayback Burgers came into being and how the brand has grown since its inception?

Christine: Wayback Burgers (then known as Jake's Hamburgers) first opened in Newark, Delaware, in 1991. The burgers were so delicious that it wasn't long before some more Jake's Hamburgers opened up.

Eventually, to avoid confusion with another smaller restaurant chain, the name 'Jake' was dropped. The Wayback Burgers franchise now has 155 domestic restaurants in 30 states with several additional restaurants around the world. All in all, there are more than 500 development deals in place. So, Wayback Burgers may or may not be a household name (it depends whose house you live in) today, but it will be...and very soon!

When did Wayback Burgers come to Malaysia?

Christine: Wayback Burgers opened its doors in Malaysia in July 2017 in Taman Melawati, Kuala Lumpur. Retaining the same freshness and tasty burgers people have long enjoyed in America with some new meals to complement the local tastes, Wayback Burgers Malaysia has garnered a significant number of regulars that just can't resist their scrumptious menu.

Wayback Delights is the locally owned company which holds the Master Franchise License of Wayback Burgers in Peninsular Malaysia. This company is owned by a group of friends who likes to eat burgers. They also have more than 20 years of experience in retail and marketing.

What would you say are the key factors that potential franchisees look for in an F&B franchise business?

Christine: When people look at a restaurant, they tend to focus on the business model, menu and food. They also put a high emphasis on how the company is run, what it takes to keep the business going smoothly and the management methods that can help the company achieve long-lasting success.

This was why we only started to sell the franchise license after 7 months into operation. Although we have the product standard operating procedures (SOP) from the USA, we are serving food to Malaysians and thus, the expectations and requirements are different in their own way. We also need to evaluate our suppliers to make sure that there are no hiccups on the supply side of things.

The first franchise license was bought by two certified medical doctors, Dr. Lim Liat Woi and Dr. Aung Than. They opened their first franchise restaurant on 26th August 2018 at Wisma Lim Foo Yong, Jalan Raja Chulan, serving the busy CBD at the heart of Kuala Lumpur.

What made you venture into F&B franchising?

Drs: Being medical doctors, we wanted to diversify by stepping into the "real business" world. Having owned two private clinics, we decided that it is best to start a F&B business as we could pass it down to our children or spouses as they do not need to be certified nor even have the knowledge about cooking in order to run the business, as opposed to owning a clinic. When it comes to early retirements, doctors may face a hindrance as our job requires us to attend to our patients every time we are needed. By owning a business that is time flexible, we have the option to retire early and still be generating an income.

Why did you choose Wayback Burgers as your foray into F&B franchising?

Drs: Wayback Burgers is famous for their fast-casual service, providing only the freshest ingredients on their menu. The variety of quality products combined with excellent service are what makes Wayback Burgers stand out from other F&B companies. Their popular handmade ground-beef patties using only Chuck Tenders imported from Australia and the hand-dipped milkshakes are the signatures of the company.

We chose Wayback Burgers because we are impressed with the brand's variety of quality products and excellent service

In addition, Wayback Burgers' menu is crafted for everyone. They have a specific menu that caters to guests that are vegan and vegetarian. The Craft-Your-Own section further complements the menu, enabling guests to have their own burgers to be precisely and specifically 'built'' only for their tastebuds. As an initiative to attract local hungry customers, Wayback Burgers Malaysia is certifed Halal by Jakim and has localised their selection of food on the menu. The addition of Cili Padi in the sauce selection and the choice of using chicken for their frankfurters is to better suit Malaysia's local tastes from the different backgrounds of religions and races. The competitively priced menu coupled with amazing products enable everyone to have a wonderful meal time at Wayback Burgers.

The outlet at Wisma Lim Foo Yong

Wayback Burgers are freshly made and never frozen

To us, it's all about the product, the service and the investment. The total investment is relatively low for a fast-casual restaurant compared to other American brands. Most importantly, we do not need to import any spices or sauces from America. All the spices are available locally.

How has your experience been in opening a Wayback Burgers restaurant?

Drs: There is not much involvement required from us in order to open a Wayback Burger restaurant as the master franchisee will send an operation personnel to assist us from the very beginning until the very end. From real estate selection (location sourcing) to leasing negotiations, especially in rental negotiations, it will all be handled by the master franchisee. In fact, our current outlet is secured entirely by the master franchisee. We didn't even meet the landlord until the day we are needed to pay the deposit and sign the leasing agreement.

The master franchisee will take charge of basically everything that is needed for the new restaurant, including renovation supervision, initial stock ordering, equipment, furniture and restaurant set-up. They even sent us weekly renovation updates. For items that will be supplied to the restaurant (except beef products), they will be sourced from local suppliers and will not be imported from the United States. Furthermore, marketing materials, as well as thorough training for future employees will be provided and planned well before the restaurant's opening. Also, ongoing support that include weekly visits, sales analysis, local restaurant marketing, and assistance in ordering will be done by the master franchisee.

Can you share more about the support you receive as a Wayback Burgers franchisee?

Drs: The support given by the master franchisee cover a few aspects before the opening of a restaurant. In terms of training, we were required to hire staff who would need to attend training at the Melawati Mall outlet for at least two weeks. They encouraged us as the owners to attend the training, too. They were also on standby for two weeks at our restaurant during the initial opening.

I remember during those two weeks, the operation person from the master franchisee was stationed at our restaurant for 12 hours, from opening till closing time. This is to ensure the efficiency and the smoothness of operation. For the first month of business, we did not need to concern ourselves with the keys of running the operations as this was taken care of by the master franchisee before the handing it over to the manager in charge. The master franchisee also assists us in manpower sourcing and interviews, HR-related issues, such as salary package advice, manpower scheduling, as well as cost management including Profit & Loss reports and the filling system for the restaurant.

Why do you think it is good to be associated with an American brand?

Christine: American brands have a long history in Malaysia and they have been the number one choice for many of us. In the F&B world, American restaurants have been in the country for decades and have created a significant impact in many peoples' childhoods. Hence, we took this opportunity to be one of the brands that can leave a memory in many Malaysians' lives, though with a distinct difference compared to the rest, notably with our signature handmade ground-beef patties and hand-dipped milkshakes.

The launch of Wayback Burgers in Malaysia will indeed create an impact, especially with its fast-casual style restaurant that is quite revolutionary in this country. Americans always have a craving for something fresh and new in their menu, which is similar to the taste buds of many Malaysians. That is why only the best and most excellent choice of ingredients make it into our menu, and will indeed change the way Malaysians consume burgers.

At Wayback Burgers, the menu is tweaked to suit Malaysians' taste buds

What can a potential employee expect when they join your team?

Christine: We consider it our utmost responsibility to ensure that the Wayback Burgers' team members are well taken care of. Their welfare is regularly being monitored to ensure that they are constantly in excellent condition whilst at work. The employees are given staff meals once per day which consist of selected items from the menu. In addition, the team members are given briefings regarding the sales targets they are expected to achieve, when they are to be met, and incentives would be given to well-deserving staff.

Food delivery services are all the rage now. What are your plans to collaborate with these service providers?

Christine: Our restaurant has partnered with a number of popular food delivery services, namely, Foodpanda, honestbee and in the near future, GrabFood. These collaborations will fully satisfy the needs of our customers to have their favourite Wayback Burgers orders delivered right to their doorsteps. We also have a vision of launching our very own delivery channel for the convenience of our customers, an initiative that has been done by many competing brands, which we, too, want to be a part of.

Hand-dipped Cookies and Cream Milkshake

KEY FACTS

Company Name:	Wayback Delights Sdn Bhd
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Phone:	+60 (3) 8082 0002
Website:	www.waybackburgers.com.my
Facebook:	waybackburgersmalaysia
Year Established:	1991
Country of Origin:	United States of America
Email Address:	christine@waybackdelights.com
Type of Business:	Fast casual burger restaurant with thick hand-dipped milkshake
Types of Franchise Available:	Single, Multiple Unit Franchise and Area Franchise
Size of units:	750 sq – 2,000 sq ft
Franchise Fees:	Available upon request
Franchise Term (years):	15 years
Royalty:	5%
Marketing / A&P Fund:	2%
Estimated Initial Investment:	RM550,000 – RM1 mil depending on location and size.

To find our more information about the Wayback Burgers franchise, please visit www.waybackburgers.com.my or email info@waybackdelights.com