

# FOOD and DRINK

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Krispy Kreme., Page 42

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EMPLOYEES: 300  
SPECIALTY: COFFEEHOUSES  
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Green Beans Coffee™  
WORLDCAFÉ



Green Beans Coffee Co. offers a Seattle-style coffeehouse atmosphere to soldiers stateside and abroad.

# Tastes of Home

Green Beans Coffee Co. says its cafes are dedicated to providing U.S. soldiers with a place where they can get away from it all and enjoy the tastes from back home. **BY ALAN DORICH**

**WITH MORE THAN 60 LOCATIONS ON MILITARY BASES IN** Southwest Asia, the Middle East and Africa, Green Beans Coffee Co. Inc. not only provides its customers with hot, satisfying cups of coffee, but also a taste of home.

Based in Larkspur, Calif., the company's cafes specialize in serving the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces.

"We have committed to opening our cafes in the most remote, challenging and dangerous locations in the world," declares H. Jason Araghi, president and CEO.

He notes that the company works to offer soldiers 15 minutes of tranquility during their stressful days and help "with the overall morale."

Araghi founded Green Beans with his brother, Vice President Jon Araghi, in 1996. Previously, Jason Araghi was working in a company owned by a member of the Royal family in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Araghi was approached with a business proposal by one of its clients, a young princess.

According to Green Beans, the princess had recently opened Art Nouveau, a furniture showroom, and wanted to add a café on its second floor.

While he concentrated on building the business and its strategic relationships, Araghi's brother focused on the design of the café, which was conceptualized as a Seattle-style coffeehouse for the Saudi marketplace.

To aid in its development, the two enlisted the help of Teri Hope and master roaster Tim McKinney of the Los Gatos Coffee Roasting Co., based in Los Gatos, Calif. Jon Araghi had worked with the two previously.

## **BREWING UP BUSINESS**

When the café opened, Green Beans says, it attracted both Saudi customers and U.S. military personnel from a nearby base in Eskan Village.

When many high-ranking officers became its regulars, Jason Araghi was asked to open a café at the base.

The Araghis opened their first Green Beans location a few months later. The café supported the military's plan to boost troop morale by providing food concepts that were similar to those found back home.

In a few months, the U.S. Air Force asked Green Beans to open three more locations at Prince Sultan Air Base in Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia.

Today, Green Beans says it serves customers in Afghanistan, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait, Qatar and Djibouti, Africa.

In addition, the company has three locations in California and Kentucky that serve soldiers who have returned home.

Araghi says it is on track to open four more stateside, later this year.

#### TEAMING UP

To stay efficient, it is necessary for Green Beans' employees to function as a team, Araghi says.

"All employees that work with us are a key to the success of our daily mission," he declares.

"There are those that go beyond the call of duty, but as I see it, any employee that is willing to put on a flak jacket, a Kevlar helmet and go to work in the middle of a war zone is key to the company's success," he says.

#### A DEDICATED OPERATION

In addition to serving the men and women of the U.S. military, Green Beans works alongside them, as well. Araghi explains

that the company employs retired military personnel. "They are great to work with, disciplined, great leaders and role models for their colleagues," he adds.

Green Beans also donates a percentage of its revenues to charities that help support the children and families of soldiers who were disabled or died in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Recently, Green Beans won Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year Award for corporate social responsibility for these efforts," Araghi adds.

The company also is dedicated to green initiatives. "Almost all of the coffees that we serve in our cafes are organic and/or fair trade," Araghi says.

"[Additionally,] most of the materials we use in the construction of our cafes are made of organic, recycled and sustainable products."

#### BRANCHING OUT

Araghi says he has enjoyed the coffee industry and the task of growing Green Beans.

"It has been a great experience and we have met great people along the way," he states.

"It is a great feeling to offer a service that is needed and appreciated, and to be part of people's lives."

As it opens more locations across the United States, he says, Green Beans plans to start a franchise program.

These will be formed with qualified candidates who have served in the military and want to "come home and be entrepreneurs for themselves in their communities," he explains. ☐



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