

## **HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL GRAD MAKES DESSERT HISTORY**

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS— *U.S. News & World Report* has credited **Finale** with being the trendsetter in starting the dessert-focused restaurant concept, now springing up around the country.

The idea of an all-dessert restaurant seemed strange and unrealistic to the culinary world back in 1998. So strange in fact, that the critics said that it couldn't be done, and that it wouldn't last more than six months. But, that wasn't always the case for **Finale Desserterie**, which now celebrates its 10th year, and opening a fifth restaurant in September.

Paul Conforti one of the architects of this unusual eatery went so far as to say, **“We want to educate customers about the delicious, affordable luxury that is super-premium desserts, just as Starbucks educated us all about super-premium coffee.”** With comments like that, established chain restaurant honchos shot back with their own take on an all dessert restaurant. **The early outspoken critics, were vocal to say the least, with comments like, “A concept like this wouldn't last more than a few months.” It just isn't possible to survive offering desserts only.” The general consensus was that this idea would simply not work.**

Fast forward 10 years and four, soon to be five locations later and the critics who said it couldn't be done have become devotees of the all dessert restaurant concept. The very same Chain Restaurants who doubted that Finale would be successful became the Company's ardent supporters and some even became investors. Industry veterans, like Bob Rosenberg (former CEO, Dunkin Donuts,) Tom First (Co-chairman and Co-founder, Nantucket Nectars,) Dennis Pedra (former President of Bugaboo Creek Steakhouse and New England Restaurant Co,) and Roger Berkowitz (President and CEO of Legal Seafood) all sit on the board of advisors nicknamed the Chain Gang. This illustrious group joined together to help Finale stay on track. Today, Berkowitz remembers, “I must admit to being a bit skeptical upon hearing of the premise behind Finale. Looking back, I've got to give the founders Paul and Kim credit, for identifying a market niche, which was largely untapped.” Finale opened its first location across the street from Legal Seafoods' flagship location in Boston's Park Plaza.

Other industry movers and shakers became involved as well. Just recently, Steve Silverstein, CEO of Not Your Average Joe's (National Restaurant Association's Hot Concept winner) was added to the Chain Gang.

Silverstein says, “I was honored to be part of this group. Paul and Kim have created a phenomenal idea that works. It's a great laser focused brand with national growth potential.”

### **Finale's History**

The story of Finale begins back in 1996, when Paul Conforti, celebrated the end of his rigorous first year at Harvard Business School (HBS) with a conversation with his friends about his passion for service and his desire to start a restaurant company. The ensuing brainstorm session quickly focused on desserts. Along with classmates Kristen Krzyzewski and Kim Moore, Paul spent the second year at HBS writing the business plan. By the time they were finished, the group was convinced they had a winning idea. Room for Dessert would be the Robin Hood of Dessert - making super-premium desserts available to everyone, not just to those who frequent fine-dining restaurants and fancy hotels.

Paul and Kim graduated, committed to opening Room for Dessert in Boston. While in search of the perfect location, Paul joined a start-up Mexican restaurant as a server and shift supervisor. Kim joined the ranks of The Cheesecake Factory, where she plated desserts and made espresso drinks. Setting the unofficial record as the lowest paid graduates of Harvard Business School, the pair gained priceless insights into the restaurant business

and convinced investors of the strength of their resolve.

On July 1, 1998, their resolve paid off. Now called Finale Desserterie – Co-Founders Paul and Kim, opened their first location in Boston's Park Plaza - nestled between bustling Newbury Street and the Theatre District. Executive Pastry Chef Nicole Coady joined the team to create the sensational desserts that would be so critical to the success of Finale.

By Valentine's Day 1999, things started to simmer at Finale. Articles in the *Boston Globe*, *Pastry Art & Design* and *Bon Appetit*, and inclusion on the *TV Food Network's* "Best of Dessert" and "Best of Boston" introduced Finale to dessert-lovers across the country. Soon Best Dessert Awards started to roll in. Finale's mission was (and still is) to create sensational dessert experiences for every guest, every day. Give them a reason to come back, and a reason to tell their friends to give Finale a try.

In October 2002, the Finale team opened a second Desserterie in Harvard Square-taking the concept back to the place where it was born. That same year, they opened a centralized Pastry Kitchen where Chef Coady and her team create all of the sensational desserts. The third Desserterie opened in Brookline's Coolidge Corner in July 2006. Finale debuted their first Desserterie in the suburbs in September 2007 at the Natick Collection mall west of Boston.

**Ten successful years later, the critics have most definitely become converts. Just recently, industry analyst Darren Tristano, a vice president at Chicago-based consulting firm Technomic Inc., sees Finale, with its limited menu and \$18 average check, as appealing to core customers who are “well-insulated from economic conditions.”**

With articles in most national business, food and lifestyle publications, such as, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Business Week*, *Town & Country* to name just a few, all touting the success of Finale, the company that couldn't, is launching more restaurants throughout the region. New England is just the start of realizing the dream to create sensational dessert experiences all across the country.

**“For anyone who has ever felt like making a meal of dessert, one Boston restaurant has the menu for you.” Finale serves up artistically arranged decadent delights that tempt with a creative mix of flavors.” *Business Week*.**

**“We recommend Finale of Cambridge, MA, source of delectable creations.” *Town & Country***

About Finale Dessert Company: Finale Desserterie creates sensational dessert experiences. What exactly does that mean? They use the best ingredients, like Valrhona chocolate and Tahitian vanilla beans. The creations are also the most beautiful you've ever seen. The pastry chef, Nicole Coady, treats each dessert like works of art. She makes them on a dessert plating stage with culinary mirrors overhead, right in the middle of the dining room. Finale Dessert Company currently operates four locations in Massachusetts: Park Plaza in Boston, Harvard Square in Cambridge, Coolidge Corner in Brookline and Natick Collection Mall in Natick.



High resolution photography available: people, plated desserts, carryout desserts, architectural interiors

