



**RICHARD HODGSON TO JOIN THE EXPANDED YO! GROUP AS CEO
ROBIN ROWLAND TO REMAIN ON BOARD AS NON-EXEC**

(London, 28 November 2017)

Following its recent acquisition of Bento Sushi (“Bento”), YO! Sushi (“YO!”), is delighted to announce Richard Hodgson will join the newly formed combined group (“Group”) as Chief Executive Officer, commencing in December. Richard was formerly Chief Executive Officer of Pizza Express, where he was instrumental in driving the internationalisation of the business.

As agreed with the Board when Mayfair Equity Partners invested in YO! in November 2015, and with the business delivering strong results and underlying like-for-like growth, Robin Rowland will step down as Chief Executive Officer but remain on the board as a Non-Executive Director. Robin has led YO! for 18 years, taking it from three London restaurants, through three private equity transactions, to 97 sites worldwide. Today YO! serves seven million customers a year. Since receiving backing from Mayfair Equity Partners, Robin has overseen a revitalisation of the brand, resulting in like-for-like sales growth of +5% over the past 18 months. Eight new sites opened in the UK this year, as well as YO!’s first sites in Manhattan, Paris and Sydney.

The CAD\$100m acquisition of Bento, the second largest sushi brand in North America and the largest in Canada, has formed a global, multi-channel, multi-brand Japanese food group. The Group is one of the largest sushi companies outside of Japan, with over 100 restaurants around the world, 550 partnered kiosks across North America, and fresh packaged sushi supplied to a further 1700 partner sites. The combined businesses have recorded sales of approximately £175 million over the last twelve months.

Richard brings considerable international restaurant and retail experience which will benefit the newly expanded and diversified Group. Prior to his role at Pizza Express, Richard was commercial director of Morrisons and Waitrose. At Pizza Express, he led its international expansion, opened well over 120 new restaurants including in South East Asia and China, acquired its international franchise operations in the UAE and the Far East, and developed its retail business through new deals with supermarkets and online delivery platforms.

Robin Rowland, Chief Executive Officer of YO!, commented: *“I’m pleased to pass the baton to Richard. Richard inherits a business that continues to go from strength-to-strength and is now poised for rapid expansion across the Group’s range of formats and geographies. I look forward to supporting the Group’s growth in a non-executive capacity.”*

Richard Hodgson, incoming Chief Executive Officer of YO!, said: *“YO! Sushi has been an iconic consumer brand for the last twenty years, and the introduction of the Bento brand and offering presents a huge opportunity. I’m excited about joining the newly diversified Group at this pivotal point in its development, and working with the team as we capitalise on the new multi-channel multi-brand format.”*

Eric Nicoli, Non-Executive Chairman of YO!, added: *"I'm delighted to welcome Richard to YO!. He is particularly well-suited to drive the next stage of the Group's growth and development. He arrives with an impressive reputation for motivating management teams and a strong background in grocery that is rare in the casual dining sector. His extensive experience in food retailing will also help the Group achieve its full potential as a global, multi-channel, multi-format and multi-brand purveyor of Japanese cuisine."*

"Over the past 18 years, Robin Rowland has taught the UK to know and love Japanese food and, in the process, has built YO! into an iconic brand and a sought-after place to work. He is well known across the industry as the operators' operator. The board looks forward to benefiting from his ongoing insight and support."

Keep up to date with the latest from **YO!** at www.yosushi.com or via [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#), and **Bento Sushi** at www.bentosushi.com or via [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#)

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Note to Editors:

About YO! Sushi and Bento Sushi ("the Group")

Comprising of two leading Japanese casual dining brands, YO! Sushi and Bento Sushi, the Group is one of the largest sushi companies outside of Japan, with over 100 restaurants around the world, 550 partnered kiosks across North America, and fresh packaged sushi supplied to a further 1700 partner sites. Providing a global multi-channel, multi-brand offering, the Group is dedicated to serving the highest quality food in a sustainable and responsible manner. The Group sources all its fish from reputable suppliers who share the same concerns with regards to environmental issues and the sustainability of at-risk species through over fishing and the subsequent depletion of certain fish.

Founded in 1997, YO! Sushi was the first to bring to the UK the concept of a Japanese 'kaiten' sushi bar that delivered food via a conveyor belt. Today, YO! Sushi has 97 restaurants worldwide; 81 owned and 16 franchised, serving over 7 million customers a year. International restaurants include Boston, Manhattan, Sydney, Dubai, Paris, Oslo and Copenhagen. YO! Sushi was acquired by Mayfair Equity Partners in November 2015.

Founded in 1996 in Toronto, Bento Sushi is Canada's largest sushi company and second largest in North America, trading from over 600 locations, whilst supplying sushi to a further 1700 partner sites. Bento Sushi is conveniently located in 'grab and go' kiosks and sushi bars in supermarkets, colleges and universities, shopping centres and corporate dining facilities across Canada and the United States.