



SnowFox partners with YO! to form world's largest sushi company outside Japan

(London, 02 July 2019): YO!, the iconic Sushi and fresh Japanese food company, today announces a merger with SnowFox, one of the largest operators and franchise owners of sushi kiosks in the United States, creating one of the largest Japanese food companies outside of Japan. The merger has been facilitated by Mayfair Equity Partners, who partnered with YO!'s management team as part of a management buyout in 2015. Following this merger, the expanded group, made up of SnowFox, YO!, Bento Sushi, and Taiko Foods, consists of four fast-growing businesses with \$425 million of sales (including franchisees' sales), of which nearly two-thirds originates from North America.

JFE Franchising, Inc. (operating as SnowFox), founded in 2005 and a wholly owned subsidiary of Jim Kim Holdings, is the third largest sushi kiosk business in the United States, managing over 700 full-service sushi kiosks across 25 U.S. states, primarily in supermarkets. The SnowFox sushi kiosk model helps retail partners ride the rising tide of sushi's popularity with kiosks in visible, high-traffic areas of their stores by placing a high priority on food quality and customer engagement.

SnowFox's strategy has been driven by the vision and leadership of Jim Kim, SnowFox's Chairman, and as part of the merger Jim Kim will join the Board of the combined group, as well as remaining a significant shareholder. Stacy Kwon, SnowFox's President, has been crucial to the business's success and, alongside Bento Sushi CEO Glenn Brown, will become co-President of the group's North American operations, responsible for driving growth and executing the group's strategy. They will both report into the group's CEO Richard Hodgson.

Since Richard Hodgson's appointment in November 2017, YO! has continued to execute on its strategy to diversify its business model by creating a global multi-channel, multi-format Japanese food business. With this merger, the expanded group will be partnering with leading retailers across North America and the UK, including; Kroger, Loblaws, Walmart, Sobeys, Waitrose, Sam's Club and Tesco, as well as operating 1,400 kiosks, seven central kitchens and 89 restaurants. This partnership firmly establishes a leadership position in each geography and provides innovation partnership opportunities to enhance the group's B2B and B2C offerings. It will also facilitate wider distribution across all four businesses' operations and extend the group's capabilities in all routes to market.

The current size of the US grocery sushi market is estimated to be over \$1 billion per annum and growing around 13% year-on-year, with Japanese cuisine seen as one of the fastest growing food types across the globe. In February 2018, approximately only 36% of U.S. grocery stores provided frozen or fresh sushi to customers, demonstrating the material growth opportunity available. In the UK, YO! continues to develop and diversify its offer as part of its mission to increase the availability and quality of Japanese food. It recently opened a site in Ashford with a new look kaiten belt, with plans to open a new flagship site in Westfield White City later in the summer, and is currently piloting grab and go kiosks with Tesco.

Richard Hodgson, Chief Executive Officer of YO!, commented: *"We are delighted to be partnering with SnowFox given its high brand penetration, recognised product and service quality, as well as excellent industry relationships. Building on from the successful integration of Bento Sushi starting in*

2017, YO! will look to replicate this approach with SnowFox as it continues to execute its diversification strategy. By expanding its geographical presence and offering, the expanded group will meet the untapped demand of consumers around the world. Jim, Stacy and their teams exemplify the talent we wish to work with and we are incredibly honoured that we are partnering with them.”

Jim Kim, JFE Chairman, said: “We are very proud of the business we have built over the last 14 years, commencing from humble beginnings in Houston to now operating across 25 States. We are very excited about our next chapter as we work together with YO! and Bento. We’re especially thankful to every team member and every chef whose tireless work, expertise and commitment has helped us get to where we are today.”

Stacy Kwon, President of SnowFox, stated: “The United States is one of the fastest growing sushi markets globally and we estimate that sushi has the potential to account for 1% of total US food retailer sales, approximately \$10 billion. This merger brings together YO!’s restaurant expertise, Bento’s company-owned and manufactured sushi expertise, and SnowFox’s franchising and retail expertise – all of which will allow us to better serve our retail partners’ every need.”

Spayne Lindsay and Linklaters were advisers to YO! and Mayfair. M3 Asset Management, Inc., FocalPoint Securities, LLC and Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP were advisers to SnowFox.

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Notes to Editors:

YO!

Founded in 1997, YO! was the first to bring the concept of a Japanese ‘kaiten’ sushi bar that delivered food via a conveyor belt to the UK. Today, YO! has 89 restaurants worldwide; 71 owned and 18 franchised, serving over 7 million customers a year. YO! sources all its fish from reputable suppliers who share the same concerns with regards to environmental issues and sustainability of at-risk species through over fishing and the subsequent depletion of certain fish, and all YO! dishes are freshly prepared in their restaurants every day. YO! was acquired by Mayfair Equity Partners in November 2015. Since then YO! has acquired Bento Sushi in North America and Taiko Foods in the UK. Founded in 1996 in Toronto, Bento Sushi is Canada's largest sushi company and second largest in

North America. With over 600 sushi bars and 6 commissaries Bento Sushi continues to grow year-after-year based on the core values of being "the customer's choice for quick-service sushi based on excellence, trust, innovation and service."

SnowFox

Founded in 2005 and based in Houston, Texas, SnowFox is the franchisor of over 700 full-service sushi kiosks in 25 states throughout the continental U.S., Hawaii, and Alaska. The sushi kiosks are optimally placed in visible, high traffic areas inside supermarkets and club stores. SnowFox's sushi kiosks feature a trained chef making sushi live in front of prospective customers, thereby enlivening the fresh fare atmosphere. SnowFox's mission is to lead and exemplify grab-n-go sushi by placing customers first, exchanging value with retail partners, and being dedicated to offering innovative menu selections that are affordable, served fresh, in an attractive setting.

Mayfair Equity Partners

Mayfair Equity Partners is a buyout and growth capital investor providing capital to dynamic businesses in the Consumer and TMT sectors. Its primary focus is on building strong partnerships with exceptional management teams. Mayfair is an investor in YO!, a multi-brand multi-channel sushi platform with operations across the UK, Canada and the US, Ovo Energy, a high-growth tech-enabled energy challenger brand, SuperAwesome, a global high-growth digital marketing business whose technology platform enables brands and agencies to deliver kid-safe digital advertising to under-thirteen audiences, and GCI, one of the UK's leading Converged ICT Service Providers as well as several other innovative businesses in the Consumer and TMT sectors. www.mayfairequity.com