El Pollo Loco Unveils Iconic New Restaurant Design and Eyes Significant Expansion as the Brand Approaches 50th Anniversary

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Innovation, Efficiency, and Growth are at the Forefront of the Brand's Evolution

COSTA MESA, Calif., Oct. 29, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- El Pollo Loco, the nation's premier fire-grilled chicken restaurant chain, today unveiled their new Iconic restaurant prototype showcasing an enduring, yet modern and efficient design. As the brand approaches its 50th anniversary next year, they look to create a modern legacy of curated experiences, inspired by place and punctuated by new menu innovation.

While the new restaurant prototype includes existing brand elements - such as the fire stack gradient, logo, and font - that fans have come to know and love, these elements now reflect an updated color palette, footprint, and use of materials. Specifics include interior and furniture upgrades to create a bright and airy space; LED lighting; and energy-efficient hoods and HVAC.

The new restaurant design comes on the heels of hiring Tim Welsh as Chief Development Officer earlier this year. Welsh, a registered architect, joins El Pollo Loco with over 25 years of experience in restaurant and retail design. Prior to joining El Pollo Loco, Welsh was Senior Vice President of Design and Construction for TriMark, an industry leader in food service design and commercial kitchen construction. Before his time at TriMark, Welsh was the Chief Development Officer of Crunch Fitness and QDOBA® Mexican Eats. His extensive experience also includes leadership roles at The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, Sweetgreen, and Walgreens. Throughout his career, Welsh has led growth strategies, franchise sales, prototype development, remodel programs, and facilities maintenance.

Currently operating 495 restaurants across seven U.S. states, El Pollo Loco plans to open its 500th location by the end of 2024. The brand is also eyeing previously untapped markets such as Boise, El Paso, Kansas City, and Seattle-Tacoma for growth in 2025.

El Pollo Loco is committed and passionate about nurturing strong relationships, targeting new partners, and leveraging incentives to excite new and existing franchisees. As it continues to serve delicious fire-grilled chicken and better-for-you menu offerings across the nation, the brand remains committed to delivering exceptional, flavor-packed experiences to every customer. Stay tuned for more exciting developments from El Pollo Loco as it looks to expand its presence nationally.

For more information about El Pollo Loco's expansion, development, and growth, visit its Franchising page on the website. To learn and stay updated on the latest investor news and developments, visit the Investors page.

About El Pollo Loco
El Pollo Loco (Nasdaq: LOCO) is the nation's leading fire-grilled chicken restaurant known for its craveable, flavorful, and better-for-you offerings. Recently voted as the #1 "Best Restaurant for Quick, Healthy Food" in USA TODAY's 10Best Readers' Choice Awards, our menu features innovative meals with Mexican flavors made daily in our restaurants using quality ingredients. At El Pollo Loco, inclusivity is at the heart of our culture. Our community of over 4,000 employees reflects our commitment to creating a workplace where everyone has a seat at our table. Since 1980, El Pollo Loco has successfully expanded its presence, operating more than 495 company-owned and franchised restaurants across seven U.S. states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, Texas, Utah, and Louisiana. The company has also extended its footprint internationally, with ten licensed restaurant locations in the Philippines. For more information or to place an order, visit the Loco Rewards app or ElPolloLoco.com. Follow us on Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, or X.

Forward-Looking Statements

This press release contains forward-looking statements that are subject to risks and uncertainties. All statements other than statements of historical fact included in this press release are forward-looking statements. Forward-looking statements discuss our current expectations and projections relating to development, franchisees, future performance and business. You can identify forward-looking statements because they do not relate strictly to historical or current facts. These statements may include words such as "look" "aim," "eyeing," "targeting," "leveraging," "anticipate," "believe," "potential," "project," "projection," "plan," "intend," "seek," "may," "could," "would," "will," "should," "can," "can have," and "likely," the negatives thereof and other words and terms of similar meaning in connection with any discussion of the timing or nature of future operating or financial performance or other events. They appear in a number of places throughout this press release and include our 2024 outlook and statements regarding the expected results of our initiatives and our ability to capture opportunities and attract franchisees, as well as our ongoing business intentions, beliefs or current expectations concerning, among other things, our results of operations, financial condition, liquidity, prospects, growth, strategies and the industry in which we operate. All forward-looking statements are subject to risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ materially from those that we expected.

While we believe that our assumptions are reasonable, we caution that it is very difficult to predict the impact of known factors, and it is impossible for

us to anticipate all factors that could affect our actual results. All forward-looking statements are expressly qualified in their entirety by these cautionary statements. You should evaluate all forward-looking statements made in this press release in the context of the risks and uncertainties that could cause outcomes to differ materially from our expectations. These factors include, but are not limited to: global economic or other business conditions that may affect the desire or ability of our customers to purchase our products such as inflationary pressures, high unemployment levels, increases in gas prices, and declines in median income growth, consumer confidence and consumer discretionary spending; our ability to open new restaurants in new and existing markets, including difficulty in finding sites and in negotiating acceptable leases; our ability to compete successfully with other quick-service and fast casual restaurants; our vulnerability to changes in political and economic conditions and consumer preferences; our ability to attract, develop, assimilate, and retain employees; our vulnerability to conditions in the greater Los Angeles area and to natural disasters given the geographic concentration and real estate intensive nature of our business; the possibility that we may continue to incur significant impairment of certain of our assets, in particular in our new markets; changes in food and supply costs, especially for chicken, labor, construction and utilities; social media and negative publicity, whether or not valid, and our ability to respond to and effectively manage the accelerated impact of social media; our ability to continue to expand our digital business, delivery orders and catering; concerns about food safety and quality and about food-borne illness; dependence on frequent and timely deliveries of food and supplies; our ability to service our level of indebtedness; uncertainty related to the success of our marketing programs, new menu items, advertising campaigns and restaurant designs and remodels; adverse changes in the economic environment, including inflation and increased labor and supply costs, which may affect our franchisees, with adverse consequences to us; the impact of federal, state and local labor law governing our relationships with our employees, including minimum wage laws, minimum standards for fast food workers or other similar laws; the impacts of the uncertainty regarding pandemics, epidemics or infectious disease outbreaks (such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic) on our company, our employees, our customers, our partners, our industry and the economy as a whole, as well as our franchisees' ability to operate their individual restaurants without disruption; our limited control over our franchisees and potential deterioration of our relations with existing or potential franchisees; potential exposure to unexpected costs and losses from our self-insurance programs; potential obligations under long-term and non-cancelable leases, and our ability to renew leases at the end of their terms; the possibility that Delaware law, our organizational documents, our shareholder rights agreement, and our existing and future debt agreements may impede or discourage a takeover; the impact of shareholder activism on our expenses, business and stock price; the impact of any failure of our information technology system or any breach of our network security; the impact of any security breaches on our ability to protect our customers' payment method data or personal information; our ability to enforce and maintain our trademarks and protect our other proprietary intellectual property; risks related to government regulation and litigation, including employment and labor laws and other risks set forth in our filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission from time to time, including under Item 1A, Risk Factors in our annual report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 27, 2023, as such risk factors may be amended, supplemented or superseded from time to time by other reports we file with the Securities and Exchange Commission, all of which are or will be available online at www.sec.gov.

We caution you that the important factors referenced above may not contain all of the factors that are important to you. In addition, we cannot assure you that we will realize the results or developments we expect or anticipate or, even if substantially realized, that they will result in the consequences we anticipate or affect us or our operations in the ways that we expect. The forward-looking statements included in this press release are made only as of the date hereof. We undertake no obligation to publicly update or revise any forward-looking statement as a result of new information, future events or otherwise, except as required by law. If we do update one or more forward-looking statements, no inference should be made that we will make additional updates with respect to those or other forward-looking statements. We qualify all of our forward-looking statements by these cautionary statements.

A photo accompanying this announcement is available at https://www.globenewswire.com/NewsRoom/AttachmentNg/ee3d3904-5e99-4b57-aade-57d81bc901d0

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El Pollo Loco's new Iconic restaurant prototype features an enduring, yet modern and efficient design