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El Pollo Loco Announces Franchise Expansion in Utah

Long-Time Franchisees Reinvest in Brand to Open Five New Restaurants in Salt Lake City

COSTA MESA, Calif., March 2, 2015 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- El Pollo Loco (Nasdaq:LOCO), the nation's leading fire-grilled chicken chain, today announced it has signed a franchise development deal to open five new restaurants in the Salt Lake City, Utah area. Three long-time franchisees have committed to reinvesting in the brand and expanding El Pollo Loco's presence to a total of seven locations in Utah by 2018.

A photo accompanying this release is available at <http://www.globenewswire.com/newsroom/prs/?pkgid=31077>

The development will be led by three existing franchisees, Lee Alvarez, Rolando Chicas and Nelson Amaya and one new franchisee partner, David Steeves. Alvarez, Chicas and Amaya have each been with El Pollo Loco for more than 20 years and bring deep operations experience and firsthand knowledge of the brand to the team. They will be joined by Steeves who is a new partner to the brand, and possesses many years of experience developing restaurants. Combined, this group currently operates 13 El Pollo Loco restaurants throughout Southern California.

"We see tremendous opportunity to further penetrate the Utah market, and bring the El Pollo Loco brand to the Salt Lake City community," said Steve Sather, President and CEO of El Pollo Loco. "We are thrilled to be expanding our relationship with Lee, Rolando and Nelson, who over the past 20-plus years have become valued and passionate champions of the brand. We also welcome David to the El Pollo Loco franchising family. As we continue to expand our footprint in new and existing markets, we are always looking for new partners as well as current partners interested in expanding their relationship to support our long term growth and bring our signature citrus-marinated, fire-grilled chicken to more customers across the country."

Through the agreement, the franchisee group will open their first restaurant in 2016 and the remaining four restaurants by 2018. El Pollo Loco currently has two locations in Utah, one restaurant outside of Salt Lake City located in Lehi, and one in the southwest corner of the state located in Washington.

"I started with El Pollo Loco as a manager and in 1994 I became a franchisee. I have had the great pleasure of being able to grow with the brand and now, with my partners, have 13 restaurants. There is no better feeling than opening the doors of a new restaurant for the first time and I look forward to bringing the unique brand and flavors of El Pollo Loco to more customers in the Salt Lake City area," said franchise owner Lee Alvarez.

El Pollo Loco goes to crazy lengths to create Mexican-inspired entrées that are made with the freshest ingredients. It's Crazy You Can Taste.

El Pollo Loco is currently seeking highly qualified, multi-unit operators in Northern California, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Texas and Utah. For more information visit <https://elpolloloco.com/franchising/>.

About El Pollo Loco

[El Pollo Loco](#) (Nasdaq:LOCO) is the nation's leading fire-grilled chicken restaurant chain renowned for its masterfully citrus-marinated and fire-grilled chicken and handcrafted entrees using fresh ingredients inspired by authentic Mexican recipes. With more than 400 company-owned and franchised restaurants in Arizona, California, Nevada, Texas and Utah, El Pollo Loco will expand its presence in key markets through a combination of company and existing and new franchisee development. Some say the lengths we go to create fresh, delicious food are crazy. We say it's Crazy You Can Taste. Visit us on our website at ElPolloLoco.com.

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