

summosa



# Healthy profits

Meet two businessmen who proved fast food can be healthy

# Caught in New York salad daze

## COVER STORY

Two businessmen found a magic franchise ingredient in the Big Apple, writes **Nathan Mawby**

**W**HEN you have a big idea, sometimes you just have to go with it.

That's what Sumosalad founders Luke Baylis and James Miller did and now they've turned their small business into a chain of franchises that will have more than 70 stores running by year's end.

The inspiration to start their own business came when the two were working in New York, one day noticing a local sandwich shop had added a salad bar to its menu.

When they came home they identified the lack of healthy fast-food options as a gap in the market into which they could fit.

"In Australian culture healthy food isn't particularly prominent," Baylis says. "You'd have your Pizza Hut in any food court in the country, but nothing for the health-conscious."

"You had to go to a restaurant and spend \$20 on a salad to satisfy your dietary requirements."

Inspiration for a new business can come from anywhere, but looking close to home means you're more likely to find something to suit your other ambitions in life.

"Luke and I were both about 120kg when we came back from the States — so we were sumos ourselves," Miller says of the duo's decision to bring healthy eating to the Australian fast-food market.

They've since lost weight and gained experience in running their own business and franchising.

Baylis admits he and Miller have seen many health-conscious vendors try to climb into the same niche without success and says a lot of hard work is behind a successful small business or franchise.

"There's a lot of planning and a lot of trial and error and a lot of learning from your mistakes," he says.

The two still tour their franchisees' stores looking for ways to improve them and their products.

Miller says: "In any franchise you don't just wake up one day and it's perfect. We always push harder and try to improve. There's a real art to getting it right."

Running your own business is more than a job, it's a lifestyle and you have to be there because you want to, Baylis says.

"You'll be running a business that appeals to your objective in life. It's not something you're just doing for the pay cheque," he says.

And when you're running your own business that pay cheque can be a big incentive to keep doing what you love, provided you put in the effort.

"Uncapped earnings — you can put in a huge amount of effort and make direct financial gain from it," Baylis says. "People need to understand that what you put in is what you get out."

The two are still heavily involved in Sumosalad, though their role has shifted more towards being a franchising support centre — helping other people with similar goals.

There isn't a distinct career path for running your own business, but every bit of life experience helps. Using all your skills and experience helps shape the business and keeps you working to your strong points.

**W**ITH several years spent studying to be a chef, tertiary education in business retail, experience in IT and as a manager with an international Australian company, Baylis's background sounds ideal for his current job.

"I understood retail, food and had a good business background — and it was good to pool them all together," he says.

Miller, on the other hand, started working in Canberra bars before moving into sales.

Their success has come from several factors ranging from hard work and dedication to using their position as their own boss to balance their work and family lives.

Starting any business is a risk, but it's a great way to a successful career because you do it your way.

Baylis says: "I think you need to take risks to be successful and it's the people who are prepared to take that innovation who are the ones who make the most of it."

For those considering their own business, the two say it's a great opportunity to make it what you want it to be.



**Salad dressing:** (left) James Miller and fellow Sumosalad founder Luke Baylis are pushing healthy eating at the fast-food market.

Picture: BOB BARKER