

(SUMO SALAD) LUKE BAYLIS & JAMES MILLER

Naming a healthy food company with ironic elan has done this pair a fat lot of good, finds *Nick Smith*.

SUMO SALAD headquarters is a converted pub in Leichhardt, Sydney. When the *GQ* team arrives we're confronted by two picture frames on the reception area wall, each containing an enormous imprint of a hand, reminiscent of a kindergarten painting — but tea times the size. "They're the hands of champion sumowrestlers in Japan," explains James Miller, one half of the team gonged *GQ* Entrepreneur of the Year. "They're a gift from a Japanese master franchisee," says the other half, Luke Baylis. "They're looking to launch about 500 Sumo stores."

While changing, the modest pair ask how the hell they got nominated. Well, in just four years, they've single-sumo-handedly changed the face of fast food in Australia with their healthy-eating chain of salad bars. One single store launched with their life savings in Liverpool Street, Sydney has grown to over 30 nationally. There's a store in Dubai, one in the UK — and 500 Japanese ones.

Baylis and Miller met when they worked in sales and marketing in the IT industry eight years ago. "We thought with the Australian climate, the quality of the produce and the trend towards low-carb, it'd be a fantastic idea," explains Baylis. And the name? "We were having a few beers with friends," adds Miller, "and funnily enough that was the one we all woke up and remembered." Now worth \$10 million, the company is one of the fastest growing retail chains in Australia.

They split management responsibilities — Baylis covers the financial side, Miller looks after the design, menus and supply — but share a knack for cocky marketing. "McDonald's have cracked the shits with a lot of the ads we've done," says Baylis. One recent commercial rips off the McDonald's 'revisit your youth' campaign, in which kids climb out of their adult bodies to get a bite to eat. In the Sumo version they're too obese to climb through the body cavity. Subsequent ads where a Chopperesque character says, "Eat some salad you fat bastard," have penetrated the hierative male lunchtime market.

So why have they done all this? The answer is common to every entrepreneur: "To have control of our own destiny," says Baylis. "Little did we know that's not the case now — everyone has got control of our destiny except us — suppliers, franchisees, customers. A lot of other people are steering your course for you. But hey, that's business." **GQ**

James (left) and Luke both wear wool two-button jackets, \$720, and wool pants, \$325; cotton shirts, \$179, all by Farago.

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