

# Get to know Taster, the 'delivery-first' restaurant group

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Anton Soulier, founder and CEO of Taster, about working at Deliveroo, raising over \$50M and battling with inflation.

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## What was the catalyst for launching Taster?

As one of *Deliveroo*'s earliest employees, I worked with lots of brands and restaurant owners. It was during this time that I noticed how restaurants weren't reimagining their food for the delivery experience. Delivery food simply didn't taste as good as it should, with food often arriving cold or damaged.

I spotted a new opportunity – creating digitally native food brands that are scaled using tech and are centred around the customer, focusing on experience, quality, variety and speed of service.

## Tell me about the business?

We create iconic food, designed to be delivered. Our goal is to become the largest chain of restaurants in the world by enabling the next generation of restaurant owners to thrive in the delivery era.

To do so, we partner with world class food creators to create amazing food and then franchise these brands to entrepreneurial kitchen owners who want to be part of the booming food delivery market.

We are pioneering a new delivery-first category and we are the experts. Unlike other restaurant businesses where delivery is a small part of what they do – this is our entire business and we know it better than anyone.

## How has the business evolved since its launch?

We launched Mission Saigon, our Vietnamese brand, just over five years ago from a tiny kitchen in the 11th arrondissement in Paris. Orders flew in and we quickly realised that we needed to create a new kind of franchise model to scale rapidly as a delivery-first restaurant group.

We invested a lot of time and energy into building our successful B2B side of the business. For us that means world-class operations and supply, a superstar sales team and an innovative tech suite.

It also means partnering with entrepreneurial kitchen owners with the vision to join the delivery era. We've now created five iconic brands that are prepared by franchise partners from 114 locations in four countries and 60 cities.

## How are you funded?

We're lucky to be backed by some incredible investors who are excited as we are about the future of delivery-first. To date, we raised over \$50M from the likes of Octopus Ventures, Rakuten, Battery Ventures, LocalGlobe and Heartcore Capital.

Last year, we also welcomed 568 new investors to Taster through an extremely successful crowdfunding round, raising over €600,000 and smashing our targets.

## What has been your biggest challenge so far?

The biggest challenge facing the food and hospitality industry at the moment is inflation – a huge challenge that is impacting businesses across Europe.

From our side we're working hard to protect our kitchen partners – and

ultimately our consumers – by strengthening our long-term relationships with suppliers and doing what we can to future-proof our business.

## How does Taster answer an unmet need?

We are firmly in the delivery era. 60% of people in the UK order food at least once a week; 50% in France (our two main markets). But our research has found that people currently associate delivery food with convenience rather than taste and experience.

We've become laser-focused on our mission of food 'designed to be delivered'. It's difficult for traditional restaurants to focus on delivery, but we obsess about it. We can create packaging that makes sure every chip gets to the door crisp, we can find ingredients that will hold their flavour and shape after a 30 minute bike ride.

We're constantly reimagining the food delivery experience because we are 100% focused on doing right by the consumer. I can't say much more at this stage but the next evolution of Taster will be all about personalising the customer journey and experience...

## What's in store for the future?

As well as evolving the B2C side of our model, we're launching a very exciting new brand this Autumn. It's going to be game changing.

We'll also continue to partner with more kitchen owners to ensure that anyone can eat Taster whenever they want. We're on track to double our restaurant footprint by the end of this year, and we'll also be launching in our fifth market soon.

Taster is already in lots of cities across the UK and Europe, but we also think there is a big opportunity outside of city centres where there isn't as much choice on delivery platforms. Reaching those customers will also be really important for us.

## What one piece of advice would you give to future founders?

As an ambitious startup or scaleup, there's constantly a lot going on. If things

feel overwhelming, I always tell my team to go back to the North Star metrics – focus on what is really valuable and important.

Anton Soulier is founder and CEO at Taster.

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Article by MADDYNESS UK