

As Millennium Investments opens its first restaurant project in the Capital, we caught up with its chairman Khaled Bin Nasser Bin Mezkir Al Hajeri to find out what else is coming up ...



When was Millennium Investments founded and how does it relate to the Al Shafi Group?

We founded Millennium Investments in January 2012. We saw a gap in the market for an independent food and beverage developer to focus on flagship destination venues. There are a lot of restaurants in Abu Dhabi, but most of them are in hotels; we wanted to offer people something new.

More importantly we wanted to help raise the bar a little on the Abu Dhabi dining scene so that people have venues to visit here that compare to some of the world's leading outlets, which tend to opt for Dubai.

The Al Shafi Group has been in operation for around eight years and acts as a parent company to real estate (the group owns around 40 buildings in Abu Dhabi and Al Ain), contracting, financial services, media and telecoms businesses throughout the Emirate and overseas.

Can you tell us a little more about the projects you're currently working on?

We have just opened a new restaurant at Al Bandar in Al Raha Beach called Ornina, but that's the first of many openings we have planned for 2012. Other upcoming developments include the first official Fashion TV Café in Abu Dhabi at the Al Wahda Mall extension, plus a Rotana Music Café, rooftop shisha lounge and gourmet supermarket at Al Gurm (just off Khaleej Al Arabi Street).

We have approximately 12 destination venues planned for 2012 and 2013, which are now under various stages of execution.

The Fashion Café is set to open in the next three months and we think it will quickly become the favourite hangout of Abu Dhabi's discerning fashionistas. The Al Gurm development is scheduled for completion by the end of the year. We're planning a pretty extensive entertainment programme at the Fashion Café, as well as at Ornina and the Rotana Music Café.

The Rotana Café is based around the successful record label and music channel so there will be visiting DJs and Arabic music celebrities. In fact, we have signed an agreement with Rotana, which will see all artists signed with the label visit the café at Al Gurm. They will do album launches and record signings regularly at the café so we're hoping this will also be something new for Abu Dhabi.

The gourmet supermarket is also exciting, as it will offer residents of Al Gurm and visitors something a little more than your average supermarket while still acting as a source of daily necessities.

The setting at Al Gurm is really very beautiful and the view from the rooftop lounge will be something special; we're really hoping this becomes a popular hangout for the surrounding community. There's nothing else like it in the area.

How did you select the locations and the brands you have chosen to work with?

Millennium Investments will become synonymous with quality. We have spent a lot of time researching the market and looking for the best brands and offerings that we know people want. We decided that these businesses represent something that is missing in Abu Dhabi and that's why we know that they will be a success.

They are brands with soul and personality and each of them has already developed a lasting reputation.

In terms of locations, we looked at key growth areas around the city and decided on sites we knew would appeal to consumers.

We have also been lucky enough to have the support of Aldar and the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority. They have fantastic teams who understand the needs of the market and have been very supportive. They have helped us put our vision into practice and for that we're eternally grateful. We are now looking to work with TDIC and a number of other key developers in the Emirate so watch this space for more news! □

Megan Wynes