

New Brazilian coffee concept heading to Orlando

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Kitanda's menu includes a variety of coffee beverages and savory items made with Brazilian cheese bread. (Courtesy of Kitanda Coffee and Acai)



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A new coffee concept with “Brazilian DNA” is heading for the Orlando area.

Kitanda Coffee and Acai has plans to open three new stores, expanding outside of the Pacific Northwest for the first time.

“We have about 10 stores in Seattle, and we want to open in Orlando because of the demographics of Orlando with the Brazilian community. It very fast became the number one in density for Brazilians in North America,” said Luis Conde, managing director of Kitanda. The company also has one store in Oregon.

Kitanda sells high-quality coffee, acai products, and Brazilian pastries like cheese bread. The name means a small grocery or convenience store and is spelled quitanda in Portuguese.

“If someone tries to sell you acai that is not Brazilian, run away fast,” Conde said with a laugh. “We have our own bakery in house and we’re going to open a bakery in Orlando as well for the Brazilian cheese bread and other specialty goods from Brazil.”

The size of Kitanda allows the company to buy from small farms in Brazil.

“We source [acai] from some very unique folks in Brazil. They understand [acai] and are trying to remain as close to purity as you can,” he explained, adding the company adds very little sugar or coconut water to the acai to make it easier to dispense. “We’ve been doing this for about 20 years now when we thought acai was going to be a trend, but it has now become a lifestyle.”

The coffee comes from a small Brazilian co-op, with just enough highly rated coffee to fulfill Kitanda’s needs, but not enough for some of the bigger companies.

“We can be finicky with the way we buy it so we can source the most unique super-premium coffee that we can.”

For now, all of the coffee will be roasted in Seattle, but if things go well in Orlando, there might be a need for a roastery here in the long term.

John Boff started a corner store in Seattle back in 1998 to sell products from Brazil to the people there. Soon, it expanded to include a coffee shop, bringing Brazilian coffee to compete with the bigger Seattle staples like Starbucks.

“We have a very strong presence in Seattle and we’re about the only game in town [in Seattle] for Brazilians,” Conde told GrowthSpotter, adding the Brazilian population in Seattle is about 16,000. It’s about ten times more than that in Orlando.

“Even though there’s a lot of Brazilian establishments [in Orlando,] I think we learned [a lot] throughout the years and we have a beautiful DNA inspired by Brazil, but adapted to the American consumer,” he said. “We are a more organized business than most of the mom and pop Brazilian shops you can see in Orlando.”

Work is already underway for three stores with another yet to be finalized. A former Starbucks location will soon be a Kitanda in Hunter’s Creek and work is underway for locations in Celebration Pointe and at Legacy Plaza in Kissimmee.

“We’re trying to be first where our community is, the Brazilian folks, because I think initially they will help us build the traffic,” he said, adding acai is very on trend in Orlando and across the country with many stores seemingly popping up everywhere. “Celebration Pointe is just across from a high school and high school kids love acai as well.”

Plans are to open the first location in March and hiring for personnel is scheduled to start next month, but Conde said he understands delays might stand in the way.

Each location ranges from 1,500 to 2,500 square feet, with the Celebration Pointe one being the largest.

Conde said he is aware of the competition in both acai and coffee markets in the Orlando area, with Orlando having the second most coffee shops per capita in the country, according to recent data.

Also, two other West Coast coffee companies have recently expanded into the area or have plans to. Oregon-based Dutch Bros currently has three operating locations as part of its extensive Orlando rollout. Storyville Coffee is part of the plans for a mixed-use project in downtown Winter Park.

“Hopefully our assumptions about the markets are right. We’re looking forward to coming in and servicing the community with acai and coffee and I think our bakery will surprise a lot of the community. The quality and uniqueness of our bakery will surprise a lot of local consumers.”

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