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PRESS RELEASE

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CRAFT BEER MARKET EXPANDING TO CHINA

Partners with First Growth Holdings Ltd. to Open 5 Restaurants in China

Calgary, AB – Calgary based CRAFT Beer Market has partnered with First Growth Holdings Ltd. and will open the first of five restaurants in the city of Shanghai in 2015 with the other locations yet to be determined.

“When I started CRAFT I never imagined that we would be opening a location in China” says Founder and President, PJ L’Heureux. “Our vision when we opened was simply to provide an experience to people that wasn’t available in the market. Fresh local food served alongside fresh craft beer all under one roof.”

CRAFT Beer Market has become an almost overnight success story in Western Canada, opening three locations over the past three years in three different markets. The first restaurant opened in Calgary’s Beltline District in 2011 and expanded in late 2013 with locations in Vancouver’s iconic Salt Building and Edmonton’s downtown core.

At over 10,000 sq. ft and with seating for 350 plus, all of CRAFT’s locations are considered large by restaurant standards. At that size, and with the volume of people that come through the doors each day, the team was focused on creating an approachable environment and providing a unique experience for their guests. Their passion and commitment to serving fresh local food and craft beer, coupled with this, has been integral in their success in connecting with guests. These values have also resonated with other business owners and has attracted a lot of attention for new business opportunities.

CRAFT’s location and success in Vancouver caught the eye of First Growth Holdings, based in Vancouver, and they approached L’Heureux with the idea of bringing the concept to China. After a visit to Shanghai to check out the culinary scene and emerging craft beer market, it was evident that, along with Shanghai being one of the most advanced cities in the world, Chinese consumers are hungry for North American brands.

“With the draft beer sector reaching unprecedented levels in China, we feel the timing is perfect to enter the market. We are extremely excited to partner with CRAFT Beer Market to expand it’s brand into China through our network and connections,” said Paul Guedes, President of First Growth. “The proposed joint venture allows First Growth to add an additional recognized brand to our portfolio and penetrate international markets.”

[CNBC reported](#) earlier this year that, according to a EuroMonitor International report, China is set to overtake the U.S. as the world’s largest beer market in value by 2017, China is already the world’s largest beer market by volume serving more than double the pints compared with the U.S. last year as reported by CNBC.

Although there was some initial hesitation expanding to a completely new market, L’Heureux is confident in the partnership with First Growth Holdings and their commitment to ensuring the values and vision of the brand remain consistent and strong in China.

“The most exciting thing about expanding to China is what it means to our local partners here. We will continue to work with Canadian breweries and food suppliers to import products into the Chinese market,” says L’Heureux. “Our team is dedicated to our brand promise of serving fresh local food in the most sustainable way and we feel this will truly be a welcome approach in the Asian market. We are excited to be a part of the growing craft beer scene in China and introduce some great Canadian producers to the market.”

When asked about what an expansion like this could mean for Canadian breweries, Tim Barnes, VP of Sales and Marketing for Central City Brewers & Distillers from Surrey, BC said, “We consider the team from CRAFT Beer Market to be one of the most innovative partners we work with, and are both proud and excited for them in this new venture, and as well at the prospects this could bring to Central City and other BC Craft Brewers for development into China.”

Brad Goddard, Sales Manager for Calgary based Big Rock Brewing, commented, “The success of CRAFT Beer Market has truly helped elevate awareness of Western Canadian craft brewers like Big Rock, and we look forward to toasting their success in Shanghai as they introduce the best of the West to the East.”

CRAFT Beer Market is a privately owned company and will continue to be the private owner of all current and future locations in Canada. This new partnership with First Growth is a five year, five restaurant partnership for the Chinese market.

First Growth is a Vancouver based Canadian company that identifies and develops strong brands in the Canadian and international markets. They recognize the potential for certain brands to penetrate international markets and are focused on developing each one to its fullest potential. First Growth’s first brand, WineOnline, has been a strong brand in Canada since 2004 and they are currently looking to expand their wine import business into Asia.

CRAFT Beer Market – Restaurant + Bar is a premium casual restaurant with fresh local food made in house, classic music, friendly atmosphere and Canada’s largest selection of draft beer. CRAFT has restaurants in Calgary’s Beltline District, False Creek in Vancouver and in the heart of downtown Edmonton.

Keep up to date on all things CRAFT by visiting them online at www.craftbeermarket.ca where you can subscribe to their e-newsletter. Follow them on Twitter [@CRAFTbeermarket](https://twitter.com/CRAFTbeermarket) or like them on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/CRAFTbeermarket).

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