## **Interbrand**DesignForum

### **NEWS RELEASE**

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# INTERBRAND DESIGN FORUM ELEVATES AU BON PAIN BRAND EXPERIENCE

Customer-centric prototype design differentiates the brand, highlights core strengths and makes space easier to navigate

**DAYTON, OHIO**—Interbrand Design Forum partnered with bakery café Au Bon Pain to create an engaging and differentiating "marketplace" concept. The focus was on giving the store more personality, distinction and improving the ease of shopping.

One of the first remodeled locations is in Boston at 431 Boylston St. The 2,632-square-foot store opened in February 2011 and is one of 26 new cafés that Au Bon Pain expects to have open by August 2011.

To get started, the team analyzed the current experience and found significant opportunity for the brand to define its own space in the fast-casual arena. Qualitative in-field research into the market and the consumer informed brand associations, identified desired shopping behaviors and illuminated pain points, which helped the team arrive at the direction for the fresher, more convenient and authentic experience.

"The biggest issue that we needed to address was that Au Bon Pain did not have a personality or a tone of voice. When people thought of Au Bon Pain, they thought of yellow bakery," said Tom Kowalski, VP of Design, Interbrand Design Forum. "The new concept gives the brand credit for the things that it does really well. We've created destinations for core competencies and we've made it easier for customers to navigate the experience, inviting them to buy more."

The new design is bright, welcoming and energized with color and comfort. Communication zones clarify the offer and enable customers to build their order with speed and convenience. The old pencil-and-paper sandwich ordering method is replaced with wireless devices. This new efficient system allows customers to maximize their dwell time in the space and explore the complete Au Bon Pain offering. New, deeper trays with handles enable customers to build their orders easily.

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As customers enter through the dining room, oversized graphics highlight the flavor and quality of the products. The curves of the floor's tile pattern and overhead soffits guide traffic into the space and toward the right where the bakery focal tempts guests with everything from croissants to cookies. The adjacent coffee "island" makes it convenient to assemble a quick breakfast.

The Café Creations counter anchors the back of the space, encouraging customization of made-to-order sandwiches and salads. The yellow staggered tiles provide warmth and texture and make a distinct backdrop for the beautiful display of fresh salad ingredients. Overhead, the menu board clearly organizes featured signature items as well as options for customization, making it easy to peruse the offering.

Sandwiches and salads are fresh and made to order, but there's also the convenience of grab and go. Just before the custom-order counter is a hot sandwich case with already-prepared items and a refrigerated case with additional beverages and sides for those customers who are in a hurry.

To the left of the market area, a custom fixture establishes soup as a key destination. The double-decker arrangement allows space for 10 varieties of soup below, while the upper shelf offers a wide assortment of breads, suggesting everything from bread bowls to rolls as add-ons. The fixture also includes a case offering half sandwiches.

The new program establishes a clear visual and verbal style for the brand. Yellow is the signature brand color. It differentiates Au Bon Pain in the marketplace and makes a vibrant visual statement while leveraging and refreshing Au Bon Pain's existing color equity. Green harmonizes with the signature yellow, sending natural and garden-fresh cues, while berry hues and chocolate tones are incorporated as accents.

Moments of texture and color punctuate the environment. These "spice" elements create a layered aesthetic that speaks to the variety and customization that is unique to the brand experience. A balance of modern and traditional materials project a contemporary yet authentic atmosphere. This is evident throughout the space, particularly with the use of subtly grained woods banded with a metal edge.

Framed text-based art provides color and texture, while delivering branded messages. Hanging glass divider panels add privacy in the seating area, where warm brown sign bands link the panels with additional messaging. Script typeface on bold color is an ownable combination and establishes an approachable voice.

The dining room offers a similar seat count to existing Au Bon Pain restaurants, but the area is more well-defined. The clearer delineation freed up space for the market area and includes a variety of flexible seating including banquettes, bar height seating, two tops that can be pushed together as well as soft seating. Warm woods are paired with fabrics in foodcentric hues to create comfort as well as a splash of color.

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Checkout is grocery style which enables faster throughput. Four passthrough style check outs with integrated pedestals give shoppers a clear area to place their items for purchase, helping to eliminate awkward juggling during transactions.

LED luminaires were used for both general downlighting and accent lighting. The design includes warm soft general light level throughout, accented with bursts of light on the wall graphics and fixtures. Pendants provide ambient light in key places.

"We're taking the customer experience to the next level," said Sue Morelli, chief executive officer for Au Bon Pain. "The response we've been getting to our new prototype has validated our decision to accelerate our growth, including going to new markets nationally."

The positioning has moved the brand away from the QSR sphere into a category for more personalized experience, akin to the type of status enjoyed by a local deli. Au Bon Pain is now getting credit for what it has always been great at and highlighting its sincere service.

#### **About Interbrand Design Forum**

Since 1978, we have been creating retail brand experiences for companies around the world. Interbrand Design Forum's talent for game-changing innovation led us to create a business model that integrates brand strategy, shopper sciences, retail design, digital, documentation and rollout to provide clients with a comprehensive offering. By bringing together a diverse range of insightful thinkers, we deliver solutions that are rigorously analytical and highly creative through a network of 1,200 associates in almost 40 offices around the globe. For more information, please contact Beth Ling (937) 312-8803 or visit www.interbranddesignforum.com.

#### **About Au Bon Pain**

Founded in 1978, Au Bon Pain ("the place of good bread") has grown into an internationally recognized leader in the fast casual restaurant category. The chain's signature items – breads, pastries, sandwiches, salads, soups, and coffee – are served in welcoming café environments emphasizing quick service and hospitality. Au Bon Pain offers consumers a wide array of delicious, nutritional foods, and over the last three years has earned Health Magazine's designation as one of America's Top 5 Healthiest Restaurant Chains.

Au Bon Pain operates in five key trade channels including urban office buildings, hospitals, universities, transportation centers and malls, with locations ranging from 300-square-foot satellites to 6,500-square-foot cafés with 100-plus seats. It currently operates in 318 locations in the U.S. and internationally. Additional information about Au Bon Pain, which is headquartered in Boston, may be found at www.aubonpain.com.