

Early Chili's Restaurants Executive and Former Cheesecake Factory COO Mike Nahkunst Dies at 63

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Austin, TX: May 21, 2014 – Mike Nahkunst, one of the original seven employees that started Chili's in the mid 1970's has died. He was 63. Mike had a natural ability to reach people in a deep and positive way as a leader, team builder, mentor and as a good friend. As one of the all stars that helped create the multi-billion dollar casual dining sector, Mike impacted thousands of people that work in the restaurant industry; from hourly employees through CEO's at many of the leading national restaurant chains. Starting with his first restaurant job in 1972 at Pelican's Wharf in Austin, Mike enjoyed a very successful career in the restaurant industry. Most notably, as one of the first seven employees of Chili's Restaurants. From the first restaurant in Dallas, Mike rose from Store Management to Senior Vice President of Chili's over a 17-year career with Dallas-based Brinker International. After leaving Brinker International in 1994, he accepted the Chief Operating Officer position at The Cheesecake Factory in Calabasas, California moving his "Nahkunst Bunch" with him. A few years later he accepted the position as the Chief Operating Officer at BJ's Restaurant Inc. in Huntington Beach continuing to build strong restaurant teams for the industry. In 2011, Mike accepted the top spot as CEO of Kona Grill, Inc. based in Scottsdale, AZ before returning to Austin to found Austin Restaurant Partners, closing the loop from where he started in the restaurant business.

"Mike was a hard working restaurateur, executive and mentor to young operators. He also loved life with the Aloha spirit" Said Michael L. Atkinson, Mike's business partner and friend. "Mike was a true leader and restaurant business visionary. He will be missed".

For more information please visit the memorial website at <http://wp.me/P4E9X8-1>

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