

= Slug and Lettuce =

Slug and Lettuce is a chain of bars that operate in the United Kingdom , with a large number located in London and South East England . As of 2013 , there are a total of 70 outlets . Hugh Corbett opened the first Slug and Lettuce opened in Islington in 1984 . Corbett attempted to premiumise the pub experience , at a time when standards were often low .

The bars are designed for a youthful clientele , and aim to attract an equal number of women as well as men with " female friendly " designs . The chain has remained relevant by continually re @-@ inventing itself for the contemporary marketplace . The chain has gone through a number of owners throughout its history , and is currently owned by the Stonegate Pub Company , based in Luton , Bedfordshire .

All Slug and Lettuce outlets serve food throughout the day , and the meals are English inspired , with offerings including sandwiches , burgers , pasta and salads . Outlets sell a range of cocktails , beer and wine . Since 2011 , outlets have opened early for breakfast .

= = History = =

Hugh Corbett , an entrepreneur with a background in the hotel industry , opened The Slug and Lettuce pub on Islington Green , North London in 1984 . At the time , Islington was becoming increasingly gentrified due to its proximity to the City of London financial district . Corbett owned a small number of pubs , which he rechristened with humorous or nonsensical names , with the effect of differentiating them from competitors . His pubs had the then notable differential of stripped out carpets and enlarged windows so that people could see inside from the street . Corbett listed his business in 1989 as Fast Forward , by which time it was a nine @-@ strong chain . In 1990 Roger Protz identified the group as an imitation of David Bruce 's Firkin chain pubs .

In 1992 , the David Bruce controlled Grosvenor Inns acquired Fast Forward for £ 4 @.@ 46 million , bringing Grosvenor 's total number of pubs to thirty . By this time , Fast Forward owned thirteen pubs , all based around the London area , with seven under the Slug name . The decision was taken to appeal to customers in their 20s and 30s and make the bar " more contemporary " , " more of a bar , less of a pub " , " young and even rowdy " and " not blokey - not a very male environment " , aiming for an equal proportion of both male and female clientele . Sheila McKenzie , who had founded the female @-@ friendly Pitcher & Piano chain , was enlisted to enact these changes , and the Slug and Lettuce concept has been described as her " brainchild " . Grovesnor felt that the pub chain had " lost its way " , and concentrated on boosting its food operations .

In 1995 , Slug and Lettuce was rebranded again , this time as a " contemporary English bar " , designed to occupy the middle ground between a continental cafe and a classic English pub . By this time , food constituted 30 per cent of total sales . In 1997 the chain identified its primary competitors as the All Bar One and Pitcher & Piano bar chains . In 1998 Grosvenor Inns changed its name to The Slug and Lettuce Group , reflecting the fact that the now 22 @-@ strong chain had become the company 's sole focus . The chain also announced that it would not stock the Amusement with Prizes machines common in many other pubs . In 1998 , the chain encountered its first major setback after it expanded into the North of England with five outlets in Nottingham , York , Manchester , Harrogate and Leeds . These all made profit losses in their first six months of operation , which triggered the company 's first profit warning . In 1999 , the chain first entered the Scottish market , with an outlet in Glasgow . Meanwhile , the company board was criticised for a lack of dynamism and being too slow to expand its number of outlets . The chain launched a website in February 2000 .

In mid @-@ 2000 , SFI , the owner of the Litten Tree bar chain , announced a £ 31 @.@ 6 million takeover of Slug and Lettuce , paid for in shares , and McKenzie left the chain in order to pursue new challenges . By this time the chain had 32 outlets . According to analysts , the chain was too small and had too much debt to survive alone . SFI refurbished a number of their existing pubs under the Slug and Lettuce concept , and by 2004 the chain had 56 outlets . In 2005 , SFI attempted to reposition the chain as an upmarket place to eat , in anticipation of the forthcoming smoking ban .

In June 2005 SFI went into administration , and sold 98 of its 150 outlets to the Laurel Pub Company , controlled by Robert Tchenguiz , for £ 80 million . In 2008 Laurel itself collapsed , and the Slug chain became a part of the Bay Restaurant Group , later Town & City Pub Company . The chain has withdrawn from a number of locations , including Glasgow and Cardiff , leaving it with only one location in Scotland , and no presence in Wales . In 2010 , Town & City began to refurbish the outlets , switching from a brown colour scheme to aubergine and updating upholstery and lighting . In June 2011 Town & City merged with the Stonegate Pub Company .

Since 2011 outlets have opened early in order to serve breakfast . In September 2012 the Stonegate company chairman Ian Payne announced plans to expand the chain , which he claimed had outperformed the high street for the past three years , and was enjoying double digit growth . As of 2012 , outlets are being refurbished with a colour scheme of gold , purple , green and plum .

= = Operations = =

The menu largely comprises traditional English inspired cuisine , and includes such items as burgers , curries , pasta and salads . In drinks , the chain focuses on beer , wine and spirits based cocktails such as the Long Island Ice Tea and mojitos . Some outlets sell cask ale . In 2006 the chain switched to selling exclusively fair trade coffee . In 2000 , average annual turnover of each site was just below £ 900 @, @ 000 . Outlets typically occupy around 2 @, @ 000 square feet in area , and include converted banks and churches .

= = Reception = =

In 1994 The Times described the chain as " a modish hang @-@ out for the stripped pine brigade " . The chain 's interior layout has been described as " minimalist " . The chain has been criticised by some , such as the writer Will Self , for spreading a bland uniformity throughout British high streets , and for removing individual elements from the pubs that it converts . In 1997 , a Slug and Lettuce in a listed building in Islington Green illegally removed its old mahogany bar , which it was later forced to restore .

The appeal of the Slug and Lettuce concept has seen it become widely imitated , with Zoe Williams of The Guardian commenting in 2012 , " Does anybody remember in the 90s , when the Slug and Lettuce pub chain deliberately fancied itself up to appeal to the lady drinker ? And wham , two seconds later , that 's where all the men wanted to drink as well , so that all pubs had to become more like Slugs and Lettuces just to survive ? "