



# TOP 100

MOVERS & SHAKERS

2024

SPONSORED BY

**Revel**  
SYSTEMS





**Tom Harper**

Executive chairman

tomh@networldmediagroup.com

**Kathy Doyle**

CEO

kathyd@networldmediagroup.com

**Mandy Detwiler**

Managing editor

mandyd@networldmediagroup.com

**Kimberly Wright**

Digital client services director

kimw@networldmediagroup.com

**SPONSORED BY**



The 2024 Fast Casual Top 100 Movers & Shakers. ©2024 Networld Media Group LLC. 13100 East Point Park Blvd., Louisville, KY 40223. (502) 241-7545. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the express written approval of the publisher. Viewpoints of the columnists and editors are their own and do not necessarily represent the viewpoints of the publisher.

# TOP 100

MOVERS & SHAKERS

2024

What a year our winners had! From new store openings to same-store sales increases, the nominees of Pizza Marketplace's Movers & Shakers have, indeed, shook the industry.

This year, we decided to do away with categories in favor of a straight list of the Top 75 brands and the Top 25 executives. Brands nominated themselves, and a team of judges took great care in making our 2024 list. Brands were scored on their use of technology, number of stores opened, media and marketing and overall successes throughout the year.

You'll find the list includes both big chains and small independents, truly a representation of the industry itself. The Top 100 isn't solely focused on the most profitable or fastest-growing brands. While those elements are important, it also spotlights brands that are taking risks, using technology and creatively growing their footprints.

We're proud of all our winners, and we wish them well in their future endeavors.

Mandy Wolf Detwiler

Editor

Pizza Marketplace

## ABOUT THE SPONSOR

Revel Systems powers the ambitions of restaurants and retailers with a robust cloud-based Point of Sale and business management system. Improving day-to-day operations and fueling merchant growth, Revel's streamlined ecosystem helps customers seize their future by pairing an intuitive POS with powerful management tools on a single platform.



## #1 SLICE HOUSE BY TONY GEMIGNANI



Helmed by Tony Gemignani, Slice House by Tony Gemignani has grown from 19 units open or in development to 90 units this past year. Additionally, [the San Francisco-based brand](#) has 25 licensed locations in stadiums and arenas, including Sphere in Las Vegas.

In 2023, Slice House experienced 400% growth in franchise development and an average unit volume of \$2.4 million. Gemignani continues to be a leader in not only the pizza world but now in the world of franchise, as well.

The brand launched its first franchise program in 2023, giving [franchisees](#) an opportunity to benefit from a flexible revenue stream from brick-and-mortar locations to stadium kiosks with fast casual, sit-down, take-out or third-party delivery services.

“With 400% growth in franchised locations open in or in development and an average unit volume of \$2.4M, 2023 has been a tremendous year,” CEO Tony Gemignani said. “Our first year and a half were met by such incredible enthusiasm and demand from the market, we can’t wait to see what 2024 will bring. We look forward to opening additional locations to offer our authentic, award-winning pizza to new communities across the country.”

In 2023 the brand hired Rena Scott as the new CMO and David Denton as the new CTO, and signed a partnership with restaurant industry executives Don Lewandowski and Bob Baker. Denton is bringing more than 20 years experience to help the brand to continue to evolve and grow.

“Slice House has demonstrated incredible promise over the past year and a half, and I am excited to join Tony and his expert team in the explosive growth of the brand,” Denton said in a release. “I look forward to supporting the brand’s rapid rise and the success of Slice House for all current and future locations.”



## #2 MOUNTAIN MIKE'S PIZZA

For the last six years, including 2023, Mountain Mike's Pizza has produced strong sales, experienced continued growth, inked impressive partnerships and achieved many major milestones, thus making the fast-growing brand one of the most dynamic and interesting pizza chains in the U.S. The leading fast casual family-style pizza chain is known for its legendary crispy, curly pepperoni, 20" Mountain-sized pizzas, fresh sliced toppings and dough made fresh daily.

By the end of 2023, Mountain Mike's Pizza will have opened nearly 20 new locations throughout the U.S., including debuts in Texas, Colorado and Los Angeles County, and added more than 60 new units to its pipeline through franchise recruitment and development. The fast-growing chain inked multi-unit deals in Washington and Wisconsin this year, bringing development to two new states, and adding to the eight states where it currently operates restaurants.

Impressively, Mountain Mike's Pizza is on pace to surpass the 400-unit milestone by the end of 2025, which would complete an increase in units of more than 120 percent since 2017. Beyond its impressive restaurant growth trajectory, Mountain Mike's has seen same store sales (SSS) increase more than 25% over the past three years. By extending opportunities to new franchise partners looking to diversify their franchise portfolios, Mountain Mike's is primed to continue expanding in markets where there is a strong demand for fast-casual family dining concepts. Since being acquired by Chris Britt and Ed St. Geme in 2017, Mountain Mike's has experienced a strong desire among existing franchise partners to continue growing with the company.



## #3 CICIS PIZZA

As the originator of the all-you-can-eat pizza buffet concept, Cicis Pizza holds a unique position in the market, embodying a legacy that spans decades. The brand's commitment to continuous improvement and adaptation to industry trends has not only sustained the brand but has propelled it forward. In the past year, Cicis has achieved a remarkable 7.8% increase in sales, reflecting the successful openings and reopenings of several stores, with plans for further expansion in the pipeline. Headquartered in Coppell, Texas, Cicis also revamped its website experience, introduced multiple new and inventive limited-time-only products and reflected on another year that bolstered the success of its "Endless Pizzabilities" campaign. Notably, the introduction of Piezilla, a 64-slice pizza monstrosity, has captured the imagination of pizza lovers and stands as a testament to the brand's commitment to pushing the boundaries of pizza innovation.

Additionally, bringing back fan-favorites like the Pumpkin Spice Cinnamon Rolls and bringing in new and fresh initiatives like the Coca-Cola Cup partnership reflects Cicis commitment to keeping their offerings fresh and exciting while also appealing to a broad range of tastes and preferences, but still staying connected with Cicis loyal fans with LTO classics. The revamped website also played a pivotal role in enhancing the customer experience, providing a user-friendly gateway to explore Cicis diverse pizza options and exclusive deals.

Throughout the year, Cicis continued success of the Endless Pizzabilities campaign and the delightful presence of its whimsical spokesperson, C.C. Pazzin reinforced Cicis brand personality and connection with customers. The blend of paid, earned and owned media strategies played a crucial role in amplifying this messaging, driving foot traffic, fostering repeat visits and securing high-value press coverage.



## #4 FRANK PEPE PIZZERIA NAPOLETANA

Headquartered in Meriden, Connecticut, Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana is renowned for its signature coal-fired, thin-crust pizzas, crafted with the finest ingredients and meticulous attention to detail. The unique charring process and long fermentation dough create a distinctively flavorful pizza that has captivated generations of pizza lovers.

Affectionately known as Pepe's Pizza, this brand is more than just a pizza chain; it's a cornerstone of American culinary history. Founded in 1925 by Frank Pepe, the brand has remained family-owned and operated for nearly a century, carrying forward a legacy of tradition, innovation, and unmatched pizza excellence.

In 2023, dedication to continuous improvement and guest satisfaction drove impactful initiatives. The brand introduced highly acclaimed seasonal specials, receiving overwhelmingly positive feedback and reaffirming its commitment to delivering a memorable pizza experience. To show gratitude for customer loyalty, Pepe's Pizza revamped its rewards system, offering exclusive benefits to enhance the overall dining experience. In addition, the brand expanded its wine and beer selection, upgraded pizza boxes for better takeaway experiences, and overhauled its website and app, resulting in increased online sales.

In 2024, Frank Pepe Pizzeria's growth plan is grounded in the enduring values instilled by its founders, Frank and Filomena Pepe. Its growth in 2024 is not just about opening more stores; it's about deepening its connection with customers, upholding the values that define the brand, and ensuring that each new location becomes a cherished part of the communities it serves.



Old Reliable  
**THE ORIGINAL**  
**FRANK PEPE**  
PIZZERIA NAPOLETANA  
EST. 1925



## #5 MARCO'S PIZZA

Marco's is staking its claim as a leader in the pizza industry by achieving tremendous growth and sales, while becoming a leading innovator in the space. The Ohio-based brand closed out 2023 with nearly 100 franchises awarded and 85 store openings, inching closer to its 1200th store milestone. Marco's is one of the fastest growing pizza brands in the country with no intention of slowing down.

With nearly half of its current franchise network comprised of multi-unit operators, Marco's budgeted more than \$7M to invest in qualified existing franchisees' development to further grow Marco's multi-unit ownership by 10% year-over-year.

Marco's winning strategy is a combination of its quality product – which has provided the basic foundation to scale, new product rollouts, proven business model, personnel, strategic vendor partnerships, multi-channel national advertising, and a commitment to technology and innovation – all with an eye on maximizing franchisee profits while meeting the needs of today's modern customer.

2023 was the year of technological advancements for Marco's Pizza. Most notably is its collaboration with Magna, a global mobility technology company, to explore new mobility solutions in last-mile food delivery. Announced in September 2023, Magna and Marco's are developing proof-of-concepts followed by in-market pilot projects with participating franchisees. These initial projects will provide valuable data and insights into last-mile delivery usage rates, customer acceptance, and overall efficiency.

This year was filled with new initiatives to deliver unique flavors to customers. One product in particular that had a remarkable impact on the year is the Pizzoli. Debuting in October, this fully-loaded handheld features savory high-quality meats along with four melty cheeses rolled up in fresh house-made dough and baked to golden perfection.



# Top 75 Brands

## #6 PAPA JOHNS

Papa Johns' impressive achievement of 119 net-unit openings in the first three quarters of 2023 alone, showcases the brand's robust expansion strategy. This rapid growth is indicative of a strong and successful business model, making it a standout candidate for recognition among the top pizza brands. Additionally, The strong execution by Papa Johns' teams and franchisees resulting in solid system-wide restaurant sales growth in Q3 2023 underscores the brand's operational efficiency and consumer appeal.

Positive financial performance is a crucial factor in evaluating a brand's market presence, and Papa Johns demonstrated success in this aspect enhances its eligibility for inclusion. Also, Papa Johns' status as a sought-after brand globally is reinforced by its expanded partnership to open 650 new restaurants in India by 2033. This global expansion strategy not only emphasizes the brand's international appeal but also positions it as a key player in emerging markets.

The ability to form and leverage strategic partnerships is a noteworthy achievement that contributes to the brand's overall strength. Papa Johns' outstanding performance in net-unit openings, strong sales growth and global expansion, collectively showcase Papa Johns as a leading and dynamic player in the pizza industry.

"With a rich history dating back to 1984, Papa Johns has not only established an iconic presence but also continues to evolve with a renewed focus on U.S. market expansion," Patrick Coelho, SVP of Franchise Development, said. "Our brand, synonymous with exceptional pizza experiences, coupled with strategic initiatives like the addition of drive-up pick-up windows for enhanced customer convenience, exemplifies why Papa Johns deserves a prominent spot on the list, representing excellence in the pizza industry."



## #7 BLAZE PIZZA

Blaze Pizza stands out in the fast-casual pizza industry due to its distinctive 'build-your-own' pizza concept and its diverse array of premium, customizable offerings. The brand's triumph is rooted in a steadfast commitment to innovation, cutting-edge technology integration and robust franchisee support. Headquartered in Pasadena, Blaze Pizza's approach to franchising has yielded remarkable results, with over 300 locations spanning various states and countries. The brand's success is further amplified by its pioneering use of technology, leading to heightened customer engagement, industry accolades and substantial growth in digital sales.

In 2023, Blaze Pizza implemented several business initiatives that contributed to its sustained success and growth. One key initiative involved the expansion of the brand's footprint, with several new restaurant openings and the forging of multi-unit area development agreements. Blaze strengthened its international presence by signing an agreement in Bahrain through a multi-unit development deal encompassing new locations and the acquisition of an existing outlet. This expansion strategy not only broadened the brand's reach but also reinforced Blaze's position as a premier fast-casual pizza brand on a global scale.

Furthermore, its commitment to technological innovation was underscored by a comprehensive revamp of Blaze's loyalty app, harnessing cutting-edge technology to harmonize seamless marketing strategies and streamlined online ordering. This transformative tech-driven strategy not only earned industry recognition, such as the Franchise Innovation Award for "Best Loyalty App and Most Innovative Use of Data," but also facilitated substantial growth in digital sales for the brand's franchisees. These initiatives collectively propelled Blaze Pizza to new heights in 2023, marking a year of strategic expansion, technological advancement, and continued excellence in the fast-casual pizza landscape.



## #8 AZZIP PIZZA

In 2023, Azzip continued to grow its brand around the Pizza of the Month (POTM) program. The monthly specialty pizza program continues to bring unique offerings to its customers and included successful launches of the Firecracker - a Bang Bang Shrimp pizza - and Make No Mi-Steak - a Korean Beef pizza.

POTMs were ordered on 11% of pizzas in 2023 and included the March Crabness - a Crab Rangoon pizza - that topped the charts at 30% of pizzas during the month of March. Azzip continued their POTM Club subscription program in 2023 as membership in the program increased by 20% from the prior year. Azzip is planning six new pizzas for the 2024 POTM lineup.

By reinvesting in existing restaurants, Azzip improved order flow and increased peak capacity in its restaurants. Two store expansion projects resulted in same-store sales growth of 20 and 27% through reduced wait times and expanded order capacity for both in-store and online customers. One of the expansions included an online order pickup door for customers to collect their orders and reduced late orders at that store by 62%.

In 2023, Azzip same-store sales growth brought the now 11-unit fast-casual chain AUV's above \$1.4 million. Throughout 2024, Azzip will continue to look for opportunities to invest in equipment and technologies to improve the customer and employee experience in their stores.

"Azzip Pizza is quickly gaining a reputation in the fast-casual space as being a leader in taste trends," Co-CEO and Founder Brad Niemeier, said. "I want to continue to push the boundaries on what can and should be allowed to go on a pizza. 'Create Something Delicious' is our company motto and every day is a chance to live that for our customers."



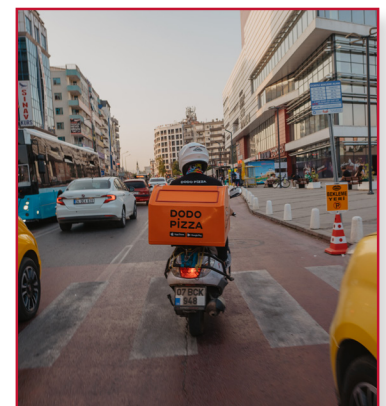
## #9 DODO PIZZA

The Russian pizza delivery franchise, Dodo Pizza, celebrated its biggest milestone yet in 2023: the opening of the brand's 1000th store. Last year was a record-breaking year in many ways, with system sales reaching \$985 million 18% YoY growth. Throughout the year, the fast-growing European brand opened 129 new stores, entered three new countries (Turkey, Cyprus and Armenia) and signed franchise partnerships with partners in three more new countries.

Additionally, Dodo Pizza, which is under the Ddo Brands umbrella, launched delivery in reusable pizza boxes in Dubai, followed by Poland and Slovenia. Dubai launched delivery in reusable pizza boxes (pizza cases). Each box is equal to 500 disposable pizza boxes and allows the brand to lessen the amount of waste that rests after delivery. Dodo couriers can grab the box right after the delivery or pick it up later upon request, once the pizza is finished. Dodo became the first company in the Middle East to propose this delivery option and the first worldwide that made it free of charge for the customers.

In February of last year, Dodo Pizza Dubai launched a pizza based on a recipe by ChatGPT, which became one of the most popular on the menu. This launch was covered by CNN, The Sun, and The Times UK.

The growth plan for 2024 includes opening stores in seven new countries including Serbia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Indonesia and Mongolia, and it hopes to double the revenue and number of stores in the Eurasian Region by 2026.



# Top 75 Brands

## #10 PIZZA RANCH

In its 42-year history, Pizza Ranch has expanded to 218 locations across 14 states. The Orange City, Iowa-based brand has a proven history of execution, innovation and growth. Pizza Ranch is 'winning' in several key areas. It's restaurant same-store-sales are outpacing the restaurant industry and the brand achieved another record sales year in 2023, helping it to continue its outlet growth trajectory, adding 8 new restaurants in 2023

There were many strong initiatives launched in 2023, from the brand's new buffet-centric ad campaign, to expansion of its FunZone Arcade brand to the implementation of a new POS system. The launch of its Revel POS system across 100% of its locations, and integration of key ancillary technologies, sets Pizza Ranch up for continued, long-term success. Pizza Ranch is planning to open 7 to 10 new restaurants in 2024, and is looking to open 16 to 20 Pizza Ranch FunZone Arcades.

The FunZones include party rooms that can set additional large pastries, as well as provide up to 60 games. This concept was created in 2022 when a franchisee, located in a strip mall, had some extra space and added a handful of games. This initiative is continuing to provide

Opportunities for franchisees. A new FunZone Rewards program for the arcade side was introduced in 2023, and has been met with positive feedback from customers and franchisees.



## #11 FARRELLI'S PIZZA

Farrelli's will celebrate its 29th anniversary in 2024. In the past year and a half, the DuPont, Washington-based brand has opened four new units, taking the company from eight units to 12, and marking the most significant expansion period in the company's history. This year, the brand was also just recognized for the 6th consecutive time as the Best Pizza winner in the Best of Western Washington contest put on by King5 (NBC) Evening Magazine, the top regional people's choice awards.

In addition to the regional expansion, Farrelli's has entered the exciting world of stadium concessions, with an off-premise sales venue at Cheyney Stadium in Tacoma, Washington in a three-year partnership with the Tacoma Rainiers minor league baseball affiliate to the Seattle Mariners. Likewise, it has also partnered with the nationally ranked Div. II Men's NCAA Basketball program at St. Martin's University in Lacey, Washington selling pizzas through their concession stand during all men's and women's basketball games. The result of that partnership in the first years was \$75,000 in pizza sales through the stadium and another \$425,000 in sales lift at stores through in-stadium promotions driving traffic back to its restaurants.

"Every year I am blown away by the commitment our team has in developing disciplined and caring hospitality professionals," CEO Jacque Farrell said. "Their unwavering commitment to that human development is what has allowed our company to be successful and prepared for regional expansion. As we approach 30 years in business it truly feels like we are just getting started and I love it."



## #12 HANGAR 54 PIZZA/WINGMAN PIZZA

Hangar 54 Pizza and Wingman Pizza are quickly becoming one of the top pizza brands within the convenience and grocery industries. These two sister brands were created to bring that QSR high-quality pizza product in the convenience environment. Hangar 54 Pizza is backed with full technology including mobile apps, online ordering and third-party delivery to offer the highest level of convenience to consumers. Wingman Pizza is a simple license agreement offering flexibility to operators, yet providing the same high quality products. Both of these brands offer a mix of made-to-order hot 14" pizzas, Take & Bake, convenient Grab & Go slices, and new in 2023 – a 7" personal pizza option.

Also new in 2023, the brands expanded the menu offerings to include wings and more. In 2023 alone, there were 39 new Hangar 54 pizza franchise locations sold and 119 Wingman Pizza locations sold, bringing the total number of 130 Hangar 54 Pizza locations to 130 in 26 states, and 238 Wingman Pizza locations in 36 states.

VP of Marketing Amanda Wagner said the brands take a lot of pride in food quality and the support provided to make retailers profitable.

"Being a 100% employee-owned company, we are passionate about winning and doing everything we can to grow sales and making sure our retailers are profitable and growing year-over-year," Wagner said. "Consumer experience is critical with high quality products and convenient ordering options. We wrap it up into a turnkey program making it easy for retailers to implement and succeed. Watch for these 2 brands to keep growing rapidly."



## #13 AMICI

The Amici brand is a Madison, Georgia based concept that centers around pizza, wings and friends. The company is now experiencing an unprecedented period of growth, even as it celebrates its 30th Anniversary and is embraced in both rural and urban environments

Amici opened a new franchise in Perry, Georgia in early 2024, and is spending the remainder of the year streamlining processes and improving the use of recent technological changes in the organization, like Restaurant365 and its new POS provider, Toast.

Amici recently switched from Aloha to Toast POS and is in the process of retrofitting its restaurants to utilize the new POS. Through Toast, Amici leverages online ordering, is integrated with DoorDash and other third party providers, and uses Kitchen Display Screens as well as printers in its kitchens. This has not only been more affordable for franchisees and corporate-owned locations alike, it also made the latest technologies available in a streamlined platform that all just works together. The brand also continued to refine its use of the Restaurant365 suite of restaurant administration programs to handle everything from inventory, billing, food cost/labor management and more.

Mike Torino, CEO of Amici Food Group, said the brand concentrates on the three pillars of its family-dining concept: Pizza, Wings, and Friends.

"Amici figured out over 30 years ago that if we consistently deliver excellence on the first two pillars, the community will naturally provide the third," he said. "We like to think of ourselves as the town's living room, and that feeling of getting together with friends for a couple of slices and a pint of one of our in-house brewed beers continues to resonate with every community we join."



# Top 75 Brands

## #14 CANE ROSSO

CANE  ROSSO

Cane Rosso first brought wood-fired Neapolitan style pizza to the Dallas Fort Worth metroplex in 2011. Since then, the pizza standards in Dallas have risen and brought in lots of fierce competition, both local and national. Still, Cane Rosso has stood the test of time and grown to seven locations across DFW. The brand's success also allowed it to expand the company with two other pizza brands (and styles): Zoli's Pizza makes New York style pizza (round and square pies), and Thunderbird Pies is its first venture into making Detroit-style pizza.

The brand opened one location in 2023 and has one new location under construction, prepping for a Spring 2024 opening. It is on the lookout for another new location to open later this year, bringing the growth plan to two new locations for the company per year.

Jay Jerrier, founder/owner, said the team continues to work hard.

"Every year gets harder than the last, and while we have faced some of the same struggles that most other restaurants have dealt with for the past three to four years, we are lucky to have established ourselves as a brand that people really count on for their pizza, parties, and nights out with the family," he said. "We are focused now on maintaining (or raising) our quality standards, implementing tech solutions that will help us grow, and working to ensure that we don't become stale as a brand as the years go by."



## #15 HUNGRY HOWIE'S

The originator of the Flavored Crust pizza, Hungry Howie's is a national franchise that has been known to bring the flavor since its inception 50 years ago. Popular for its high-quality pizza at a great value, the franchise makes its dough daily in each of its locations, allowing the brand to stand out from other pizza chains. Hungry Howie's expanded nationwide this year, increasing its unit count within its key markets.

Celebrating 50 years in the pizza industry in 2023, Hungry Howie's launched its Secret Menu, featuring fan-favorite pie combinations available exclusively through a QR code scan across its system through year-end 2023. The Secret Menu drove significant success in the first month alone, resulting in over \$515,000 in sales and 1.42 percent of total system-wide sales in August. The brand saw such a significant sales increase that the Secret Menu will be continued through 2024.

Every October, Hungry Howie's raises funds for the National Breast Cancer Foundation through its "Love, Hope & Pizza" Campaign; and this year, the brand raised approximately \$5 million in funds in its 15th consecutive fundraising campaign.

Hungry Howie's plans to expand its footprint in key growth markets throughout the United States. The franchise plans to open 10-15 new stores in 2024 with its primary target for development in locations such as Michigan, Alabama, Ohio and Texas.

Menu innovation and evolving technology continue to play a vital role in the company's customer experience. Hungry Howie's recently released its new pizza party planner website that calculates the recommended amount of pizza customers should order based on the number of guests and their age range.



# Top 75 Brands



## 16. Grimaldi's Pizzeria

Some may know Grimaldi's as "The Pizza that made the Brooklyn Bridge famous", but as the brand continues to grow and evolve its pizzerias, CEO Joseph Ciolli said its name has grown to mean something even greater.



"We have an incredible brand with more than 100 years of history in its making, enjoyed by pizza lovers from around the world," Ciolli said. "With best-in-class culinary offerings and a highly capable leadership team poised for growth, we are now ideally positioned to deliver our exceptional guest experiences to neighborhoods all around the United States, through franchising."

This year, the brand took its coloring sheets to the digital age by launching its first branded web game, Ready, Set Dough!, available for all to play on Grimaldi's website and app. Additionally, it also expanded internationally for the first time with its newest franchise location officially open in Abu Dhabi.

In addition to serving its famous coal, brick-oven pizza overseas, the Grimaldi's franchising program grew to three franchisees, with two current operating locations (Abu Dhabi and Huntsville, AL) and four more locations planned for 2024. While it expands to neighborhoods across the United States and beyond, Ciolli said

Grimaldi's prides itself on continuing to create brick-oven pizzas from traditions dating back over 100 years to make the best New York-style pizza around. In 2023, the launch of its slices program created a new avenue of revenue and the Pizzeria Rewards Program surpassed 750,000 members.



## 17. Billy Bricks

Served in a Premiere Casual Atmosphere, Billy Bricks has specialized in the craft of thin-crust, Neapolitan and New Haven Inspired Pizza, Baked in an authentic wood-fired, brick oven since 2005. CEO Ric Gruber said when his family started with its first location, people thought his father had lost his mind. Opening up in Chicago, "pizza country," with this unique (at the time) style and in an open-faced kitchen, where customers place their order at the counter, was risky. But, he said it made Billy Bricks the first of its kind in Illinois, and they've proudly grown over the years to include multiple stores, but also multiple food trucks that are also one-of-a-kind.



"As a pioneer in the fast casual and wood fired pizza spaces, Billy Bricks has always owed its success and now future growth plans to a willingness to innovate and adapt to new technologies and market

changes, while remaining true to its core values of providing "Real People. Real Food. Real Fast," CEO Ric Gruber said.

The brand began 2023 by starting its EOS journey. The biggest change in the company and its growth trajectory was in investing in its people and their growth.

"If we were going to get where we want to go, we all needed to be the right people in the right seats with a shared vision," he said. "We set out to put in a system that would be based on streamlined communication amongst our teams with a clearly articulate set of core values and shared vision."



## 18. Artichoke Basille's Pizza

Artichoke Basille's Pizza



**Artichoke Pizza**

exploded onto the NYC pizza scene in 2008, and has been making a splash in the industry with their authentic New York style pizza ever since. Artichoke Basille's Pizza specializes in serving an authentic style of pizza born and bred from fourth-generation New York City pizzaiolos.

Artichoke's signature slices and whole pies feature a variety of toppings that range from the unique (artichoke cream sauce and Surimi crab meat) to more traditional favorites like pepperoni, meatball, and ricotta. Unlike other fast casual pizza concepts, Artichoke's pies are never made in a conveyor belt oven, but instead cooked to perfection in a

# Top 75 Brands

more traditional deck oven. Its award-winning pizzas have attracted a cult-like fanbase of local New Yorkers, tourists, and celebrities alike -- Leonardo DiCaprio has been said to ship Artichoke pies from NYC to his home in Los Angeles.

In 2023, the New York-based brand brought the total number of locations from coast to coast to 14 units. Due to this growth, Artichoke Pizza is the largest and fastest authentic New York-style pizza concept in the U.S. Additionally, its concept yields great unit economics, low start-up and food costs, impressive margins, and has national name recognition to boot.

In 2024, Artichoke Pizza intends to grow by expanding more locations and maintaining our existing shops. We strive to continue the Artichoke brand across the country, and plan to secure more multi-unit franchise deals while also pursuing more corporate growth.



## 19. Chuck E. Cheese

As the only family entertainment center brand that has a mainstay in the cultural zeitgeist of American pop culture over the last four decades, Chuck E. Cheese and its constant evolution has allowed it to be a part of billions of family memories. Chuck E. Cheese is the place 'Where A Kid Can Be A Kid' with a commitment to providing



a fun, safe and inclusive environment, and helping to protect families through industry-leading programs such as Kid Check.

As a strong advocate for its local communities, Chuck E. Cheese has donated more than \$22 million to schools and non-profits through its fundraising programs. The Company and its franchisees operate a system of nearly 600 Chuck E. Cheese fun centers, with locations in 47 states and 19 foreign countries and territories. The reimagined Chuck E. Cheese experience is entertainment-focused and technology forward. Technology improvements include self-service kiosks, table ordering, dynamic digital menu boards and an e-ticket system.

Chuck E. Cheese rolled out its first domestic Trampoline Zones in 2023, which allow kids up to 52" tall to bounce in a safe, enclosed environment. The brand also expanded the distribution of its licensed fan-favorite frozen pizza to Walmart groceries across the U.S. As an award-winning frozen pizza in the groceries category, the product has been a hit with families as an easy, delicious meal at home. In addition to Walmart and Kroger, new distribution in 2023 included Winn-Dixie, Giant Food, Hannaford and other select grocery stores across the country.

## 20. Jet's Pizza

Jet's Pizza saw substantial growth in 2023 and expanded its store count bringing the total number of stores to 420 in 21 states. This number is set to be even higher in 2024. Jet's Pizza also stands out in the industry by embracing AI technology with its



phone bot system and text ordering that enhances the customer and employee experience. These digital platforms are really proving to be effective, resulting in more than \$300 million in digital sales.

Jet's Pizza did nearly a half a billion dollars in overall net sales this year. These sales were aided with the launch of successful LTOs including the Triple-Roni and the Popcorn Chicken Pizzas, salad and sidekick. Jet's also upgraded its [gluten-free crust](#) that has less starch, resulting in a lighter, airier crust.

In addition to menu innovation, Jet's continues to grow and be a dynamic player in the pizza industry. With some new hires at the corporate level, the brand has been working toward promoting and bringing in new franchisees, allowing the brand to spread to new states such as Utah and Washington in early 2024.

President and CEO John Jetts, said Jet's Pizza has come a long way.

"I started this company with my brother, Eugene Jetts, in 1978 and since then we have grown to 420 stores in 21 states," he said. "This growth would not have been possible without our commitment to innovation, while maintaining a high quality product. We continue to look for ways to give our customers the best experience when ordering their pizza. We look forward to our future growth and all that 2024 will bring."

# Top 75 Brands



## 21. Mister O1 Extraordinary Pizza

Led by Chef and Founder Renato Viola, Mister O1 Extraordinary Pizza is continuing to build on its reputation of quality and consistency. Viola is a pizza [world champion](#) who believes pizza should be an experience. Bringing unmatched skill and creativity to his pizzas, Viola's pies have been named "Best Pizza" by Food & Wine Magazine, acknowledging his dedication to delivering an outstanding dining experience.



In 2023, Mister O1's emphasis centered on enhancing uniformity across all 15 locations. As the organization continues to expand, ensuring a consistent and exceptional experience across every new opening has become pivotal to this brand's growth. This concerted effort toward standardization not only reinforces Viola's commitment to excellence but also establishes a professional benchmark that resonates seamlessly across all facets of the brand's operations.

In 2024, the brand plans to open more locations in Florida and Texas.

"Before we opened, most people thought I was completely crazy and that it would not survive more than three months," Viola said. "Today the same people say

that I'm a genius. I'm not crazy or a genius but I always believe in myself and work hard to be different."



## 22. Sbarro

Sbarro is the leader in pizza by the slice. Last year, the Columbus, Ohio-based brand opened a record number of new locations totalling 103. This year, Sbarro expects to once again open more than 100 new stores, bringing the total number of locations to more than 800 that are either open or in development. Sbarro opened in 1956, when Camela and Gennaro Sbarro opened their first location in Brooklyn.



What started as a small business to make pizza slices for shift workers, quickly led to a second location. Over the past 60 years, the global brand has expanded into 28 countries, and offers a variety of pizzas, pastas and salads. With a knack for setting up shop in a variety of settings, Sbarro locations can be found in malls, military bases, travel centers and casinos, as well as stand-alone locations.

In 2023, the brand launched a new mobile app with slice awards given and included all third-party delivery platforms. In 2024, the brand looks to expand it's OLO third-party platform as well as debuting a variety of new menu items.



## 23. Donatos Pizza

Donatos Pizza has seen consistent growth throughout



2023 and plans to build on this momentum in 2024. Since the beginning 2023, Donatos Pizza opened more than 30 locations, including five traditional stores, along with 26 strategic partnership locations. With a presence in 29 states, the franchise presently boasts a network of over 460 locations. Donatos' products are also proudly served in nine sport and entertainment venues, including being the official pizza provider for the Cincinnati Bengals in Paycor Stadium.

Donatos' strategic partnership with Red Robin Gourmet Burgers, a full-service restaurant chain, has been a win for both Donatos Pizza and Red Robin. The Donatos Pizza partnered locations are a proven, high-return growth driver for the Red Robin brand. Today, the partnership includes 274 Red Robin locations with plans to scale to additional markets across the nation. With a powerful traditional store AUV of over \$1,290,000, Donatos Pizza is accelerating growth plans across the United States and has entered the key market of Dallas, Texas. Based on Donatos' current pipeline of franchise partners and the expanding growth from non-traditional partner locations, the brand is poised to launch over 150 new restaurants in 2024.

# Top 75 Brands

Donatos Pizza continues to be an innovator in restaurant technology and was awarded the 2023 CREATORS award by Nation's Restaurant News, recognizing the best innovations in the restaurant business. Working with Agápe Automation, Donatos Pizza introduced several solutions to help improve efficiency and consistency in the kitchen with a line of Sm^rt equipment that help Donatos Pizza eliminate excess food waste, streamline production and be more efficient, allowing more focus on excellent customer service.



## 24. Happy Joe's Pizza & Ice Cream

Happy Joe's Pizza & Ice Cream is a unique pizza brand based out of the Quad Cities. It was founded in 1972 by Joe Whitty with a dream to create a restaurant concept that focused on serving America's two favorite foods - pizza and ice cream in a family-friendly, celebratory environment. Owned and operated by Dynamic Restaurant Holdings Inc., Happy Joe's has been recognized in several awards and lists because of its ability to be a trendsetter in the pizza industry.

The brand continues to stand out from its competitors with its willingness to take a leap, creating unique and innovative pizza, and building a place where people can celebrate and be happy. The



brand continues to be recognized for its outstanding community involvement, diverse menu, family-friendly environment and growth. It has a commitment to quality with the fresh ingredients, consistency of great food and customer satisfaction.

In 2023, Happy Joe's partnered with Integrated Digital Strategies as it continued to expand its footprint, including launching a new franchising only website to continue expanding the growth of the brand nationally. The proprietary franchise lead generation process was founded by IDS that provides innovative and integrated solutions to solve the unique needs of multi-location businesses. This is an integral part to Happy Joe's explosive growth planned for 2024 and beyond. The brand plans to open locations in Florida, Arizona, Texas, Montana, North Dakota and two or three locations in Egypt.



## 25. Mr. Gatti's Pizza

Mr Gatti's is an iconic buffet brand that has experienced phenomenal growth during the past several years. With more than 55-years in business, the Fort Worth-based brand is on a trajectory with further significant expansion on the horizon. With increasing interest in, and excitement about the brand, Mr Gatti's notched 2 of the Top 10 "most clicked"



among published Pizza Marketplace articles of 2023. Mr. Gatti's has plans to open 10 more locations in 2024, bringing its total count to more than 140 locations open or in development.

CEO Jim Phillips said the strong performance of Mr Gatti's is all about their employees.

"Our success over the past several years is a testament to our dedicated franchisee network who continue to achieve sales levels that exceed 2019 and each year thereafter," he said. "As franchisor, our commitment is to be supportive to our franchisees and not confound the great operators who we are lucky to have in this amazing brand."

To end 2023, Mr. Gatti's opened a Family Entertainment Center in Louisville, Kentucky that offers education programs to local schools as well as child development centers. This is just one example of the commitment this brand has to bettering the communities in which it serves.



## 26. Mellow Mushroom

Mellow Mushroom has been serving out-of-this-world stone-baked pizzas since 1974. Founded in Atlanta, Georgia and now operating more than 160 locations across 16 states, the iconic pizza bakers are all about being high on pizza, people and



# Top 75 Brands

passion. Elevating the dining experience with a “Higher Order of Pizza”, Mellow Mushroom’s coveted secret dough recipe and red sauce have garnered a cult-like following over the years. Dedicated to innovating its pizza menu with an ever-evolving rotation of new flavors and ingredients, the brand continues to cement its status within the world of hand tossed pies.

Mellow Mushroom’s menu of hand-tossed, stone-baked pizzas also includes munchies, greens, calzones, hoagies, sweets and more with plenty of gluten-free and vegan options. Behind the Mellow Mushroom bar, guests can enjoy a selection of fun, handcrafted cocktails and mocktails, wines and beer, including those from local breweries. Each location is locally owned and operated, providing a local flare baked in with Mellow’s trippy vibes, high quality, fresh ingredients and psychedelic artwork.

In November 2023, Mellow Mushroom launched a company-wide rebrand complete with a new, invigorated persona brought to life through a refreshed logo, menu, website experience and more. The long-time pizza favorite debuted a new digital experience and is rolling out the new look across all restaurants with vibrant colorways and new signage, newly designed menus, revamped retail items, uniforms and other visuals, new and updated characters, plus a coming-soon prototype location in Atlanta. The launch honors where the brand came from while redefining the future of Mellow Mushroom with a fresh look for the brand’s upcoming 50th Anniversary, which will take place in 2024. mes from their phone or any other device.



## 27. New York Pizza

Anyone who has experienced [New York Pizza](#) knows that everything revolves around taste. This Amsterdam-based brand has been the trendsetter in the Netherlands since it opened in 1993. With a menu that consists of pizzas, pastas and surprising side dishes like nachos, wings and nuggets, this brand also serves up great customer service, fun promotions in a unique atmosphere.

New York Pizza is one of the most ambitious and fastest growing pizza franchises in Europe, with more than 300 stores and a strong growth platform. The brand opened 28 locations in 2023 and is planning 25 more in 2024. CEO Philippe Vorst has been in the business for more than 30 years, and has led New York Pizza to tremendous growth, including the addition of a dough factory with Euro Pizza products.

New York Pizza also has a sustainability model that includes 90% of all deliveries made with electric vehicles. These deliveries include menu items that are made all-natural products. These high-quality and fresh products are the combination of the distinctive preparation method and the American-oriented

service -where the brand strives to go one step further if possible in order to lay the foundation for the New York Pizza concept. According to its website, New York Pizza is “Freakin’ Fresh”. This year, the brand will introduce a new line of products called Thin & Crispy with more taste and less calories.



## 28. Peter Piper Pizza

Peter Piper Pizza is a go-to destination for dining and entertainment while maintaining a neighborhood feel across its more than 110 locations in the Southwest. The brand tagline is “The Fun is Baked In” and exemplifies its food, family, fun culture. Peter Piper Pizza was founded in Glendale, Arizona in 1973 and has been making families happy for 50 years, taking pride in delivering pizza on dough made-from-scratch every day in its restaurants with fresh toppings. It focuses on providing the highest quality food and fun that reconnects family and friends. The menu also includes starters, wings, salads and desserts.

Peter Piper Pizza opened a brand-new concept, Peter Piper Pizzeria in Kansas City in 2023, which is a brand extension within the fast casual dining segment that offers the perfect spot for a dinner out



# Top 75 Brands

with the family, catching the game with friends or a solo lunch out all in a casual, fun environment. In 2024, the brand plans to open one express location in Tucson and a big-box Peter Piper Pizza in the Phoenix Metro.

“Peter Piper Pizza is a staple of food and fun throughout the southwest and has been able to help families create memories for more than 50 years,” CMO Genaro Perez said. “The neighborhood destination has allowed families to enjoy high-quality food at reasonable prices for generations.”

Piper Pizza supports children’s education by donating more than \$600,000 annually to schools, hospitals and nonprofits through its Fundraising Program that focuses on children’s education and development.



## 29. Old Scratch Pizza

Old Scratch Pizza opened its fourth location in January, bringing its “Midwesternly Neapolitan” pizza to the community of Troy, Ohio. After opening its first location in October 2016, Old Scratch’s concept of “Neapolitan Pizza Beer Hall” took the Dayton market by storm, quickly earning Best Pizza in Dayton, as well as the highest rated pizza restaurant (or any



restaurant) on Google and Yelp.

Each of its four restaurants feature three wood-burning ovens and a dynamic open kitchen that delivers not only amazing Neapolitan pizza with a midwestern sensibility, but also not-your-average-pizza-place salads, and wood-fired vegetable dishes like whole-roasted cauliflower that look and taste like fine dining restaurants. Additionally, the brand features 24 craft beers on tap.

Operationally, the concept is going full-steam ahead and is positioned for growth. This year, the brand will see system-wide sales of over \$11M, making it one of the higher-volume small chains in the country.

In 2023, Old Scratch Pizza doubled-down on the customer experience, and developed a unique order-of-service for first time customers to convert them into long-term fans.

Founder Eric Soller said Old Scratch Pizza is a unique concept in the marketplace.

“People are consistently surprised by the level of quality and consistency of our food and the kindness of our service,” Soller said. “It is more than anyone expects from a neighborhood pizza place. Delivering on that kind of customer value is the result of the operational excellence our team has developed over the last several years, and what is positioning us for growth in the future.”

## 30. Fat Boy's Pizza

Fat Boy’s Pizza has been growing rapidly since its first location opened in 2019. The brand has 10 restaurants spanning across Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi.



Throughout 2023, it has been working to implement the newest and greatest technologies to improve the operations experience as well as the guest experience.

With a new Drive-Thru Express model, new virtual-kitchen concept launch (Wing King), hitting over 30k followers on social platforms and more than 3.3M impressions, Fat Boy’s is proving that innovation pays off.

Fat Boy’s Pizza has positioned themselves against any major fast-casual restaurant technology-wise. Not only has its technologies improved but its team continues to grow and restructure themselves with the addition of COO Casey Biehl and Director of Marketing and Events, Faith Hiles. The team at Fat Boy’s Pizza does BIG pizza and will continue to do BIG things in 2024.

The brand has two signed leases in the Houston market and has developed the prototype for its Drive-Thru Express models, as well as adding a co-branding opportunity with a fast casual brand from the North East.

COO Casey Biehl said a focus on culture is what continues to propel Fat Boy’s Pizza.

“Our team has created a company culture that is inclusive and uplifting and despite our corporate owned structure, we provide profit-sharing opportunities with our team as well as promoting an entrepreneurial mindset,” he said. “We

# Top 75 Brands

have successfully created an environment where we seek feedback and ideas from individuals to implement into our operations.”



## 31. *Pizza Guys*

California-based Pizza Guys is an innovative company constantly working to keep up with different food trends.

In addition to valuing its employees, Vice President of Operations Reza Kamalian said the brand values its customers and the communities they serve.

In order to best serve the communities, franchisees get involved with the American Cancer Society every year raising money for breast cancer research. In addition, many are highly involved in their local communities donating food, gift cards, etc.

“Our customers make us successful but so do our franchisees,” Kamalian said. “That is why it is important for us to provide top notch support to them. We are not the kind of company that grants a franchise and checks in once a year. We are constantly having conversations with our franchisees, providing resources, support and education to make them successful. Their success is our success.”

In 2023, Pizza Guys incorporated another virtual brand, Pizza Piatta, into its system. This allows the brand to offer a diverse menu and cater to a variety of customer

preferences, while adding to the overall bottom line. With 85 total units, Pizza Guys opened three locations in 2023, and has a goal for opening a minimum of 10 stores and expansion into Texas in 2024.

“The Pizza Guys team, leadership, franchisees, employees are the backbone of our success and we continue to look forward to creating lasting connections with new communities as we continue to grow and share our passion for great pizza,” Vice President of Innovations Kamiar Nejad said.



## 32. *Papa Gino's*

Founded in 1961, Papa Gino's Pizzeria is a proud New England staple with a heritage of serving high quality, handmade pizzas with fresh ingredients and an over 80-year-old Italian family recipe. From a single restaurant in East Boston, Papa Gino's has expanded to nearly 100 restaurants in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Connecticut.

For nearly 63 years and counting, Papa Gino's restaurants have remained a neighborhood favorite using the same distinctive, authentic Italian taste from the original recipe that Founder Mike Valerio brought over from Italy in the 1930's. While the pizza and its same great taste have remained unchanged, that doesn't mean that Papa Gino's hasn't grown with the times. Papa Gino's has recently been in a phase of remarkable

growth and innovation, including rapid technological advancements with a new mobile app and website. The goal of the tech innovation is, and will continue to be, to provide Papa Gino's guests with a sleek and seamless ordering experience. Papa Gino's is dedicated to providing unparalleled guest satisfaction, always prioritizing guest feedback and continuously striving to enhance their dining experience.

Chief Marketing Officer Rachel Stephens said Papa Gino's is more than just your neighborhood pizza place.

“Our restaurants are defined by the communities they've been a part of for over six decades,” she said. “With so many families having grown up alongside the brand, having childhood birthday parties in our dining rooms or holding their first job with us, there is an untouchable emotional connection that so many New Englanders have with this iconic brand. It is our unwavering commitment to quality, innovation, and our connection to the communities we are in that have made us so successful.”



## 33. *BoomBozz Pizza & Watch Bar*

With more than 25 years of crafting mouthwatering pizzas, this award-winning pizzeria has been a staple for pizza aficionados in locations across Kentucky, Indiana and Tennessee. Founder and CEO [Tony Palombino](#) said dedication to quality, unique flavors,

**BOOMBOZZ**  
PIZZA • WATCH BAR

# Top 75 Brands

innovative combinations and his amazing staff is the pinnacle behind Boombozz Pizza & Watch Bar's success.

"I believe our dedication to crafting pizzas transcends mere ingredients," he said. "It's about creating an experience that resonates with every bite. For over 25 years our commitment to excellence, innovative recipes and team members have made us who we are."

The name "**Boombozz**" comes from the Italian slang and means wild, crazy and fun, and Palombino puts those traits into every part of the brand. Growing from a 600-square-foot pizzeria to eight dine-in tap houses and watch bars, Boombozz is planning to open two additional locations in 2024. Last year, Boombozz created a new digital training program for its back-of-the-house staff, and now all facets of its operation are technology based.



## 34. **Crushed Red**

Headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, Crushed Red is always looking to connect with the community that helped them grow. With six locations, the brand plans to open three more locations in 2024. By working with other locally owned and operated partners like Gift-a-Meal, Crushed Red has been able to give back to the community. Its guests use the Gift-a-Meal app, which uses the local food bank Operation Food Search to connect those in need with meals. The



brand views this as a total community effort trying to fight the big issue of food insecurity.

Through this initiative, the brand built upon its reputation as a community-driven restaurant by sharing updates on the impact created on its social media each month. The program also incentivized guests to promote the restaurant to their friends on social media in a trusted and authentic way. Crushed Red had thousands of guests participate in the initiative, providing over 30,000 meals to families in need. It had a 65% share rate of guests spreading uplifting photos of their experience on their personal social media channels in addition to on the GiftAMeal app, creating over 200,000 impressions. On average across its analysis, guests using GiftAMeal have returned 39% more frequently, spent 20% more per check, and tipped 32% more than those that did not participate, yielding a high ROI for the restaurant's bottom line in addition to supporting those in need in the communities it serves.



## 35. **Minsky's Pizza**

Minsky's Pizza came to life in 1976 after Founder Gregg Johnson sold



his interest in the first pizza restaurant company he founded, Godfather's Pizza. Moving from Omaha (where he founded Godfather's) to Kansas City was a natural fit after having spent many weekends traveling to nearby Kansas City.

The larger city had a vibrant pro sports presence, a hungry population and a great location not far from the city's popular Country Club Plaza outdoor shopping district – known as "South Plaza." Nearly 48 years later, Minsky's Pizza has 17 KC area locations including a location in nearby Lawrence, Kansas, home of the University of Kansas.

Minsky's has a history of innovation, and last year was no different. The brand added third party delivery to add geography to its existing delivery area. It also continued to work with local athletes to extend its brand through their social networks - adding NIL partnerships to its marketing mix and building on past successes realized by partnering with pro athletes.

Johnson has also been an innovator, creating a BBQ Chicken pizza years before Wolfgang Puck popularized them. He created a cheeseburger pizza 30 years ago to compete against McDonald's lunchtime burgers. Both pizzas are still on a menu that today also includes the Prime Cut (Minsky's top selling all meat pizza), the Papa Minsky's combo pizza, Nature's Choice veggie pizza and a wide variety of hot sandwiches, crisp salads, and fresh pastas.

This year, Minsky's will continue to innovate by expanding into shipping Minsky's Pizza across the country, growing its local boxed lunch catering business, and launching a new bottled fry sauce.

# Top 75 Brands



## 36. Toarmina's Pizza

With 29 locations, Toarmina's Pizza is one of the most trusted pizza companies in the state of Michigan. From Detroit to Lansing, customers can choose from pizza delivery or carryout, subs, salads and more. The brand opened one location in 2023 and is planning to open three locations this year.



When first generation American Santa Toarmina (Grandmother to the company founder) came to Detroit, Michigan she found that Americans liked a different kind of pizza than she was accustomed to--resulting in the signature sweeter sauce that Toarmina's is now known for.

Specializing in its famous 24-inch pizza, Taormina's has been serving the Michigan area for more than 35 years. With this combination of good crust, sweet sauce, and a lot of cheese, Taormina's sets itself apart from the competition.

"We have been selling pizza in the center of the Pizza chain universe for decades," President Louis Toarmina said. "We are determined to keep our quality the same or better as the day we opened in 1987."

The brand's growth is based on its [pizza](#) and product. According to the company's website, Franchise owners take pride in their product, employees and superior service to their customers.



## 37. Mattenga's Pizzeria

In 2023, [Mattenga's Pizzeria's](#) mission was clear: make its mark in San Antonio, a bustling city of 2.3 million people. Adopting a 'Less is More' approach, the brand carefully curated its menu to create standout pizzas like the Baba Pizza topped with Banana, Bacon and cinnamon sugar. This strategy quickly paid off, earning Mattenga's three TV segments and catapulting it into the city's culinary spotlight.



The efforts resonated with the community, leading Mattenga's Pizzeria to be voted Best Pizza in San Antonio in July, 2023. Leveraging a thoughtful blend of targeted digital marketing and active engagement with mainstream media, Mattenga's Pizzeria's journey went beyond merely serving pizzas, and the brand has intertwined its story with the rich tapestry of the city's food culture.

Founder Hengam Stanfield brings a blend of leadership excellence and industry influence. At Mattenga's Pizzeria, her strategic vision has yielded significant success with nine current locations.

"Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.' Leonardo da Vinci wisely said," Stanfield said. "At Mattenga's Pizzeria, we fully embrace this philosophy. Our focus is on mastering the basics, combined

with an unwavering commitment to Texas hospitality. It's this dedication to simplicity and warmth that wins over our guests, one heart at a time."

Stanfield's leadership is leading to transformative change throughout the industry. Through her 'Making Dough Show' Hengam has proven to be a resourceful guide, fostering a learning culture within the pizza community. She's joined the James Beard Foundation Women's Entrepreneurial Leadership Program as a leader in the restaurant space instilling the love of hospitality and for future female founders in the industry.



## 38. PARLOUR

PARLOUR isn't just your average pizzeria; it's a lively hub where great food meets good times. With an emphasis on the use of fresh, premium, and locally sourced ingredients, its menu is packed with more than just fantastic artisanal pizzas – think mouthwatering house-smoked wings, crave-worthy Sriracha Bourbon BBQ nachos, savory calzones, grinders, refreshing salads, and indulgent desserts.

Plus, PARLOUR has your thirst covered with an impressive selection of over 40 craft beers on tap and a bar stocked with carefully chosen wines and liquors. But the goodness doesn't stop there – PARLOUR stirs up hand-crafted cocktails, infusing an extra layer of flavor



# Top 75 Brands

into the guest experience. Its skilled mixologists take pride in creating unique drinks, utilizing its own house-made drink mixes, syrups, and garnishments. With a laid-back atmosphere, friendly vibes, and a commitment to spreading joy, CFO Destinee Snodgrass said every visit to PARLOUR is a promise of great tastes, good times and unforgettable moments.

“We’re not just chasing a rank; we’re humbled by the idea of being recognized for the genuine connections we’ve formed and the joy we’ve shared,” she said. “PARLOUR isn’t just a place to eat; it’s a gathering space for people who appreciate good food and good times. To even be considered for the top 100 is an honor that speaks to the heart of what we do every day.”

In 2024, PARLOUR is taking a bold step into the world of franchising, with its inaugural franchisee gearing up for a six-store venture in Kentucky and Nashville, TN. This venture marks the expansion of the PARLOUR experience into fresh regions and communities.



## 39. Paisano's Pizza

Paisano's Pizza was thrilled to announce its 25th anniversary in June 2023. Since its founding in Fairfax, VA, in 1998, Paisano's Pizza has remained under the same family ownership, delivering delicious pizza and exceptional service to



its loyal customers. With a commitment to quality and community, Paisano's Pizza has become a beloved local brand that has expanded its footprint to nearly 40 locations. This expansion underscores Paisano's ability to navigate challenges, adapt to market dynamics and successfully scale the business.

In addition to celebrating its 25th anniversary last year, Paisano's Pizza entered into a partnership with Seasons Pizza, as the brand expands its presence across the East Coast.

“We are thrilled to join forces with Seasons Pizza and take Paisano's Pizza to new heights,” Capital Restaurant Group CEO Fouad Qreitem said. “This partnership represents an incredible opportunity to share our delicious pizza with even more people, spreading the flavors and joy that have made us the go-to pizza delivery.”

As Paisano's Pizza looks to the future, it remains committed to the core values of exceptional quality, warm customer service and community engagement. In 2024, Paisano's Pizza and Seasons Pizza will capitalize on the joint venture partnership by combining decades of experience in delivering made-to-order food and exceptional service across the east coast. With a combined 75 locations throughout Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, the partnership has a goal of 200 new locations by 2026.

## 40. Dewey's Pizza

In 2024, Dewey's Pizza is set to embark on an exciting journey of growth and innovation, building upon its success and commitment to providing a unique dining experience.



The expansion strategy reflects a blend of strategic partnerships, location-specific enhancements and technological advancements, demonstrating the brand's adaptability and dedication to meeting the evolving preferences of its patrons.

Last year kicked off with the opening of a new, full-service location in Covington, Kentucky. However, this was not just any expansion; it marked a strategic collaboration with Braxton Brewing Co, Dewey's Covington neighbor. This partnership resulted in the establishment of a kiosk inside Braxton Brewing Co's taproom, creating an ultimate synergy of pizza and beer. This innovative approach not only strengthens community ties but also introduces a distinctive and immersive dining experience for customers who can savor Dewey's delicious pizzas alongside Braxton Brewing Co's craft beers.

Furthermore, Dewey's Pizza has ventured into uncharted territory by adding cocktails to its menu for the first time. This expansion of beverage options reflects Dewey's commitment to keeping its offerings fresh and in tune with consumer preferences. The addition of cocktails not only broadens the beverage selection but also complements the pizza-centric menu, providing a well-rounded and enjoyable dining experience for customers.

Dewey's Pizza's growth plans in 2024 demonstrate a thoughtful and

# Top 75 Brands

multifaceted approach. By forging strategic partnerships, introducing new menu offerings, enhancing physical spaces, and investing in technology, Dewey's is poised to continue its success story, ensuring that its patrons not only enjoy great pizza but also a memorable and modern dining experience.



## 41. Pizza Factory

Pizza Factory is known for its iconic hometown vibe with an innovative approach to operations. The brand has truly lived up to its stellar reputation as a West Coast icon, especially with its multiple fast-casual prototypes. From flexible formats to innovative technology supporting the franchisee's bottom line, interest in Pizza Factory has nearly doubled over the last year which has brought the brand's name into ten new communities, further cementing its standing as a leader in the thriving pizza space.



A community staple in 100-plus hometowns, Pizza Factory has stayed true to its roots with hardworking operators, family-friendly dining and high-quality products, offering fresh, never-frozen hand-tossed pizza, pasta, wings, sandwiches, salads, beer, wine and more. With multiple fast-casual restaurant designs and robust off-premise dining options, including delivery and mobile

ordering through a proprietary app, Pizza Factory is built for the future of the restaurant industry.

Pizza Factory's biggest success for 2023 was its dedication to investing in its corporate leadership. Beginning the year with an overarching goal of sharing brand culture with both new and existing audiences, Pizza Factory has brought on three new team members to strengthen this initiative. Centered around building a more supportive and dynamic infrastructure for its franchisees, all hires bring a refreshed perspective to their roles and aim to activate new initiatives within 2024.

Introduced in 2023, the brand has partnered with GiftAMeal, an innovative community giveback initiative. Guests visiting their local Pizza factory can participate by scanning a QR code and sharing a photo of their meal on social media. For every photo uploaded by a customer, the respective Pizza Factory location will donate a meal to its nearby food pantry.



## 42. Empire Slice House

Since 2013, Empire Slice House has garnered many local and national accolades, including being recognized as Independent Pizzeria of the Year for the United States by Pizza Today in 2018. Over the years, full pie and slice



names have showcased the personality of a generation raised by pop culture, with titles such as the Notorious P.I.G., Rocksteady, Uncle Buck, and MCA.

Since its beginning, in a space that was formerly a coin laundromat, Empire now has seven locations throughout Oklahoma between Slice Houses and Slice Shops in OKC, Edmond and Tulsa.

After celebrating its 10-year anniversary by announcing a partnership with Paycom Arena, home of NBA team OKC Thunder, Empire will soon announce its newest location, Stillwater Oklahoma.

In 2023, the brand undertook a visibility initiative to increase its social media presence focusing on giving back to its communities. Continuing on the history that shows the brand's focus on being a part of the communities in which it serves, the brand was recognized by Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt with the Distinguished Service Award.

Catering Director David Rackley said there's nothing more interesting to him than getting to be a part of an industry that's always evolving.

"It means we're constantly learning, trying new things," he said. "Recognition along the way has always just reminded me of why we do what we do by putting guests' experiences first each day."

## 43. Sarpino's USA

CEO David Chatkin brought Sarpino's Pizzeria



to America in 2002 as the brand's original Illinois franchisee. Over the past 20 years, Chatkin has championed the Sarpino's USA brand, developing it into an exceptional franchise opportunity with proven, hyper-efficient systems and strong unit-level economics.



Sarpino's USA has developed a reputation for combining Old World Italian authenticity and American ingenuity. As a delivery-focused concept, the brand's operational model performed exceptionally well during pandemic lockdowns as consumers further embraced its convenience and it has continued to perform well in the years since. In fact, Sarpino's USA has experienced double-digit sales increases in the past few years and systemwide AUV is almost \$1.1 million.

Most recently, Sarpino's USA launched a national franchise expansion plan, targeting markets where existing stores continue to outperform the system including Florida and Kansas City, Missouri. For its franchisees, this level of success is life changing as several are Eastern European refugees who got their start working as cashiers and delivery drivers and worked their way up to franchise ownership. For these individuals, Sarpino's USA has helped them achieve the American Dream.

Under Chatkin's leadership, Sarpino's USA has grown to 40+ locations and become a standout concept, offering a made-from-scratch menu that's hard to come by in larger pizza chains. It has also become a diverse, inclusive franchise system. Several of the brand's franchisees are immigrants, like Chatkin himself. A common thread they all share

is an appreciation for the American Dream and creating equal opportunities for everyone - no matter the level. In fact, many of Sarpino's USA's recent franchisees are former employees.



## 44. Chubby Charlie's Pizza

Chubby Charlie's Pizza is dedicated to both the "art and science" of pizza-making. With a



combination of traditional methods and new, creative, innovative approaches to create unique and memorable pizzas and other dishes, such as Strombolis, calzones, paninis, sides, and more, each dish at Chubby Charlie's is crafted with attention to detail, precision and care.

The brand prides itself on delivering a diverse menu to better cater to its communities' tastes and preferences. From classic favorites such as the traditional margarita to its cult favorite, the famous dill pickle pizza, Chubby Charlie's is committed to providing a memorable experience for customers.

Not only does the brand love pizza, it also loves people. Founder and CEO Lou Nestorovski said they have a people-centric culture.

"We are truly grateful for our loyal customer base and the community, who continue to motivate and empower us to continue exceeding expectations and

delivering a best-in-class experience through our dishes," he said. "We consistently receive positive reviews, and it wouldn't be without the excellent team we have at Chubby Charlie's."

Nestorovski said during and post COVID-19, and with the ever-changing dynamics of today's market, it has been tough for everyone.

"We are very grateful to have demonstrated adaptability and resilience throughout these challenges, ensuring that we continue to serve our customers," he said. We continue to foster a strong sense of community, from engaging in social media campaigns, and partnerships with local events and charitable efforts. We believe our commitment to our community and simply staying together has allowed us to overcome challenges of the last few years."



## 45. Rosati's Pizza

A lot has changed since 1964, but



[Rosati's Pizza's](https://www.rosatis.com)

commitment to serving authentic Chicago-style pizza and traditional Italian food isn't one of them. With nearly 200 locations across America, Rosati's knows that some things are better done the old-fashioned way, and that's why the brand prides itself on sourcing fresh ingredients from local farms.

# Top 75 Brands

Under the leadership of COO Andrew Rosati, the brand continues to innovate and expand. As a forward-thinking pizza executive, Rosati has worked his way up through the ranks proving that he understands what it takes to lead this brand into an era of great technological advances as well as superior growth.

Rosati's continues to look for growth opportunities. The brand opened 15 locations in 2023 and is planning 25 more in 2024.

Rosati's authentic family recipes have been passed down from generation to generation and have now made their way into homes across the country. No matter how big it grows, Rosati's stays true to its roots and makes great food the number one priority.



## 46. Sal's Pizza

Sal's Pizza has seen tremendous growth in 2023, adding 34 locations, including several on university campuses and Logan International Airport. Additionally, Sal's Pizza has expanded its pizza to grocery stores as far south as Florida and as far west as Indiana.

Sal Lupoli is the mastermind behind Sal's Pizza and its continued growth as a brand. What started as one small pizza shop in 1990 has grown to more than 120 locations. Now featuring pizzas sold at



grocery stores from Indiana to Florida, a wholesale program that services 500+ schools from Maine to Connecticut, and programs within universities and sports arenas, Lupoli constantly continues to innovate and drive the brand forward, continuing his promise to provide the finest pizza made from the freshest ingredients.

In 2024, Sal's Pizza is focusing on driving franchise sales, as well as its "express" locations in convenience stores. Sal's will also continue expanding into more universities. With a new innovative fresh dough program, Sal's can expand its franchises across the entire United States. In 2023, Sal's Pizza began opening at universities throughout New England, which has given us the opportunity to grow its younger audience and create brand loyalty with today's digital savvy students.

President and CEO Sal Lupoli said Sal's Pizza has been family owned and operated for more than 30 years.

"We are constantly innovating our production capabilities to grow various divisions of our brand, as well as adding innovative technology and growing our franchise program," he said. "Consumers should plan to see a lot more of Sal's Pizza in the coming year."



## 47. The Mash

The Mash isn't just serving pizzas; it's



redefining the culinary experience with its unique blend of sustainability, innovation and community focus. Brittany Kozloski, VP of Restaurant Operations said its unique pizza dough, made from spent grain, from its sister Company Half Hitch Brewing, is a culinary innovation. This not only adds a distinct sweet, crispy and fluffy quality to The Mash's crust but also sets its chef-curated pizza flavors on a one-of-a-kind base.

"We believe that our approach not only delivers exceptional culinary delights but also paves the way for a more sustainable and community-oriented future in the restaurant industry," Kozloski said. "We're not just in the business of food; we're in the business of positive impact, one slice at a time."

In 2023, the Canada-based brand launched an innovative and heartwarming initiative that truly set it apart: the "Pawesome Pizza" for dogs. This unique offering, created with dog-safe ingredients, ensured that every member of the family, including beloved canine companions, could be part of the pizza night experience. Pawesome Pizza not only showcased The Mash's creativity and inclusivity but also resonated deeply with customers.

The introduction of Pawesome Pizza, coupled with the support for the local animal shelter, led to increased foot traffic, higher engagement on social media, and a boost in overall sales and customer loyalty.

In 2024, The Mash is poised for strategic expansion through a focused franchising initiative. Its plan is to partner with entrepreneurs who share a passion for sustainability and culinary innovation, extending this unique brand to new markets. This expansion will be supported by comprehensive

# Top 75 Brands

training in our sustainable practices, a strong emphasis on local community engagement, and a commitment to operational excellence.



## 48. Rotolo's

In 1996, Founder and CEO Mitch Rotolo opened the

# ROTOLO'S

first Rotolo's Pizzeria in Baton Rouge, Louisiana just a "pizza throw away" from Louisiana State University. Through the loyalty of Rotolo's customers, the casual Italian restaurant has since grown into a successful franchise with locations across the South and many more in the works.

Rotolo's is proud to continue to live up to its long-standing reputation for providing fresh ingredients and friendly service, because that's just the way they Rotolo. More than 25 years later, Rotolo's has grown to more than 30 franchises.

Rotolo's opened three locations in 2022 and another in 2023 bringing the total to 31 across six states. Looking ahead, the brand plans to enter two new states with announced locations in South Carolina and Mississippi along with two additional locations in Texas bringing the total to 35 locations. The brand operates two different brands under Rotolo's umbrella; Rotolo's Pizzeria (21 locations) and Rotolo's Craft & Crust (10 locations). The Pizzeria model is the concept it was founded with and Rotolo's Craft & Crust

is the new concept that is growing across the southeast

Rotolo's is positioned to see continued growth from both new franchisees and existing franchisees. President Brad Mire said the investments the brand has made in technology, menu development and personnel have Rotolo more excited than ever about what the future holds for the brand.

"Rotolo's Craft and Crust has doubled in size the last 18 months (from five to 10 locations) and we are planning to double that number again in the next 18 months," Mire said.



## 49. Bright Penny Brewing Company

Bright Penny Brewing Company is helping to revolutionize the pizza scene in North Carolina and the surrounding area. Its menu features Neapolitan-style crust

pizzas with unique twists on classics and chef-inspired creations that keep guests coming back for more. The brand prides itself on utilizing local ingredients, drawing inspiration from its region and beyond, and bringing the team's vast experience to every dish it serves.

Bright Penny pizzas are made with fresh and high quality ingredients, ensuring that every slice is packed with flavor, and



offers a variety of options for guests with dietary restrictions, including gluten-free and vegetarian pizzas that are just as delicious as our traditional pies.

In addition to pizzas, restaurants offer a full menu of appetizers, salads and entrees that are equally as impressive as the pizza selection.

Bright Penny Brewing Company is planning to add an additional taproom and restaurant concept within its current town of Mebane, North Carolina. General Manager Tony Williams said his initial concept was to be a brewery that crafted exceptional beer and the food was just to keep people in the seats long enough to drink another beer.

"We quickly found out that our pizza menu filled a major void and excelled in a market that was saturated in run of the mill pizza establishments," he said. "It was eye opening to see our team elevate our food concept to what it is today."



## 50. Pupatella

Pupatella founder Enzo Algarme moved to the United States from Naples, Italy to pursue a medical degree. After

finding a lack of traditional Neapolitan pizza, he decided to take matters into his own hands. Pupatella started with a food truck in Arlington, Virginia in 2007 before Algarme opened his first brick-and-



# Top 75 Brands

mortar store in 2010. Since that time, the brand has grown to eight locations, with three more units under development. The brand is planning to focus expansion in the Virginia, D.C. and Maryland markets. It serves classic Neapolitan-style pizza certified by the Associazione Verace Pizza Napoletana.

Today, the [menu](#) includes chef-curated red and white pizzas including an Eggplant and Red Pepper pizza as well as a Buffalo Bianca. Papatella also has a variety of small plates, salads, paninis and pastas as well as create-your-own pizzas and pastas.

COO James Biafore said he thinks Papatella's success can be attributed to authenticity, passion, hard work and great communities, all while remaining focused on making pizza the way it has been made for over 150 years in Naples.

"We are passionate about delivering authentic pizza and other Italian favorite street foods to our guests," he said. "We have an incredibly authentic product, served by a team of passionate individuals in a very cool atmosphere.. We hit all the right marks!!

Papatella now has eight locations, opening two in 2023 and three more are under development and Biafore said he continues to look for more great locations.

## 51. Blue Square Pizza

Since opening its first location 18 months ago, Blue Square Pizza has been experiencing explosive growth. While experiencing comps of 100-200% on a monthly basis, the Hopkinton, Massachusetts-based brand closed out its first full 12 months with over \$1.8 million in sales generated out of 1,200 square feet of space.



Blue Square is a sourdough pizzeria focused on four distinct styles of pizza (The fourth was a Sicilian style that debuted this winter). Owner Tony Sproul said his brand is the first pizzeria in Massachusetts that uses sourdough for multiple styles of pizza.

"In addition, we are tech forward and embrace technologies that create efficiencies and mitigate friction for both the employees and the consumer," he said. "Therefore, with a highly differentiated product, and an advanced operating production system, we are able to deliver our pizzas in a seamless way through multiple ordering channels. We are positioned to scale and capture even more value in 2024."

Sproul has embraced the right technology to drive growth and create value, using AI software to handle 95% of all phone calls, and an advanced web ordering with mobile app, bump screen technology, an order status ready board for customers, and text order alerts.

Reinvestment into the unit was the biggest initiative implemented in 2023, whether upgrading ovens, increasing refrigeration, adopting technologies, or renovating its dining room to increase kitchen space, Sproul said it all collectively helped drive growth and same-store-sales comps.



## 52. Hindsight Pizza Kitchen

Hindsight Pizza Kitchen was founded by Toledo-native [Chris Hinds](#), who grew up with a love for cooking. After working in several restaurants, he followed his dream of opening his own pizza place that focuses on unique recipes that he's perfected over the years. Hindsight features several different styles of pizza including Detroit style, transitional and gluten-free cauliflower, and serves up unique flavors as Korean Chicken which features Korean barbecue sauce, and the Philly Special that is topped with queso.

In July, 2023, the brand replaced an existing brand within its restaurant, and sales increased five times almost immediately, and Hinds said sales have settled at more than four times the previous pizza sales. Hindsight is proving to be a quince, great-tasting, well-reviewed pizza.

The brand has plans to expand to 10 more locations in the next 24 months from its current single location. It plans to open four units in 2024 and six more in the next 24 months.

Managing Partner Rod Brandt said he is excited about the future of Hindsight Pizza Kitchen.

"It's increasingly difficult to introduce a new pizza brand successfully into a crowded, competitive market like we face



# Top 75 Brands

in Toledo Ohio,” he said. “But, thanks to our team led by our strategic partner, Chris Hinds, and a unique product, we’ve made an incredible impact. We are very grateful.”



## 53. Mad Mushroom

Mad Mushroom continues to be a staple on university campuses in Kentucky and Indiana, and has increased its location count to six this year. Co-owner David Sommers said the team brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the brand, including an active participating in competitive pizza arenas, with several members on the US Pizza Team. One of the owners has even been asked to judge international competitions, both domestically and in Europe.

In 2023, the brand expanded its Vegan options by adding plant based “meats and cheeses” and Sommers said he believes they have some great menu options. Additionally, Mads Mushroom implemented some better tools for its managers to communicate with their staff..

Mad Mushroom is poised for growth over the next couple years, planning to add several locations by the end of 2025. In 2024, the brand plans to open two locations, one of which will include corporate offices and a test kitchen

Additionally, Mad Mushroom has been



very active in its communities and the pizza community as a whole.

“We love to host Dine to Donates for organizations in the towns we serve and our team members, myself included, really enjoy traveling and meeting with other pizza people at conferences and competitions,” Sommers said. “I understand how many great pizza concepts and/or companies are out there, and I believe we belong in the conversation. We are ready to move forward into 2024 and beyond to grow our business, help our communities and help our team members to become the best versions of themselves they can be.”



## 54. Karvelas Pizza Company

Karvelas Pizza Company has demonstrated significant growth and expansion. Starting with just one small location and two employees, Karvelas Pizza Co has successfully expanded to six locations by 2024. This growth not only showcases the popularity and demand for its pizza and wings, but it also reflects the trust and support the brand has gained from its customers.

Furthermore, Karvelas Pizza Co has built a powerhouse team that embodies a unique culture of servant leadership and encouragement. With a team of 170 employees, Founder and Co-Owner Joey



Karvelas has created an environment that fosters mutual respect, support and empowerment. His culture not only benefits the employees but also translates into exceptional customer service and an overall positive dining experience.

Karvelas Pizza Co's concept has positioned it for further expansion. In 2024, Karvelas Pizza Co has a clear growth plan to expand and become a top pizza chain in the southeast region. This involves opening new locations in strategic areas, targeting high-demand markets, and investing in marketing to increase brand awareness. With a strong commitment to quality and southern hospitality service, Karvelas Pizza Co aims to solidify its position as a leading pizza restaurant.

“We are scaling a scratch-made concept, which is undeniably challenging,” Karvelas said. “What sets us apart is our ability to teach and empower young men and women, some of whom are still in high school, to manage a full-service scratch-made menu. Scaling such a concept is often seen as impossible, but our team has succeeded in building a system that works.”



## 55. Morris East Pizza + Wine Bar

Jennie Dobbs started Morris East Pizza and Wine Bar when she was 29-years-old.



# Top 75 Brands

Fast forward 17 years, and this Canadian brand has improved every year since it has been open, Dobbs said.

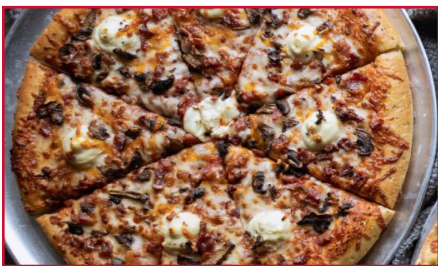
“We are still killing it,” she said. “We are beloved by our community of regular clientele. And our pizzas are delicious. We focus on making a top-tier, artisanal pizza product showcasing local suppliers and seasonal ingredients. All of this is combined with a fantastic wine list and creative cocktails.”

In 2007 Morris East blazed on the pizza scene with a range of creative, delicious, artisanal pizzas and hasn’t stopped innovating, building a loyal customer base and working hard to create memorable meal experiences for customers.

“We love what we do and you can taste it in every bite,” Dobbs said.

In 2023, Morris East launched a line of its own alcoholic drinks called Drink Sprizzi. The brand now manufactures and sells its own proprietary line of drinks. This year, it plans to further expand to include take-away stores.

“It’s going to be great,” Dobbs said. “You will be able to pick up our take away pizza in a little adjunct retail shop where we will also be selling fresh pasta, sauces and a range of house-made alcoholic seltzers.”



## 56. Mackenzie River Pizza

Mackenzie River Pizza was built around the Montana state of mind.



The brand is designed to give customers a great menu that features a twist of exceptional mountain flavor, all in an atmosphere of free-spirited adventure, said COO Ryan Fuller.

“From humble beginnings in Bozeman, Montana, the Mackenzie River Pizza brand continues to delight our guests as we continue to bring a little slice of Montana across the eight states we currently operate in,” he said.

Mackenzie River Pizza currently operates 28 locations, but is looking to expand. In 2024, the brand continues to grow and expand with both Corporate and Franchise opportunities.



## 57. Homegrown Tap & Dough

Homegrown was founded with a distinctive hand-tossed pizza menu, carefully crafted by Jean-Philippe Failyau, using his experience working at Michelin starred restaurants. These days customers can also find pastas, starters, original salads and Chef-inspired sandwiches on the menu.

Each Homegrown pays homage to Colorado’s beautiful landscapes, ingredients and outdoor possibilities. Locations feature real gondolas straight from the ski resorts, cozy yurts reminiscent of backcountry adventures



and two-story fireplaces. The menu celebrates Colorado with green chili-laced pizza, while their drink menu offers mostly local Colorado craft beers. Homegrown believes in supporting local purveyors whenever possible.


Homegrown plans for slow and steady growth with two new locations coming in 2024.

Expansion plans are underway with the next stop being a hybrid model where two popular Gastamo concepts will join forces. Perdida and Homegrown Tap & Dough in Westminster will be the result of a 12,000 square foot building. The second 2024 opening will be a location in Parker, Colorado

CEO Phillippe Failyau said he is incredibly proud of the brand.

“Our commitment to innovation is reflected in every pie we prepare from scratch, from groundbreaking flavor combinations to cutting-edge technology solutions,” he said. “Our culture is the heart of our success, fostering a team dedicated to culinary excellence and customer satisfaction. With slow yet steady growth plans, we plan to expand our reach, delighting pizza lovers across Denver. Our relentless pursuit of technological advancements ensures that we’re not just delivering pizzas; we’re shaping the future of the pizza industry.”

## 58. Pizzawala's

The Michigan-based  Pizzawala's is a steadily growing up-and-comer in the world of pizza. Bringing a fusion of flavors to America's number one food has always been a goal for this brand. In 2023 alone, Pizzawala's signed three franchisees, bringing their total to five restaurants.

# Top 75 Brands



Pizzawala's looks to continue making waves in the Pizza Industry in 2024, with a projected 10 more franchisee signings. In 2023-the brand focused on new customer acquisition and awareness for customers outside of its current data pool. CEO Rikesh Patel said the brand saw a shift in its customer base from predominantly South-Asians to nearly a 50-50 split between South Asians and non-South Asians. The brand is building upon this momentum, continuing to gain popularity and seeing positive impacts to its growth as a result.

"Take what you know about pizza, and throw it out the door," Patel said. "Pizzawala's lives by our tagline, 'Made Differently', in that we take a commonly known, beloved thing like pizza, and change the way you experience it with different flavors and execution"

In 2024, Pizzawala's will open three units, and has another 10 franchisee signings in the pipeline.

## 59. Slice Pizza & Brew

Rooted in over 50 years of the Bajalieh owned and operated restaurants in the Birmingham area, Slice Pizza & Brew is a celebration of local flavors, familial warmth and unwavering dedication to quality. Founders Chris, Jason, and the late Jeff Bajalieh have imbued each



location with a sense of home, creating welcoming, casual and family-friendly atmospheres that reflect the unique charm of their respective neighborhoods.

Guided by the mantra, "Eat Local. Drink Local. Be Local," every dish crafted pays homage to the brand's Alabama roots, using the freshest local ingredients. Culinary offerings, from the soulful Soul Pie to the tangy Bajalieh Special and the fiery Hot Mama, showcase a spectrum of flavors that cater to a wide array of tastes and dietary needs, including gluten-free, vegan, and vegetarian options.

The brand's growth, community initiatives and commitment to sustaining local businesses through partnerships with local purveyors further solidify its integration into the fabric of the community.

In 2023, Slice Pizza & Brew undertook a multifaceted approach to enhance its brand and operations, amplifying its public relations plan, increasing its visibility and engagement within the community and beyond. Key to this effort was the introduction of innovative community-centric programs such as its 'Slice & Sketch' pizza drawing competition, a creative pizza-drawing contest in local schools. This initiative, along with our Dough Raisers program that donates 10% of sales on designated days to local 501CS organizations, allowed the brand to engage with members of the community in a meaningful way.

After the successful launch of its fourth neighborhood store in the city of Birmingham, the cornerstone of the growth plan for 2024 is the highly-anticipated opening of its fifth location in Homewood, Alabama.



## 60. Joe's New York Pizza

Joe's New York Pizza has been the premier pizza restaurant for the past 15 years in Las Vegas serving local clientele as well as the many tourists visiting the town each year. Owner Peter Soltesz said in 2023, the brand focused more on social media and billboard advertising as well as employee training. It also gave more emphasis to menu development.



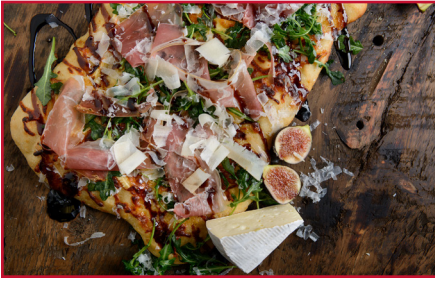
His two locations have grossed more than \$2.7 million in food sales alone--as the brand does not sell alcohol. As a three-time award winner at the International Pizza Expo, Joe's New York Pizza plans to capitalize on its momentum and plans to acquire another location in 2024.

## 61. Mercasa Little Italy Eatery

Based in Brantford, Ontario, Canada, Mercasa Little Italy Eatery serves authentic



# Top 75 Brands



Roman pizza using an artisan hand-stretching method with a natural 72 hour fermentation process. President and Executive Chef Tom Mercante said everything is prepared from scratch daily by his team of passionate chefs

Currently, the brand operates one location but is adding a second location, as well as a food truck, in 2024.

In 2023, the brand launched a loyalty program that was very successful. Mercante's family is from Castelli, which is in the Abruzzo region of Italy. Fascinated by the culinary world from very young, Mercante traveled the world to find inspiration for his menu that combines the convenience of fast food with the homemade quality of Italian food. This combination is proving to be a recipe for success.

"Quality and passion win every time, Mercante said.

## 62. Pizzeria Camión

Pizzeria Camión introduced hand-stretched, artisanal pizzas in 2023, further showing its dedication to authentic, high-quality pies. This change deeply resonated with customers, who appreciate the superior taste and texture that only traditional pizza-making techniques can provide.

Moreover, the addition of Empower Delivery's delivery software revolutionized



how Pizzeria Camión is delivered, ensuring that its gourmet creations reach customers with unmatched speed while maintaining the freshness and quality the brand is known for. This blend of artisanal craftsmanship and state-of-the-art technology not only enhances the overall customer experience but also firmly positions Pizzeria Camión as innovators in the pizza marketplace.

In 2024, Pizzeria Camión is poised for growth, primarily through a strategic franchising initiative. After finalizing its Franchise Disclosure Document in the third quarter of 2023 and welcoming its first franchise in quarter four, the brand laid a strong foundation for expansion. The plan for the year involves a three-pronged approach including selective franchise partner onboarding, geographic expansion and support and training for franchisees.

Its expansion into franchising further illustrates its commitment to quality, carefully selecting franchise partners who uphold high standards, ensuring that every Pizzeria Camión delivers the same exceptional food and customer service. This strategic growth, coupled with the focus on maintaining consistency across all outlets, demonstrates Pizzeria Camión's scalability without compromising the artisanal quality that defines it.

CEO Janet Monroe said Pizzeria Camión embodies the innovative spirit and culinary excellence that define today's leading pizza brands.

"We're not just keeping up with industry trends; we're setting them, integrating cutting-edge technology to elevate the customer experience," she said.



## 63. Gina's Pizza and Pastaria

CEO Leanna Costa-McMahan said Gina's Pizza & Pastaria has been rocking this 'Pizza Party' for its community since 1975 and is looking forward to another 50 years of making great dough and great memories for its fans.



When Founder [Gina Costa](#) immigrated to America from Palermo, Sicily, she brought her love of cooking. She opened her first location in Corona Del Mar California in 1975, and her recipes are carried on by her family to this day.

"We remain committed to our loyal team members who have been with us through thick and thin," Costa-McMahan said. "And we don't skimp on ingredients to fortify our bottom line. We firmly believe people can tell the difference between crap and quality and we owe it to our fans to deliver the very best."

Gina's Pizza and Pastaria was nominated by the Los Angeles Times' reader's poll as best Pizza in Orange County for 2023. This-family ran brand now has four

# Top 75 Brands

locations in Corona Del Mar, Newport Beach, Laguna Beach and Costa Mesa. Costa-McMahan said the brand is looking to expand further into California, looking for locations in both Irvine and Tustin.



## 64. Truly Pizza

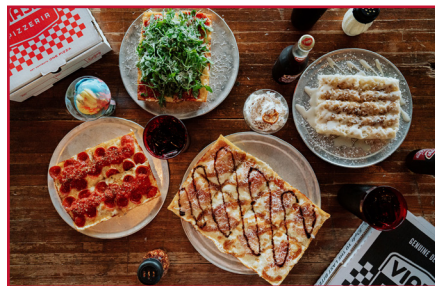
Truly Pizza, the only restaurant of its kind in Southern California, provides Dana Point residents and visitors with a unique and delicious pizza experience filled with world-class pizza making and generations-old techniques. The long-awaited artisanal pizzeria is the brainchild of Donna Baldwin, a hospitality veteran, and World Pizza Champion John Arena of Metro Pizza in Las Vegas. Baldwin and Arena are joined by World Champions of Pizza Chris Decker and Michael Vakneen, alongside longtime Dana Point area resident and developer Steve Muller.

The menu features classic 12" square and round pizzas made with award-winning three-to-five-day-fermented crispy and airy dough along with a selection of focaccia sandwiches, salads and desserts. Guests can expect to find must-try menu items like the American Artisan round 12" Umami Mushroom, (made with creamy onion and garlic sauce, smoked mozzarella, marinated roasted mushrooms and toasted sesame oil) and Suprema (made with house-made vodka sauce, fresh and aged whole

milk mozzarella, spicy giardiniera, cup & char pepperoni and grated romano) all made with Truly Pizza's exclusive award-winning pizza dough recipe.

Truly plans to open two more locations in 2024, one in a Southern California beach community and one in Las Vegas. After that, the team is targeting beach and destination markets like Malibu, Napa, Las Vegas, Park City and more.

"Our Truly Pizza team has worked passionately and enthusiastically to create a neighborhood pizzeria that is welcoming, service oriented and thoughtful to our customers throughout the entire guest experience," said Donna Baldwin, co-founder of Truly Pizza. "Our collective love for great pizza is what brought us together and I'm very proud of everyone's contributions from the building design to the menu development and I'm excited to share Truly Pizza with our community."



## 65. Via 313

Via 313 Pizzeria is fired up. The Detroit-style pizza brand started in 2011 in a nondescript trailer in Austin, Texas, and has now grown to 17 brick-and-mortar locations in three states — with nine more to come in 2024. Via 313's energized growth is thanks to world-class ingredients and hometown heart. The pizzas are called square, but they're actually rectangle and



baked in metal trays — just like the ones used on the automotive assembly lines at the Big Three.

In 2020, Via 313 was acquired by Savory Fund in Lehi, UT, which has been instrumental in its expansion. Savory is an innovative private equity firm that combines over \$600 million in assets under management with a growth playbook and expertise that has been developed over 15 years of operating in the restaurant industry.

In 2023, Via 313 implemented a variety of initiatives to cook up excitement in the brand. It launched Happy Hour across all locations as well as lunch specials in Utah and Arizona.

Kiplan Welsch, VP of Operations for Via 313, said there is nothing quite like Via 313.

"Our Detroit-style pizza is the genuine article, and we are energized to share our unforgettable flavors and the heart of Detroit across the country as we get ready to add nearly 10 more locations in 2024," she said. "Our founders, Brandon and Zane Hunt, care deeply about the Via 313 community we've built and work hard to make sure it stays warm and welcoming for all. Case in point: we don't just have gluten-free pizza to check a box."

## 66. Woodstock's Pizza

For over 40 years, Woodstock's Pizza has created epic memories at its

legendary locations in California college towns. With a mission to give guests the Ultimate Pizza Experience From Chico to San Diego, Woodstock's Pizza has been the "best first job ever" for many college students just beginning their



# Top 75 Brands



professional careers, and as they grow as leaders, so has the brand. With eight locations, Woodstock's Leadership Track management program currently includes more than 35 current and future servant leaders growing in their professional journeys. In 2020, Woodstock's Pizza was named the Top Independent Pizzeria in America (Pizza Today) and its team and sales continue to grow since earning that top spot.

Each year, the brand outlines a handful of strategic initiatives, but the most impactful in 2023 was the roll-out of the Leadership Track development program. This program created not only a transparent path for the more "green" managers to grow into Assistant GMs and GMs, but more importantly laid the foundation to hold the company more committed and accountable to providing more professional feedback, soft skill training and overall team growth.

This led to a record-low turnover at the restaurant-leadership level in 2023, higher shopper scores, improved reviewer star ratings (averaging 4.5 stars across all locations) and more social engagement by its teams. But Chief Operating Officer / Owner Tony Dellamano said the real challenge is now making this stick going into 2024 and beyond.

"At Woodstock's Pizza we are passionate about team development," Dellamano said. "When you work for pizza, we strive

to make it the 'best job ever' in your career. This not only paves the way for future leaders, but it helps sell a lot of pizza in our college communities."



## 67. Slice of Vegas Pizza Kitchen and Bar

Slice of Vegas Pizza Kitchen and Bar has been a staple to the Las Vegas Strip for more than a decade and consistently has more than \$5 million in sales annually, said Owner Scott Frost.



"We are here to make the customer happy," Frost said.

**Slice of Vegas** serves hand-tossed NY style pizza with a thin, chewy crust. Customers can enjoy a signature pizza like the "Miles 10 Meat" or the "Chicken Parm," or can build their own. The brand also serves classic Italian pastas, sandwiches, and salads. The menu includes a variety of vegan and vegetarian options as well as gluten-free pizzas and pastas. There is a full bar with a thoughtfully curated selection of local and craft beers, colorful and creative souvenir cocktails and wine by the glass or bottle.

In order to get the word out, Slice of Vegas began doing TV advertising in 2023 to attract Vegas locals to their location on the Vegas Strip. Located in The Shoppes at Mandalay Place, the mall between

Mandalay Bay and Luxor, Corporate Chef George Motsinger said Slice of Vegas keeps it simple... good food in a friendly atmosphere.



## 68. Al Grottino Pizzeria

The **Al Grottino** pizzeria offers a variety of pizzas made with long-ripening doughs (from classic flavors to the most original and contemporary variations), light and crunchy fried foods, and appetizers. It features excellent first courses, tasty meat second courses, rich salads and homemade desserts all accompanied by a wide selection of craft beers.



Located in Rome, Italy, Tony Vespa launched the brand that features "Ne Alta...Ne Bassa" in Italian it means not thick ... not thin, a pizza style in between a Neapolitan and Roman style.

The restaurant was created in 1987 by Eugenio and Dora Vespa. In 1991 it was renovated to install a wood-fired oven, where the long-ripening pizza process was perfected. In 2016, the Al Grottino pizzeria invested resources to carry out a remodel, acquiring a new wing, a new wood-fired oven and an open kitchen to recreate the atmosphere of the past. The final effect is a perfect balance between traditions of the past, and designs of today.

# Top 75 Brands



## 69. FoodHub

Food hub has had a unique evolution. Beginning in 1990 in Bermuda, the brand began with a focus on pizza delivery. In 1999, the brand expanded the menu to also include Authentic Indian and Chinese food. In response to the Covid recession FoodHub has expanded its brands and created a restaurant marketplace that includes online ordering and a physical location for takeout, dining and buffet.

With 14 units total, FoodHub continues to grow, adding two new locations in 2023. This year, it looks to additional brands, locations, menu items and services. New concepts include fried chicken, Greek cuisine, a Muslim bakery, seafood and retail.

In 2023, Food Hub renovated and upgraded locations and tech stack, reimagined its organizational structure, and evolved from pizza restaurants with large menus to ethnic specialties and created brand-focused teams with both online and physical marketplace presences.



## 70. Richie B's New York Pizzeria

Richie B's makes the best New York slice in New Mexico -- and the brand makes it Monster sized. Chuck Ruiz, the owner-operator of this



mom n' pop shop, is the creator of the "Monster Slice," and people come from all over New Mexico to experience this phenomenon. Richie B's has been recognized by the [Washington Post](#) for its New York in 2023, and the brand is looking to gain momentum. Richie B's Monster Slice is 2 feet long, and can be customized to a customer's liking. This phenomenon gained steam on social media this year, and customers come from all over the country to get a chance to hashtag their Monster Slice experience.

In addition to its monster slice, Richie B's is known for a variety of fresh, made to order sandwiches that feature Boar's Head meats and top-of-the-line cheeses. Last year, the brand implemented a new Italian-style chili oil called "Hot'Za!" to spice up its menu.

The brand is planning to increase its location count from one to three in 2024.

## 71. V Modern Italian

V Modern Italian has been redefining the dining experience by seamlessly blending the art of gastronomy with cutting-edge technology, a concept the brand affectionately calls "Fast Fine." V Modern Italian has demonstrated its extraordinary



commitment to this vision, and are showing compelling reasons for its well-deserved nomination.

In just one year, V Modern Italian has achieved an impressive milestone by signing 73 restaurants. This remarkable pace of growth solidifies its position as an industry pioneer and leader in the pizza category. This achievement is a testament to V Modern Italian's dedication to innovation and excellence.

What sets V Modern Italian apart is its groundbreaking use of geolocated QR technology. This innovation empowers patrons to not only explore the menu but also seamlessly place their orders and make payments – all through their smartphones. This integration with the POS and KDS systems ensures real-time feedback on order processing, enhancing the overall guest experience and streamlining operational efficiency.

By simplifying the ordering and payment process, V Modern Italian allows patrons to concentrate on what truly matters – savoring Italian cuisine crafted with premium quality ingredients and receiving exceptional guest service. This innovative approach removes the burden of traditional table-to-table ordering routines, creating an immersive dining experience.

V Modern Italian's success story extends beyond the borders of Europe, reaching locations in Sweden, Spain, Belgium, Mexico, Argentina, Saudi Arabia, and

# Top 75 Brands

now, the United States. This international expansion demonstrates that delivering exceptional products at great value within an elevated environment is a winning formula for growth and industry-leading return on investment.



## 72. Valentina's Pizzeria & Wine bar

Growing up in an Italian-American home, Joe Carlucci's grandmother spoke words of wisdom to her



grandson. She would say, "Add in some passion when you cook. You are not just cooking to eat, you are cooking to see the smiles of your family and friends." Those special words from his cherished Nanny would stay with him his whole life.

Carlucci imagined the day when he would carry on this tradition with a child of his own—and last year his dream was fulfilled when he opened Valentina's Pizzeria & Wine Bar, named after his daughter.

With Joe and Valentina pouring the love of family and friends into Valentina's, General Manager Camryn Suggs said everyone who breaks bread there is family.

"They invite you to come and eat, making your own traditions and memories with your family and friends," she said. "Our

owner, Joe Carlucci, has failed more times than he can count. He has been in the business for over 20 years. When he opened Valentina's in 2020, he opened a 1,000 square foot building doing what he knows how to do - make great pizza."

Now three years later, Suggs said he opened his first brick and mortar that is 4,000 square feet.

"We are a pizzeria first," Suggs said. "This means 80% of what we do is pizza. Joe always tells us to never listen to the negativity. If he did he would have never opened Valentina's. He always says 'work hard, hard work beats talent everyday'."



## 73. Wooden Peel

Wooden Peel was established in the late 1970's and has been a hometown favorite ever since. Saylor Carrico and Becky Carlson took over the restaurant in fall of 2022 and have been working hard to bring in new customers while continuing to satisfy regulars.

Carlson said both she and Carrico are moms and split the responsibility of owning and operating the pizza place.

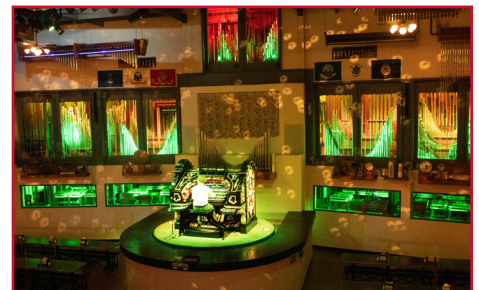
"We have both worked in the restaurant since we were teens and love this place and are so excited for it and our future," she said. "Saylor's grandma was the previous owner and we love that it is still in the family and will continue to be family owned. We often get people who have



moved away stop in, while visiting family, let us know we are always on the list of things to do while being back. We feel so honored that they keep coming back and that they tell their friends about us."

In 2023, the Wooden Peel started hosting events and bringing in new customers. Carlson said they have also been working to train employees in more than one area to be more effective since staffing is sometimes hard to do. By cross training employees, they are more valuable and help on days without enough coverage.

"We work hard to provide top notch pizza and create an environment families will return to year after year," Co-owner Saylor Carrico said.



## 74. Organ Stop Pizza

Organ Stop Pizza is one of the last remaining pizza and pipes



concepts in the United States. It has been in the Phoenix metropolitan area for 51 years, and is home to the Mighty Wurlitzer, the largest theater organ in the country. This restaurant and entertainment destination can seat up to 700 people at a time and attracts hundreds of thousands of patrons each year with its theatrical performances complete with dancing cat puppets, disco balls and bubbles. The menu consists of pizza, pasta, sandwiches, salad, bar, ice cream, sodas and beer and wine,

# Top 75 Brands

Organ Stop Pizza continues to be a destination for locals and visitors to Arizona for the variety of events happening in the area, such as the Cactus League spring training, championships and sporting events. Vice President Jack Barz said as an independent restaurant with over 50 years of continuous service, Organ Stop Pizza is the premier destination restaurant for fantastic family dinners and entertainment.

"We are one of the whole concepts that the whole family will enjoy," he said "From two to 102, all age groups have an amazing experience."

With a long tradition of supporting its community, this year the brand continued its annual tradition of Christmas in July with a local food bank, where it decorated the restaurant for Christmas during the month of July and collected donations for the food bank.



## 75. *Uncle Rico's Pizza*

"To build your dream, you must be willing to dig." Those are the words President Rico Magnoli used to help him continue to build upon his dream. Magnoli has been working in the pizza industry since 1998. Even as a little boy, he worked for a family relative during his summer breaks, learning to make pizzas while standing on a milk crate at the young age of 12 years old.



The pizza business has been in his blood for over 25 years. Uncle Rico—as he's known by his seven nieces and nephews—inspired the name of his Schenectady, New York-based pizzeria.

Moving to New York from Toronto in 2005, he worked his way up at a local restaurant, from delivery driver to General Manager, while his father continued to encourage him to open his own restaurant. After the death of his father in 2012, Magnoli opened Uncle Rico's Pizza on Father's Day in 2014 as a way to honor him.

Uncle Rico's serves up a variety of pizzas, appetizers, calzones, sandwiches, wraps and salads. Magnoli said his restaurant has been voted best pizza by the people in the city's newspaper contest three years in a row, which is evident by the increase in sales year-to-year.

"We've had 27.9% and 23.4% increase in sales in the last two years," he said. "We will be in business for 10 years coming in June, 2024."

# Top 25 Executives



## ***Jeff Hetsel, president, Cicis Pizza***

Jeff Hetsel holds nearly 40 years of esteemed restaurant industry experience. He first joined the Cicis brand in 1992 as a manager of the Dallas, Texas location before moving to Atlanta, Georgia and in 1996 where he opened up a distribution center, JMC Restaurant Distribution, for the brand. He then went on to open the first Cicis locations in twelve states and has also served in a variety of roles for the brand including Vice President of Franchise Sales, Real Estate and Construction as well as Chief Development Officer. A Certified Franchise Executive, Hetsel currently serves as the President and Partner of Cicis Pizza as well as JMC Restaurant Distribution.

Hetsel's commitment to fostering a sense of community within Cicis, from franchisees to guests, highlights his understanding of the importance of relationships in the restaurant business. His leadership style emphasizes collaboration, innovation and a customer-centric approach, all of which contribute to Cicis success and growth. His leadership has not only sustained the legacy of Cicis as the nation's original all-you-can-eat buffet but has also propelled it into a new era of innovation, ensuring its continued success in the pizza industry.

"At Cicis, we've always believed in pushing the boundaries of what's possible in the pizza industry," Hetsel said. "Our commitment to innovation, customer satisfaction, and the recent success of Piezilla exemplify our dedication to delivering an exceptional pizza experience. As the inventor of the Endless Pizza Buffet concept, offering guests a wide variety of pizza, along with pastas, salads, and desserts, we've continued to grow the brand and are stronger than we've ever been."



## ***Tony Gemignani, owner, Slicer House by Tony Gemignani***

Year after year, Tony Gemignani has been a trend setter in the pizza world. Under his leadership, in 2023, Slice House experienced 400% growth in franchise development and an average unit volume of \$2.4M. Gemignani continues to be a leader in not only the pizza world but now in the world of franchise, as well.

Helmed by Gemignani, Slice House by Tony Gemignani has grown from 19 units open or in development to 90 units this past year. Also, the brand has 25 licensed locations in stadiums and arenas, including Sphere in Las Vegas.

Peter Soltesz, Owner of Joe's New York Pizza said he is absolutely the best in the pizza business.

With plans to open an additional 12 units in 2024, Slice House is projecting awarding an additional 50-75 units in 2024 to add to its already existing 90.

Tony Sproul, owner of Blue Square Pizza said he's trained with Gemignani at two different schools and he's had a tremendous impact on all of his students' crafts.

"His generosity of wisdom, focus on details and willingness to extend his phone number and email for any future questions, and to promptly respond is incredible," he said. "He has undoubtedly influenced more pizzeria operators in 2023 having taught at two different schools than any other executive."

David Sommers, Co-Owner of Mad Mushroom called Gemignani the "GOAT".

"Tony has been a mentor to so many and has done more for the industry, especially independents, than anyone I have known or heard of," he said. "In 2023, Tony expanded into franchising his model and the immediate growth was amazing, yet he still finds time to help any pizza person who needs it."

# Top 25 Executives



## ***Jim Metevier, CEO, Mountain Mike's Pizza***

Elevated to Chief Executive Officer of Mountain Mike's Pizza in 2023, Jim Metevier previously served as Mountain Mike's President and Chief Operating Officer since 2018 and has more than 30 years in the restaurant industry – experience that has been instrumental in accelerating the brand's considerable sales and franchise growth in the last half-decade.

After being acquired in 2017 by new owners Chris Britt and Ed St. Geme, who made several key executive hires, including Metevier, Mountain Mike's Pizza has emerged from being a notable regional chain to a fast-growing national powerhouse with a multi-state footprint, nearly 300 restaurants in operation and a robust development pipeline across 10 states.

Since Metevier joined the brand, Mountain Mike's Pizza has thrived from brand loyalty and recognition to sales and franchise growth. Under Metevier's leadership, the brand's AUV has grown nearly 40%, now reaching \$1.1 million with the top 25% of locations averaging \$1.62 million in sales. In addition, system sales across digital platforms continuously rose and now account for nearly 42% of Mountain Mike's systemwide sales.

In the ultra-competitive pizza sector, Metevier has artfully evolved the Mountain Mike's brand DNA while preserving its rich brand history. Metevier and his team are continuing the four-decade legacy of Mountain Mike's Pizza by charting a course for ongoing intentional growth. As franchise growth continues to be a major factor in achieving success for Mountain Mike's Pizza, Metevier is leading the climb.

"The substantial and significant growth Mountain Mike's Pizza experienced in 2023 has been amazing to witness," Metevier said. "As we continue to expand our footprint and our brand, it's extraordinary to look back at our many successes and accomplishments, proving just how hard our franchisees and support teamwork."



## ***Alena Tikhova, CEO, Dodo Brands***

In 2023 Alena Tikhova was assigned CEO of Dodo Brands, a foodservice group with 1030 units across 18 countries (brands include Dodo Pizza, Drinkit and Doner42).

Tikhova started her journey as a Dodo Pizza franchisee with one unit in Russia in 2014, and ended up leading the Dodo Pizza chain in the US before becoming CEO of the whole Dodo Brands holding. Under her leadership, the Dodo team hasn't been afraid to experiment. The brand built its own cloud-based franchising system that partners across 18 countries use.

Tikhova said she continues to rethink every process of pizza making and delivery, from implementing computer vision to ensure the exact amount of sauce on the pizza to creating a reusable pizza box to fight delivery waste. Tikhova believes in taking courageous actions at her company in hopes to move the whole industry forward.

Operations of every Dodo Pizza branch are run on the basis of the proprietary cloud-based technology platform Dodo IS, which is available for every Dodo franchisee within the franchise agreement. Using the platform, Dodo Pizza partners can manage every aspect of their restaurants' operations. That includes staff management, quality control, sales analytics, order tracking, and delivery automation, as well as prices and marketing personalization. It means all the solutions QSR companies usually pay external providers for are included in the Dodo Pizza franchise with no fees.

# Top 25 Executives



## ***Robert Lynch, president & CEO, Papa John's***

Robert Lynch, the CEO of Papa John's, has been the picture of transformative leadership over the last two years. Under his guidance, the company has experienced a significant boost in brand reputation, marked by a commitment to quality, innovation and operational excellence. Lynch's strategic initiatives, such as the introduction of the new 'Epic Dough' store model and the drive-up pick-up windows, reflect a keen focus on elevating the customer experience and ensuring convenience.

Moreover, Lynch has been instrumental in fostering strong partnerships with other large brands. His collaborative approach has enabled Papa John's to navigate the competitive landscape effectively. Notably, the expanded partnership to open 650 new restaurants in India by 2033 and the strategic focus on U.S. market expansion underscore Lynch's commitment to global growth and brand strengthening.



## ***Kevin Printz, CEO Frank Pepe's Pizza Napoletana***

As the CEO of Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana, Kevin Printz is incredibly proud of his brand's journey, rooted in a legacy that began with its founders, Frank and Filomena Pepe, nearly a century ago.

"We are not just passionate about crafting exceptional pizzas; we are equally committed to our people," Printz said. Our employees are the heart and soul of our operation, and our commitment to being a top employer is unwavering. We strive to create an inclusive, supportive, and rewarding workplace that echoes the values set forth by Frank and Filomena Pepe almost a century ago. This commitment to our people is ingrained in our DNA, fueling our passion for delivering an outstanding dining experience. We are honored to be considered for the top 100 and look forward to continuing our journey, serving our community and our employees with the same dedication that has defined us for nearly a century."

With a commitment to Innovation, Printz isn't afraid to push the boundaries. The brand regularly introduces limited-time offers, like their recent Spring Special and Patata Rustica pizzas, showcasing their culinary creativity without compromising their commitment to quality. The brand shows a true commitment to community involvement, engaging with their local communities, supporting various charitable initiatives and events. This dedication to giving back demonstrates Printz's commitment to being more than just a pizza business and contributing positively to the communities they serve.



## ***Beto Guajardo, CEO, Blaze Pizza***

Beto Guajardo is a results-driven leader with a sharp focus on elevating fast-casual dining, spearheading growth initiatives, and prioritizing an enhanced tailored customer experience. Under the visionary leadership of CEO Beto Guajardo, whose extensive expertise in the food and beverage industry has been instrumental, Blaze Pizza has consistently earned industry acclaim and charted a path of strategic growth and international expansion. His professional journey at Blaze reflects a combination of strategic foresight and operational proficiency, contributing notably to the brand's future and resurgence. Guajardo's previous experience

includes roles across various companies such as Focus Brands, Starbucks, Levi Strauss & Co., and McKinsey where he was recognized for his contributions to growth and development, with a particular emphasis on incorporating technology and innovation.

Guajardo said Blaze Pizza's commitment to excellence lies in providing a personalized journey for its valued customers.

"We empower guests to curate their pizzas from a diverse selection of crusts, sauces, cheeses, and toppings, accommodating a wide array of dietary preferences and restrictions," he said. "By prioritizing individualized experiences, we foster customer loyalty and satisfaction, elevating our brand as a leader in the industry."

In 2024, Guajardo is looking for Blaze Pizza to introduce new LTOs, increase customer engagement on digital platforms and online ordering, sign more deals, increase in-store efficiency and look for smaller stores and new formats.



## ***Dave Karam, CEO/Owner, Sbarro***

David Karam is used to rolling up his sleeves, and getting to work. As the CEO of Sbarro, he has turned around a twice-bankrupt brand 10 years ago into now being a very successful chain that undoubtedly will exceed 1000 stores in the next few years. Under this leadership, the company is financially the healthiest it's ever been and will continue having record-breaking years of new store growth. Karam said the quality of freshly made food, the new look of the stores, and the financial model for success by its franchisee is exciting to see. Last year, Sbarro also celebrated milestones including its 200th domestic franchise restaurant, its 300th international franchise restaurant and its 500th franchise location.

"Sbarro is the leading QSR chain serving the pizza impulse buying occasion," Karam said. "We specialize in New York style pizza by the slice and Strombolis that create and satiate customers' pizza cravings."

"I am so grateful for the faith and trust of our franchisees and our corporate and field teams that have made these milestones possible," David Karam said, in a release. "With our focus on the impulse pizza segment, we've been able to feature our pizza by the slice and strombolis to drive customer loyalty. By honing in on our key points of differentiation, it's opened the doors to numerous new venues for growth including military bases, theme parks, c-stores, train stations and travel centers. I'm especially proud that our openings have been so balanced worldwide with half coming in the US and half in the now more than 25 countries we operate in. This is just the beginning for this great brand. We have an incredibly strong development pipeline and we're as excited as ever for our future."

# Top 25 Executives



## ***Tony Libardi, Co-CEO and President, Marco's Pizza***

At the helm of Marco's continued success is its commitment to exceptional customer service and core cultural beliefs of Value Everyone and a promise of Hospitality Always - ensuring a superior guest experience, every time.

Under CEO Tony Libardi's leadership, the brand earned multiple awards and recognitions including Ranking in Newsweek's 2023 America's Best Customer Service in the pizza chains category, earning a spot on QSR's Top 50, appearing on Nation's Restaurant News' prestigious Top 500 ranking, and claiming the No. 51 spot on Entrepreneur's 2023 Franchise 500 ranking.

"Marco's is at the forefront as the pizza industry continues to evolve with consumer needs and growing market changes," Libardi said. "We continue to prioritize monumental growth, advancements in technology, and above all a commitment to delivering a superior quality product and customer experience. This year has been a testament to the hard work and dedication we have to the industry, franchisees, and those we serve - and is why we are a brand to follow."

In terms of menu innovation, The crispy, craveable Pizzoli hit menus in October. By augmenting its menu with the right product, Marco's is winning new customers for potentially different pizza occasions where variety is desired, generating incremental sales, and ultimately capturing a greater share both inside and outside the QSR Pizza category. Pizzoli is proving to be the strongest selling test item in recent brand history.



## ***Domenic Primucci, president, Pizza Nova***

Domenic Primucci is the President of Pizza Nova, a family-operated business with over 150 locations in Southern Ontario. Since the age of 14, Primucci has been involved in almost every aspect of the company, from dishwasher to President. His different roles allowed him to learn every element of the business, which helps him make decisions on day-to-day operations, while putting himself in the shoes of all stakeholder groups - from customers to franchisees.

Primucci ensures Pizza Nova stays up to date with innovation and modernizes its menu, while always maintaining its commitment to quality and freshness. In 2006, he spearheaded a major brand refresh and charted a new course in menu innovation which included becoming the first in Canada to introduce such items as RWA toppings, Charcoal dough and pea-protein plant-based pepperoni. Over the course of the past 25 years, he has also led the company's popular "That's Amore Pizza for Kids" campaign which has helped to raise more than \$2.5 million for Variety - the Children's Charity of Ontario.

In 2023, in honor of the company's 60th anniversary and under Domenic's leadership, Pizza Nova announced a one-million-dollar donation to Scarborough Health Network Foundation - an organization he has supported actively for the past 8 years. As a leader, he maintains relationships with franchisees, engaging in constant, open communication and training. He believes that franchisees are part of the Pizza Nova family and its success hinges on the support they provide franchisees.

# Top 25 Executives



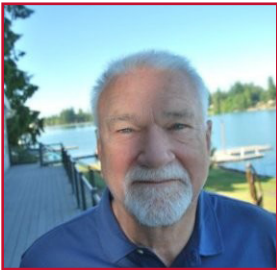
## ***Francis Garcia, Founder & Owner, Artichoke Bastille's Pizza***

Under Francis Garcia's meticulous leadership, Artichoke Basille's has grown its national presence and brand recognition which began with just one location in New York City established in 2008, to 16 corporate and franchised locations coast to coast. The fast-casual concept is aggressively moving into new markets with a new New Jersey location opening up in just a few months.

Garcia's dedication to his brand's original philosophy, which aims to spread his family's recipes developed over four generations of Staten Island-Italian pizzailos, is evident across all 16 of Artichoke Basille's units, proving the success of its franchising and overall business model.

"Artichoke Pizza deserves a spot on the Top 100 because of the dedication that the team had to originally bring great pizza to the NYC metropolitan area- that has now extended across the country," Garcia said. "This chain has a passion for pizza, and I think that shows through the quality, taste, and techniques used to make our unique slices. Artichoke is a household name in NYC, and we're ready to extend that reputation everywhere."

In 2023, the brand implemented a few Secret Menu items that Garcia said he is really excited to continue launching through 2024. Garcia, along with Co-Founder Sal Basille, has appeared on nationally-syndicated TV shows like The Tonight Show, Fox & Friends, Good Morning New York, The Nick Cannon Show, and even starred in two of their own series on The Cooking Channel: Pizza Masters and Pizza Cuz.



## ***John Farrell, founder, Farrelli's Pizza***

John Farrell has been in the hospitality industry for nearly 60 years. In that time, he built Farrelli's, alongside his daughter Jacque and a dedicated leadership team, into an industry leading independent regional chain. He started Farrelli's Pizza in 1995, and has expanded across the Puget Sounds region. The brand prides itself on growing leaders from within. He currently employs 568 people, but over his career has employed tens of thousands of people, some of whom have gone on to become surgeons, lawyers, state senators, mothers, fathers and some of whom even have children now working for the company. Farrell's impact extends

far beyond the company he now oversees and the region it operates within.

Under his leadership, in 2023 Farrelli's negotiated the acquisition of a two-unit pizza concept in its market that was converted in under two weeks into the newest Farrelli's locations, acquiring two new teams of employees and customer bases. Farrelli's will celebrate its 29th anniversary in 2024. In the past year and a half, we have opened four new units, taking the company to 12 units.

## ***Jim Phillips, CEO, Mr. Gatti's Pizza***

Jim Phillips, CEO of Mr. Gatti's Pizza is a true servant leader who has worked tirelessly to steward Mr. Gatti's iconic brand over the past few years. With a focus on the history of this long-time brand at the forefront of his mind, Phillips has simultaneously led the brand to an increase in same-store sales as well as a more than 10 % increase in system-wide sales from 2022 to 2023.

Under his leadership, the brand has been able to add more franchise agreements in a few years, than the previous decade, with a growth plan that has no plan of slowing down.

"The turnaround and current success of the Mr Gatti's Pizza brand is a master class on how a franchise system should be managed and the resurgence of this brand under his leadership is a testament to his leadership," CFO K.C. Mann said.

In addition, the brand's focus on giving back to its community is something that Phillips should be proud of. In March, Mr. Gatti's partnered with [St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital](#) for a month-long fundraiser that resulted in the brand matching donations up to \$10,000.



## ***David McKillips, CEO, CEC Entertainment***

In his nearly four-year tenure as CEO of CEC Entertainment, LLC, McKillips has pulled the company from bankruptcy and paved the way for a new era of Chuck E. Cheese.

McKillips continues to lead the industry's largest brand transformation initiative deploying \$40-\$50 million each year in remodeling its fun centers across the U.S. and Canada. To date, the over \$250 million capex investment in physical infrastructure, technology upgrades, enhanced entertainment and professional development of its Cast Members and

Management Teams has led to increased sales, greater guest survey goals and more efficient recruitment of its nearly 14,000 new hires annually.

In addition, McKillips introduced the brand's first virtual kitchen concept, Pasqually's Pizza & Wings, and launched a partnership with virtual kitchen pioneer, Virtual Dining Concepts, to lead the family entertainment and restaurant category with new 'eatertainment' delivery-only dining concepts with the popular LankyBox brand, and earlier this year with Buddy V's Cake Slice, which provides guests Buddy Valastro's famous cakes by the slice, to order for in-store or delivery nationwide.

Early in McKillips' tenure, he established the brand's global media, licensing and entertainment team to expand revenue opportunities via apparel, toys, frozen pizza and more. In 2023, he led the brand in announcing its first-ever location-based entertainment licensing deal with the new California Dreamin' Water Park.

"Chuck E. Cheese has been a trailblazer in the pizza industry and maintained an impressive legacy for over 45 years," McKillips said. "The brand's beloved and iconic concept has allowed children and families to enjoy delicious pizza and play during birthday celebrations and everyday fun for generations."

# Top 25 Executives



## ***Mary Jane Riva, CEO, Pizza Factory***

Mary Jane Riva is the CEO of Pizza Factory, a legacy pizzeria with a hometown feel and more than 100 locations across the West Coast. Riva has held the position for 11 years and continues to utilize her 30+ years of experience in the pizza industry on all aspects of the business to further the brand. She takes an innovative approach to make the brand's goals a reality and has helped to solidify Pizza Factory as an industry leader through the introduction of strategic supplier partnerships, invention of the express model and modernization of Pizza Factory's loyalty app.

In the last year, Pizza Factory experienced a 3% increase in same-store sales in 2023 for a total of \$83,588,000.

"I am thrilled with the momentum Pizza Factory experienced this year," Mary Jane Riva said. "Once again, the brand has reached new heights on all fronts and made 2023 a memorable year. We welcomed a number of new corporate team members, and store owners and introduced our awesome atmosphere to 10 new communities. All that we accomplished is a testament to our incredible system of corporate team members and new and existing franchisees. We look to 2024 with excitement, as our pipeline is primed for another year of growth and new opportunity."



## ***Tom Sterrett, president & CEO, Papa Gino's***

As a leader, Tom Sterrett prioritizes team well-being, fostering a collaborative and innovative culture that focuses on people-first leadership, operational expertise and extensive industry history. His specialization in restaurant operations ensures optimal efficiency and quality control, setting industry standards.

With a rich history in the restaurant and pizza industry, Sterrett brings valuable insights, resilience, and strategic vision to drive Papa Gino's success, making him a standout executive in the pizza landscape. In 2023, the brand made the decision to bring back its fan-favorite Rustic Pizza as a limited time offering after several years of it being taken off our menu. Different from its traditional pizzas, the Rustic Pizza is made with ultra-thin, hand-stretched dough cooked atop panko crumbs for the perfect crispiness, Papa Gino's Signature 3-Cheese Blend topped with Asiago Cheese and edges brushed with 100% Virgin Olive Oil and then sprinkled with Romano Cheese

In 2024, Papa Gino's Pizzeria is poised for strategic expansion and innovation, with a multifaceted growth plan designed to enhance our brand presence, guest reach and overall market impact. Focus areas include, but are not limited to, media opportunities and expansion, menu innovation with limited time offerings, and technological advancements.

# Top 25 Executives



## ***John Arena, co-founder, Truly Pizza***

John Arena is a third-generation pizza chef and the co-owner and co-founder of Metro Pizza, a pizzeria in Las Vegas with 7 locations. They've won countless local and national awards and acclaim, including being named one of the Top 10 pizzerias in the U.S. by Penny Pollack and Jeff Ruby in their book "Everybody Loves Pizza, featured on "Entertainment Tonight" and "Live with Regis and Kathy Lee," and listed as one of the 10 best pizzerias in America by USA Today.

John Arena has been called the don of dough, the sultan of sauce, and the prince of pizza by the Las Vegas Review Journal, not to mention, he's also a worldwide ambassador and elder statesman for the pizza industry. Arena is a legend in the industry, being named a World Champion of Pizza known for Metro Pizza in Las Vegas.

In 2023, he opened a whole new concept with his long-time friend Donna Baldwin. Together they own Truly Pizza. John partnered with two other World Champions of Pizza to create the pizza for Truly, which has quickly changed the pizza game all together with its light and airy dough.

Arena's team has spent the last several months building a community around Truly Pizza, supporting several different charities, including Farmhouse Rescue, Slice Out Hunger and several local community nonprofits and schools. They added a Community Table event and added a Wine Club, to serve small batch and high-end wines. These collective community efforts have created a more than triple the industry average in revenue, which exceeded projections by 60%.



## ***Jeff Ambrose, owner/CEO, Woodstock's Pizza***

Jeff Ambrose has been with Woodstock's Pizza for more than 40 years. He began as a delivery driver at the first location in Corvallis, Oregon while working as a student at Oregon State University. Since then, he has grown to President, CEO, and majority owner. Jeff has not only created a "Built to Last" company in Woodstock's Pizza, but has attracted, retained and inspired the top leadership talent to ensure Woodstock's Pizza strives in college communities for the next 40 years.

Under his leadership, Woodstock's Pizza has become beloved in California college towns for several decades. Ambrose said the brand thrives on three day parts- lunch, dinner and late night. Self-claimed "California Born & Baked," Woodstock's offers unique pies like the Kickin' Carnitas and crowd favorites like the All Meat Orgy and Grateful Veg. Co-Owner Laura Ambrose said Woodstock's is one of the most expensive pizza places in each of its towns, but loyal fans love the consistently high quality and fun atmosphere.

In 2024, Ambrose will continue his commitment to Innovative training and focus on building a committed team. The brand is planning a large remodel in Santa Cruz with the addition of a Type 47 license and full bar and is looking to finalize a new location and market for 2025 opening.

# Top 25 Executives



## ***Tom Sacco, CEO & Chief Happiness, Happy Joe's Pizza & Ice Cream***

Tom Sacco has taken a 50-year-old brand that was in a slow decline and reinvigorated it. Using a strategic combination of new branding, relevant menu development that includes new online ordering and a Mobile App, Happy Joe's opened five locations in 2023.

He also brought a new prototype building design and is following that up with exploding growth both domestically and internationally.

Being the iconic leader and menu innovator in the fast-casual pizza space, the 2023 partnership with Integrated Digital Strategies includes franchise perks which include multiple day parts of revenue streams, a time-tested business model, a family of happy and profitable franchisees, and ongoing corporate support. The partnership was meant to target expanding Happy Joe's into various new markets and launched a new franchise website implementing IDS' proprietary franchise lead generation process. This new landing page for potential franchisees has already played a key part in Happy Joe's recent growth. The franchise team has already seen quality leads come through, looking toward a positive outcome in 2024 and beyond.

"Through constant innovation and making an effort to set ourselves apart from our competitors, Happy Joe's continues to build on its rich 50+ year history of leadership innovation in the pizza space," Sacco said. "From creative takes on traditional pizzas, ice cream, and even pizza-inspired hamburgers, we know we are at the top of the list -- especially when it comes to putting smiles on the faces of those families we serve."



## ***Chris LaRocca, CEO, Crushed Red***

When developing the concept behind Crushed Red, Chris LaRocca put together a team of experts who spent years developing a menu that is delicious and served in a fast, welcoming and comfortable atmosphere.

He pioneered new artisan flavors of pizza all while maintaining a 100% sustainable operation. His dedication to taste and the planet is unparalleled. He shows that a leader can be impactful not only in day to day terms but long term commitment to the health of the planet. As part of the [Green Dining Alliance](#), Crushed Red has shown their commitment to providing a sustainable

restaurant management and operation system. Their locations produce little-to-no waste, and that has been important to LaRocca from the beginning.

LaRocca continues to support the communities in which he serves. The Gift A Meal marketing program helped to boost guest loyalty while feeding families in need. With this program, each time a guest took a photo of their food or drink through the GiftAMeal mobile app, Crushed Red helped fund a donation to a local food bank to provide a meal to a member of its community. The guest could then share their photo on social media, and an extra meal was donated for each platform selected (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter) for up to four meals donated per visit.



## ***Chuck Lipp, president, Dewey's Pizza***

As the President of Dewey's Pizza, Chuck Lipp has continued to showcase his exceptional leadership, strategic vision and contributions to the success of the company. Lipp has exhibited innovative leadership, driving Dewey's Pizza to explore new horizons within the pizza industry. Under his guidance, the company has embraced strategic collaborations, such as the partnership with Braxton Brewing Co in Covington, Kentucky, and the integration of cocktails into the menu. These initiatives demonstrate a forward-thinking approach and a commitment to staying ahead of industry trends.

In 2023, Dewey's undertook a comprehensive technology and process review as a pivotal business initiative that profoundly impacted the year and laid the groundwork for future growth. Lipp's leadership has been instrumental in steering Dewey's Pizza through strategic growth initiatives. The decision to launch the technology and process review in 2023 reflects his commitment to operational excellence and a proactive stance in preparing the company for sustained growth in the future. Initiatives such as the point-of-sale upgrade with Revel and the enhanced accounts payable process with R365 underscore his strategic acumen and dedication to positioning Dewey's for long-term success.

Beyond the boardroom, Lipp has demonstrated a commitment to community engagement that has contributed positively to the local communities in which the company operates.

"This year, Dewey's celebrated 25 years of serving our community," Lipp said. "It's the dedication of our passionate teams who curate the Dewey's experience, aiding our longevity and loyalty from fans. Our impact also extends beyond the four walls of our 25 restaurants. Since 2009, we've donated more than \$1.8 million to our local communities."



## ***Brian Spangler, owner, Apizza Scholls***

Brian Spangler and Kim Nyland opened their first pizzeria in January of 2004. Scholls Public House opened in Scholls, Oregon. After rebranding and reopening under the name [Apizza Scholls](#) in 2005, the brand quickly took on the other half of the building and created a complete event destination that features a creative menu and old-school classic arcade games. With a motto of "It's Just Pizza", Spangler has been able to bring a fun-loving and realistic approach to pizza making that customers gravitate to.

The menu includes salads, calzones and pizzas and dessert. Specializing in a Neo-Neapolitan style pizza, Spangler's method of cooking pizzas is in an extremely hot-temperature oven with minimal toppings.

Spangler has been featured on the [Masters of Pizza](#) site, where he provides tips and tricks for home pizza makers, as well as details behind the story of his brand.

# Top 25 Executives



## ***Shawn Burcham, PFSbrands Founder/CEO, Hangar 54/Wingman's Pizza***

Shawn Burcham continues to show the pizza industry why he is known to be a driven visionary with a core purpose to help others become more successful in work and in life. Vice President of Marketing for Hangar 54/Wingman's Pizza Amanda Wagner said Burcham lives this out daily for all of the employee-owners at PFSbrands, along with the wholesalers and retailers in the convenience and grocery industries.

"We are continuously working to provide the best foodservice solutions and help independent operators succeed in foodservice," she said. "Pizza has been a top focus for Shawn including the product variety and quality, technology, support and the profitability and success for all involved. Shawn's core purpose is contagious and the key factor behind the success and growth of these brands. Shawn is revolutionizing pizza in the convenience industry."

In terms of growth, Hangar 54 Pizza and Wingman Pizza are continuing to make a name for themselves in the convenience and grocery industries. Under Burcham's leadership, these sister brands are expanding in franchise numbers and menu offerings. In 2023 alone, there were 39 new Hangar 54 pizza franchise locations sold and 119 Wingman Pizza locations sold.



## ***Don Robinson, CEO, Parlour***

PARLOUR CEO Don Robinson was recognized as the Most Admired CEO by Louisville Business First this year for his efforts, steering PARLOUR with resilience, vision and a commitment to excellence. For Robinson, it's not just about the accolades; it's about shaping a legacy that revolves around his team and the customers who turn PARLOUR into more than a place to eat. Robinson said he wants PARLOUR to be a spot to connect, savor and create lasting memories, turning each visit into a promise of great tastes, good times and unforgettable moments.

Robinson has locked in a three-store development deal set to unfold in Lexington, Kentucky, kicking off in April. This move amplifies his dedication to spreading the love for exceptional food to additional communities. Additionally, PARLOUR is taking a bold step into the world of franchising, with its inaugural franchisee gearing up for a six-store venture in Kentucky and Tennessee

Adding to its corporate presence, PARLOUR opened another store in January 2024, solidifying Robinson's commitment to providing top-notch experiences in more locations.

Robinson is proud that PARLOUR was named the number 12 Fastest-Growing Private Company by Louisville Business First, with 195.36% sales growth from 2020 to 2022, saluting the hard work and resilience of his entire team.



## ***Ric Gruber, CEO, Billy Bricks***

At the helm of Billy Bricks is CEO Ric Gruber. Specializing in thin crust, Neapolitan-style pizza, this brand bakes its pies in a wood-fired brick oven in an open kitchen concept. Gruber's family started the brand that, in addition to its pizzas, is also known for made-to-order salads, soups and artisan sandwiches, Gruber has built and continues to grow the brand that began in 2005.

"As a pioneer in the fast casual and wood fired pizza spaces, Billy Bricks has always owed its success and now future growth plans to a willingness to innovate and adapt to new technologies and market changes, while remaining true to its core values of providing 'Real People. Real Food. Real Fast'," Gruber said,

The brand, which Gruber refers to as "The Rocket Ship" has grown to multiple stores as well as multiple food trucks. In 2024, Gruber is also actively negotiating being the official food service providers and/or pizza of several minor league athletic facilities in Illinois.

# INDEX

Al grottino pizzeria	31	Hangar 54 Pizza (and Wingman Pizza)	9	Peter Piper Pizza	15
Alena Tikhova, CEO, Dodo Brands	36	Happy Joe's Pizza & Ice Cream	14	Pizza Factory	21
Amici	9	Hindsight Pizza Kitchen	25	Pizza Guys	17
Artichoke Pizza	11	Homegrown Tap & Dough	27	Pizza Ranch	8
Azzip Pizza	7	Hungry Howie's	10	Pizzawala's	27
Beto Guajardo, CEO, Blaze Pizza	38	Jeff Ambrose, owner/CEO, Woodstock's Pizza	43	Pizzeria Camión	29
Billy Bricks	11	Jeff Hetsel, president, Cicis Pizza	35	Pupatella	24
Blaze Pizza	6	Jet's Pizza	12	Ric Gruber, CEO, Billy Bricks	46
Blue Square Pizza	25	Jim Metevier, CEO, Mountain Mike's Pizza	36	Richie B's New York Pizzeria	32
Boombozz Pizza & Watch Bar	17	Jim Phillips, CEO, Mr. Gatti's Pizza	41	Robert Lynch, president & CEO, Papa John's	37
Brian Spangler, owner, Apizza Scholls	45	Joe's New York Pizza	28	Rosati's Pizza Enterprises	22
Bright Penny Brewing Co.	24	John Arena, co-founder, Truly Pizza	43	Rotolo's	24
Cane Rosso	10	John Farrell, founder, Farrelli's Pizza	40	Sal's Pizza	23
Chris LaRocca, CEO, Crushed Red	44	Karvelas Pizza Company	26	Sarpino's USA	21
Chubby Charlie's Pizza	22	Kevin Printz, CEO Frank Pepe's Pizza Napoletana	37	Sbarro	13
Chuck E. Cheese	12	MacKenzie River Pizza	27	Shawn Burcham, PFSbrands Founder/CEO, Hangar 54/Wingman's Pizza	46
Chuck Lipp, president, Dewey's Pizza	45	Mad Mushroom	26	Slice House by Tony Gemignani	3
Cicis Pizza	4	Marco's Pizza	5	Slice of Vegas Pizza Kitchen & Bar	31
Crushed Red	18	Mary Jane Riva, CEO, Pizza Factory	42	Slice Pizza & Brew	28
Dave Karam, CEO/Owner, Sbarro	38	Mattenga's Pizzeria	19	The Mash	23
David McKillips, CEO, CEC Entertainment	41	Mellow Mushroom	14	Toarmina's Pizza	19
Dewey's Pizza	20	Mercasa Little Italy Eatery	28	Tom Sacco, CEO & Chief Happiness, Happy Joe's Pizza & Ice Cream	44
Dodo Pizza	7	Minsky's Pizza	18	Tom Sterrett, president & CEO, Papa Gino's	42
Domenic Primucci, president, Pizza Nova	39	Mister O1 Pizza	13	Tony Gemignani, owner, Slicer House by Tony Gemignani	35
Don Robinson, CEO, Parlour	46	Morris East Restaurant	26	Tony Libardi, Co-CEO and President, Marco's Pizza	39
Donatos Pizza	13	Mountain Mike's Pizza	4	Truly Pizza	30
Empire Slice House	21	Mr Gatti's Pizza	14	Uncle Rico's Pizza	34
Farrelli's Pizza	8	New York Pizza	15	V Modern Italian	32
Fat Boy's Pizza	16	Old Scratch Pizza	16	Valentina's Pizzeria & Wine Bar	33
FoodHub	32	Organ Stop Pizza	33	Via 313	30
Francis Garcia, Founder & Owner, Artichoke Bastile's Pizza	40	Paisano's Pizza	20	Wooden Peel	33
Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana	5	Papa Gino's	17	Woodstock's Pizza	30
Gina's Pizza & Pastaria	29	Papa Johns	6		
Grimaldi's Pizzeria	11	PARLOUR	19		