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Inflation and how it will impact restaurants in 2022

By Bob Patterson



Bob Patterson

In an industry hard hit by the pandemic, restaurants are facing yet another challenge: rising inflation. Inflation is at its highest in decades, with food and energy costs rising faster than the average, not to mention labor cost increases across all industries. Likely, if labor costs aren't impacting your restaurant right now, it's because you're not fully staffed. Restaurateurs and operators need to act now to cover costs by increasing menu prices—even if you have adjusted prices recently—and looking for opportunities to save on food costs. Let's start with what's happening and why. Inflation occurs when too many dollars are chasing too few goods and services. In addition to a surge in demand, supply chain bottlenecks continue to impact supply for a variety of products. A perfect storm developed over the past 19 months and looks likely to continue well into the future given previous and current monetary policies and decisions.

Through the payment platform used by my firm, our clients are experiencing significant price increases for common ingredients — up more than 25% for ground beef, nearly 50% for steak, more than 30% for chicken, seafood up 20%, French fries more than 30% — even lettuce is up 50%. These numbers track with other nationally reported figures. Skyrocketing prices have caught the attention of the Biden administration, which unveiled a \$1 million boost in early January to support smaller meatpackers in effort to reduce the influence of big corporations, arguing the increased competition would help bring down prices. While there may be some relief coming in that sector, it isn't likely to offset the overall rise in costs. Inflation at these rates will require frequent and consistent price changes unlike any time in recent history. The Wall Street Journal reported recently that fast food restaurants have raised menu prices by 7.9% this year, while other restaurant formats have increased

See INFLATION page 12

Multi-unit franchisee deal brings Curry Up Now to North Carolina

The popular Indian fast casual is coming to the bustling Research Triangle area

San Francisco, CA – Curry Up Now, the nation's largest and fastest growing Indian fast casual concept, has announced a multi-unit franchise deal to bring its innovative approach to Indian cuisine to North Carolina. The deal continues the Bay Area brand's expansion to the East Coast and marks the first location opening in the Tar Heel State. Family franchisees Viral Patel, Amit Patel, Alpesh Patel and Pathik Patel of VAAP Management will open at least five Curry Up Now restaurants in the Research Triangle area of North Carolina. As seasoned operators of Dunkin' and Baskin-Robbins franchise locations, the VAAP Management team recognized the value in operating a dual-brand to reach consumers during different day-parts. They plan to open Curry Up Now's sister concept, Mortar and Pestle craft cocktail bar, alongside select locations. "My family and I began our franchising journey in the 90s and have always wanted to break into Indian



See CURRY UP page 14



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What's Going On

Important new products, corporate news and industry events

Hotel Happenings

The Tuscan-inspired, 126-room **ette Hotel Orlando** opens spring 2022 near Disney World. Focusing on wellness as an alcohol-free property, the hotel offers culinary experiences in partnership with **Michelin Star Chef Akira Back**.



Founder of 4 Rivers Restaurant Group, John Rivers, will open the first phase of the 4Roots Farm Campus in late 2022. When complete, the 18-acre urban farm, located in The Packing District, in Orlando, will have classrooms, a farm to table restaurant and more than 40,000 sq ft of greenhouses and a diverse range of growing systems focused on innovation, sustainability and education.

◆◆◆◆◆
Vulcan, a leading provider of commercial cooking equipment, recently announced that it has hired **Mike Conway** to join the Vulcan team. Conway will serve as the Business Development Manager and leading sales expert for Fryers, Griddles and Charbroilers. He will work in conjunction



Mike Conway

with the Vulcan Sales Directors to provide development, training and end-user support. For more than 150 years, Vulcan has been recognized by chefs and operators throughout the world for top-quality, energy efficient commercial cooking equipment. Vulcan is part of ITW



Rush Bowls - a fast-casual concept known for its fresh and healthy meals-in-a-bowl - continues its rapid national expansion by announcing three locations in new markets that are expected to open early this year. These new additions are located in Alabama, Florida, and Louisiana and will work towards the brand's goal of making quick and healthy meals more accessible across the country. The new Rush Bowls locations will be making their debut in:

- ◆ 113 20th St S Birmingham, AL
- ◆ 12450 Tamiami Trail E Naples, FL
- ◆ 800 Metairie Rd Metairie, LA

"People in Birmingham, Naples, and New Orleans are wanting a healthy, on-the-go food option," said Andrew Pudalov, Founder and CEO of Rush Bowls. "There is nothing like Rush Bowls in these cities, so we are thrilled to introduce these markets to a side of health and wellness that they haven't seen or tasted before."

Food Equipment Group (NYSE: ITW). For more information, visit them at vulcanequipment.com.



Your Pie, a fast-casual pizza franchise, has signed a franchise agreement to open several new restaurants in **North Georgia** over the next few years. The new franchised restaurants will be



owned by Wesley Dowdy of Duke Hospitality. The group currently also owns 10 hotels across two states along with several other restaurant brands. The first restaurants as part of the agreement are projected to open in Dalton and Hiawassee, this summer. The other four locations, which will later be determined in the North Georgia area, are expected to be open by 2025.



Eco-Products® announced the addition of seven new items to its Vanguard™ lineup. **Made from plant-based sugarcane fiber and certified as compostable**, these two-piece compostable take-out containers are perfect for restaurants, supermarkets, convenience stores and snack bars seeking environmentally preferable options. Vanguard is an award-winning line that uses a proprietary chemistry to achieve grease resistance without the use of PFAS. Vanguard recently earned the coveted GreenScreen Certified™

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Appell Pie

What is networking and how can it help you?

Howard Appell ♦ Today's Restaurant Publisher

What is the meaning of Networking defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary? *It is the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions specifically: The cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business.*

Prior to the beginning of COVID-19, I started a Networking group that meet twice a month in person, locally in Boca Raton. We held meetings in several restaurants until we found a permanent home at City Fish Market. At every meeting we would have 15-25 attendees all from different companies. We only allowed one company per category so we were selective as to who was allowed to join.

Over the years we had companies come and go but the ones that saw the theory stayed with it and benefitted the most. Networking groups are not intended for the members to sell each other, but that does happen. By introducing yourself and your company each member built up trust and friendship with their fellow members and would feel comfortable recommending them to their customers.

New members began to come from all over the east coast of the USA and one from Canada.

As I stated above, by joining a Networking group you are actually selling to the contacts that the members may have and garnering their support for you and your business. Remember that a personal recommendation will help make the sale 80% of the time.

Once COVID started we had to suspend in person meetings and I began researching which meeting platform

was the best to use. I settled on Zoom because it was the easiest to use and the most cost efficient.

Getting our members back and finding new ones was the next challenge. I launched a campaign of email blasts and Social Media posts to attract new company/members. Our database of companies in the industry proved to be invaluable in finding new members by emailing information. By using the Zoom platform in conjunction with our database our membership grew in number and also in geographical scope. New members began to come from all over the east coast of the USA and one from Canada. Soon phone calls began coming in from companies in categories that already had a member in it, so I started a waiting list.

Once the waiting list reached a point with companies who wanted to join I decided to duplicate the first group with new members and created Chapter 2. So we now have two meetings every Friday. Chapter 2 meets at 9 AM and Chapter 1 meets at 11 AM all on Zoom. The members of both groups are leaders in their fields and understand how Networking works.

Members of the group pay dues quarterly and get special discounts on Today's Restaurant News services like digital newspaper advertising, email blasts, video emails blasts, video interviews and restaurant lead reports as well as a listing in the ads we promote on Social Media and in the digital newspaper www.trnusa.com.

Now we want to invite you, our readers who are the owners, managers and chefs to come to a meeting and meet our vendors who are ready to serve you with the highest level of service and professionalism. We expect it from our members! There is no charge to attend the meetings for you and you don't even have to leave your office. We welcome you to join us. All you need to do is RSVP by phone 561 620-8888, by email info@trnusa.com or signing up on our website www.trnusa.com/network-group. We look forward to meeting you. 

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Clarion Events and the FRLA announce reboot of their annual tradeshow

The newly designed Florida Restaurant & Lodging Show debuts with new format, venue and dates

Shelton, CT - Clarion Events Food & Beverage Group and the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association (FRLA) have announced the relaunch of the all new Florida Restaurant & Lodging Show (FRLS) to take place November 1-4, 2022 at the Caribe Royale Resort in Orlando. This newly reinvented gathering for the restaurant, foodservice, lodging and hospitality industry will replace the historic FRLS, traditionally held in Orlando in September.

"After 40 years of hosting the FRLA Show in Orlando, we felt it was time for a refresh for this important industry event, which our association has long been a partner in," said Carol Dover, President and CEO, Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association. "We believe in the power of in-person networking through a strong and dynamic expo and conference and look forward to rebuilding and rebooting this 40-year-old event. We are working closely with Clarion Events to develop timely education, exciting high production events with high profile chefs and presenters, and a diverse show floor showcasing trends and hot concepts. In addition, we are excited that the FRLA Board of Directors meeting will be held in conjunction with this new event."

Education will be a key component of this new event with leading subject matter experts providing relevant content for independents, small/medium sized chains, regional chains, foodservice and lodging industry professionals. Topics to be covered will include technology, trends and hot concepts, HR/staffing, marketing, operations, financing/budgeting, leasing, menu, legal/compliance, private label, health/healthy food products, wellness, sustainability, etc.

The expo hall will offer a diverse and curated collection of products and services, education theaters, high production demonstrations, wine & spirits, flair bartending, a Latino initiative, and much more. Special events will include a breakfast keynote, roundtable lunches with peer-to-peer networking, receptions, awards, fundraiser and the FRLA awards.



FLORIDA RESTAURANT & LODGING ASSOCIATION

"We have been working closely with our partners at the FRLA to evaluate the best ways to bring the Florida restaurant and lodging industry back together after a two-year hiatus and we are thrilled to be announcing the launch of this new and exciting conference and expo," said Rita Ugianskis, Vice President for the Clarion Events Food & Beverage Group. "We know the Florida restaurant and hospitality market is vibrant and deserving of an event that delivers top notch exhibits, education and networking opportunities. We look forward to delivering that for FRLA Members and the entire Florida market in November 2022."

The Florida Restaurant & Lodging Show is sponsored by The Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association (FRLA), Florida's premier non-profit hospitality industry trade association. Founded in 1946 as the Florida Restaurant Association, FRLA merged with the Florida Hotel and Motel Association in 2006. FRLA's more than 10,000 members include independent hoteliers and restaurateurs, household name franchises, theme parks and suppliers. The association's mission is to protect, educate and promote Florida's \$111.7 billion hospitality industry which represents 1.5 million employees. Dedicated to safeguarding the needs of the membership, FRLA provides legislative advocacy to ensure the voices of its members are heard and their interests are protected. The association offers regulatory compliance and food safety training through SafeStaff® and FRLA's subsidiary, RCS Training. The FRLA Educational Foundation provides industry-developed, career-building high school programs throughout Florida. 

Clarion Events (us.clarionevents.com) produces 37 events across 13 sectors of both trade and consumer events. The Clarion Events Food & Beverage Group include the Western Foodservice & Hospitality Expo, International Restaurant & Foodservice Show of New York, Coffee Fest and The NGA Show. Clarion Events acquired PennWell in early 2018, bringing 4 Tradeshow 200 events into the U.S. portfolio and super-charging the already rapid growth. Clarion Events has offices in Trumbull, CT; Kennesaw, GA; Boca Raton, FL; Tacoma, WA, and Fairlawn, NJ.

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National Restaurant Association launches People Behind the Plate initiative

Initiative highlights the positive impacts restaurants have in their local communities

Washington, D.C. – The National Restaurant Association today announced the launch of “People Behind the Plate,” an initiative that highlights the stories of people who have chosen to make a difference in the world by being a part of the restaurant industry. The industry is a collection of millions of owners, operators, and people who choose to make restaurants their careers. They are committed to being the cornerstones on which their community can build and support each other through adversity, like the recent pandemic. People Behind the Plate initially features the personal stories of six restaurant owners, operators and chefs from Michigan, Oregon, and Texas who persevered to keep their doors open.

Restaurant owners, operators, and the people who work in the industry have been uniquely harmed by recent economic challenges. The devastating reach of the pandemic, labor shortages, rising costs, and supply chain delays have pushed them to the brink. Many operators have struggled but ultimately succeeded in keeping employees on payroll and their customers fed. The People Behind the Plate initiative brings to light the many ways these small business owners have addressed their challenges while continuing to make a difference in their communities.



“When you hear the word community, you think of the people, places, and experiences that make your town feel like home. By creating good jobs, welcoming customers, and helping to feed the less fortunate, community is at the heart of the people in the restaurant industry. The People Behind the Plate initiative puts names and faces to the restaurant owners, operators, and employees who serve their communities every day,” said Tia Mattson, Executive Vice President, Marketing + Communications, National Restaurant Association.

The first six videos in the People Behind the Plate series showcase the personal accounts by restaurant owners and operators and how their restaurants have a tangible impact on the people around them. From supporting deployed troops, to providing free meals

for those in need, to serving meals to exhausted frontline workers during the pandemic, their stories provide a snapshot of what the people in the restaurant industry are doing to help others.

People Behind the Plate features:

- ◆ Lance Trenary, President & CEO, Golden Corral
- ◆ Chef Petro Drakopoulos, owner and chef of Republica Gastro Pub in Berkley, Michigan
- ◆ Katherine Lam and Daniel Nguyen, owners of Bambuza Vietnam Kitchen in Portland, Oregon
- ◆ Kelsey Yoho, co-owner of Weekend Beer Company in Grants Pass, Oregon
- ◆ Jerry Maddox, owner of Fazoli's in Pharr, Texas
- ◆ CaSarah Pine, Staff Sergeant, United States Air Force


Serving Guests and Serving the Community

Jerry Maddox, owner of Fazoli's in Pharr, Texas, has been in the restaurant industry for more than 25 years. To him, it's about more than owning a restaurant, it's about being there for the community anytime and in any way they need him.

Culinary Training Provides Skills for Life

CaSarah Pine, Staff Sergeant, United States Air Force, talks about how her experience in the Advanced Culinary Training Program, helps kitchen operations run smoothly at Ellsworth Air Force Base. She hopes to send younger airman to participate in the program.

Serving Over 3,000 Meals to Frontline Workers

Chef Petro Drakopoulos, Brooklyn, Michigan, describes how his team at Republica “put their hands into it” to serve more than 3,000 frontline workers in metropolitan Detroit. This action led to more and more opportunities to get food out to others. Share and say “Thank You” to Chef Petro and his team of #PeopleBehindThePlate for setting off a chain-reaction of doing good. 

To learn more visit restaurant.org.

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Tips for turning your love of food into a profitable business

Chef Big Shake serves up advice on turning your food passion into profits

Franklin, TN – Food is something we need to survive and thrive, but for many people, it's more than that; it's a passion. As such, there are many who turn that passion into profits when they take their love of food in an entrepreneurial direction. That's exactly what Shawn Davis, otherwise known as Chef Big Shake, did when he took his hot chicken and fish to the people. Today, his Nashville hot chicken and fish is famous, with four restaurant locations, and more franchises continue to be added.

"Anyone who knows me is aware of my passion for food, which is why it's only fitting that there be a line of restaurants in my honor," explains Shawn Davis, otherwise known as Chef Big Shake and owner of Big Shake's restaurants. "We have several more franchise locations in the lineup, and we are looking for more people who want to open one."

The food business is one that many people get into, and for good reason. The public typically eats three times per day, day after day. There's a lot of potential when it comes to sales. In fact, the National Restaurant Association reports that during 2020, there were \$659 billion in sales.



Chef Big Shake - Shawn Davis

It's also an industry where those who are not initially experts can succeed. Roughly 8 out of 10 restaurant owners started their career in entry-level positions, while 9 in 10 restaurant managers started in entry-level positions. In other words, it's a field where if you have a love of food, you can work your way up, learning the ropes, to achieve a lot of success.

Don't believe that if you build it, they will come. They need to know where you are and what you offer.

For those who are passionate about food and want to turn their passion into profits, consider these tips to help you get there:

- ◆ Determine what it is that you would like to do with your passion for food. Do you want to work for someone, have your business, cook, or oversee

others who do? There is no right or wrong path; it's a matter of what direction you want to take.

- ◆ Consider all your options, especially when it comes to something like franchising. Those who franchise a Chef Big Shake, for example, are able to have a business that immediately has name recognition, a reputation for great food, and all the support they need to get the business running and keep it thriving. Plus, following the pandemic, many people are leaving their jobs in search of opportunities that allow them to be their own boss and provide them with flexibility.

- ◆ If you are creating food that you want to sell, start small to test the market. It's important to see if there is a market for what you are making before you invest a lot of money into it.

- ◆ Don't believe that if you build it, they will come. They need to know where you are and what you offer. This means you need to get the word out through public relations, marketing, referrals, etc. This is an important area of business that is often overlooked but is a must if you want success.

- ◆ Ask for help and get the support

See **LOVE FOOD** page 10

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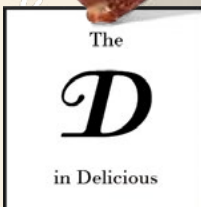
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Restaurants comeback to continue in 2022 but big risks still pose a drag

By Kim Gore & Zach Kuperman

Just a year ago, Florida's restaurant industry considered itself in a COVID-driven free fall that it struggled to slow as 2021 progressed.

It's had a leg up on several fronts. Start with a weather climate that is generally conducive to outdoor dining and open windows to deter the spread of contagion. Then there's the state's political and social climate, with a state government that's averse to shutdowns and mandates and enough patrons willing to take the risk of group gatherings to keep restaurant doors open.

The end result? The state's full-service restaurants alone are not bouncing back, but they are recovering. After falling from an eight-year high of \$25.36 billion in 2019 revenues to 2020's \$14.3 billion, the industry is on track to hit \$17.13 billion in 2021. But it's likely to take until 2023 to surpass its heyday.

Despite the state's beneficial climates, the issues its restaurants face are pretty universal and putting a damper on progress. Start with the labor shortage, which is affecting restaurants more most. Business travel has been slower than leisure to bounce back, another drag. The quest for operational efficiencies has led to greater tech investment, but also the greater risk of costly cyber attacks. And another wild card lies with weather extremes.



Kim Gore

Regaining resiliency will be the continuing challenge in 2022. Here are four risks Florida's restaurant industry should prepare for.

1. Labor issues require better offers, better protection (against COVID).

A third of former hospitality workers have no intention of returning to the industry. There's no easy or quick fix. When fewer people do more work, they burn out and no one wins. Everyone's adjusting. Higher pay – often including healthy signing bonuses – and improved benefits are becoming standard. Better working conditions are important, too. One Tampa Bay restaurant's approach was to offer a four-day work



Zach Kuperman

week to its kitchen staff. It helped. It's open seven days, and revenues have jumped 30%. The restaurant has been able to double its kitchen staff size and tips are up, too.

Another issue for restaurants is that of protecting the employees that they have, especially since COVID, in whatever iteration, isn't going away. This reality raises a red flag: potentially disruptive changes to workers' compensation insurance. Many states are considering new presumption rules under which claims would be allowed that assume an infectious disease was contracted at work. The risk of this happening puts the impetus on employers to focus on improving working conditions not just to attract workers but to also reduce risk of contagion in the process.

2. A resumption of business travel's critical to comeback.

Business travel has been slow to resume on the whole, and while Florida has the leisure market to help keep it afloat, it can't drive recovery on its own. Business trips to the state are expected to fall 61% below 2019 levels, generating \$3.46 billion in revenue for the state compared to \$8.8 billion in 2019.

It's taking a lot of ingenuity by the hospitality industry to speed the business travel recovery. Creative pivoting among hotels creates trickle-down benefits for restaurants and other attractions in the market. One move is to make the host hotel for meetings and conventions a "hub" for other activities, like events and trips to local destinations. "Come early, stay late" offers are also big, with packages that play up local amenities.

Such moves have helped with some recovery but have risks of their own. Plus, they still rely upon high levels of business travel. In this environment, it's important to maintain sufficient business income insurance coverage. That may be tough; premiums are expected to rise 10% in 2022, as carriers tighten terms and look to increase rates.

3. Tech: a double-edged sword

It's taken technology for many restaurants to survive. Point-of-sale systems have improved sales, inventory and cash flow. Delivery apps and ghost kitchens helped turn restricted sit-down operations into delivery powerhouses. On a different front, tech has enabled safe employee training with, for example, apps providing driver training or pre-trip inspections of cars

being used for restaurant deliveries or for incident reports.


There's a growing downside risk, though. Malware, phishing, and other cybercrimes are rising, and the growth in tech deployment makes the industry more vulnerable. As of 2021's second quarter, the hospitality industry overall experienced a 155.9% year-over-year rise in attempted online fraud, with 13 serious attacks occurring in the last three years alone.

And more such risks are surely ahead for 2022. Safeguards against intrusions have never been more important. Sound firewalls are a start. Comprehensive employee training on safe practices using systems and apps are important, too. Restaurants should check with their insurance brokers on the adequacy of their cyber insurance coverage as rising claims, especially for ransomware, have tightened capacity and are likely to push rates up by 20% or more.

4. The costs of weather extremes

Global weather extremes are intensifying, and they are impacting every industry, hospitality not the least. In the U.S., the effects on business are driving increases in property-casualty rates of as much as 20%.

Extreme weather disrupts operations, raises costs and reduces leisure travel and tourism as certain warm destinations get hotter. Heat and drought add to wildfire risks, in eastern and western United States, with three of the top five years for burned acreage occurring since 2015. Then, too, there are earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, floods and hail.

It's gotten to the point that catastrophe (CAT) modeling has become an important part of risk management. Those that can access CAT modeling intelligence on where weather-related catastrophes and plan accordingly have a compelling risk management story to tell underwriters. The pandemic is not going away; and its effects on the restaurant industry will be felt through 2022. Management that pays close attention to proper risk management and the right insurance protections will have better odds of making it through successfully. 

About the authors:

Kimberly Gore is the National Practice Leader of HUB International's Hospitality Specialty Practice. She has over 30 years' experience in the insurance industry with a specialization in hospitality and tourism clients. Kim is responsible for a strategic approach to carrier relationships, specialization and best in class service to benefit each client. Kim is an active member of the insurance community serving as president of ILABHGC and as a board member for ILABSC and was awarded the South Carolina Young Agent of the year in 2010.

Zach Kuperman is a Senior Vice President and the National Restaurant Practice Leader for global restaurant insurance brokerage Hub International. He has over 15 years of experience managing the insurance portfolios of over 6,000 restaurants and hundreds of properties across the country. His clients include leading national chains, private equity groups and many of the largest franchisees in the world. Beyond insurance placement, his day-to-day responsibilities include building out safety programs and risk management platforms that make both the employee workplace and guest experience a safer environment. He frequently speaks at conferences across the country on topics that include alternative risk, workers compensation and new technologies that are changing the way restaurants interact with their employees and customers.

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COURSINI:

An on-demand restaurant industry academy launches

Atlanta, GA – Whoever thought the restaurant business was behind in technology has a surprise coming to them. Restaurants are catching up fast! The industry has just received a new avenue to train their managers and get future restaurant individuals trained quicker and less expensive. Restaurateurs, meet Coursini. Coursini was conceived when veteran restaurateur Cliff Bramble had to close a restaurant. Since he knew the business, he knew there were always issues with training, financials, and marketing. Plus, many managers were always working the floor and did not have the time to stop & learn. So, he created an on-demand online system where they could learn about business anywhere. This time, not from books, but actual experience.

The first course developed was on financials. Cliff says, "Financials are always the number one area managers lack knowledge. So, this was a natural area to start." After that course, Coursini developed its marketing course. "Marketing is a close second when it comes to areas of learning, and now students can take on-demand courses and learn the steps of promotion." Plus, it's all based on real-world experience that Cliff used throughout his career. The third course was in Human Resources, and now, individuals can learn payroll, hiring, information, e-verify, and labor analysis from an owner's real-life experience. Cliff says, "This is precisely what the industry needs in a time that we are in."

Students sign up and take the courses, then review videos, complete quizzes, and watch presentations." Now, instead of scrolling through Instagram or Facebook feeds, an individual can take a fifteen-minute course and learn something. Upon completion of a class, the student becomes certified. Cliff says, "To complete the quizzes, a student has to get a grade of seventy or above, so this keeps the courses credible."

There were three reasons for developing the courses. First, the courses allow individuals easy access to industry courses 24/7 and on any device. Second, it will enable individuals to increase their education level while on site. And third, it's faster and costs less to go through these courses than it would for a kid to get a degree in restaurant management.

Now, with thirty mini restaurant business courses ranging from human resources to marketing to sales analysis, individuals can take a course 24/7 and on any device. Cliff says, "A large issue has always been the restaurant manager could not leave the property. Now, during their downtimes, a manager can be learning." Cliff says, "In my past thirty years of managing or co-owning restaurants, I have probably hired two managers with hospitality degrees. All of the others were promoted from within or had degrees, but their degrees were not focused on the industry. This tells me that we can train people and successfully reduce their college costs while helping the industry re-staff and maintain payroll with their teams. Plus, if there is current staff in place and they want to learn more, they have a training system in place for them." **TR**

About Coursini: Coursini was founded to help individuals learn the restaurant industry faster and cheaper. Founder, Clifford Bramble is an award-winning restaurateur, best-selling author of two books (*The Business Side of Restaurants* and *The Marketing Side of Restaurants*) & restaurant consultant. The Georgia Restaurant Association has recognized him as a "Restaurateur of the Year." He is the host of the *Be Hungry* podcast and has previously co-founded/co-owned some of the best restaurants in Georgia and one of the best steakhouses in the United States. (Kevin Rathbun Steak - by *Details* Mag, *Travel & Leisure*, *Playboy*.) His forty years of restaurant and business experience have helped him become an expert in restaurants, an avid podcast guest, speaker, and writer (*Restaurant Informer Magazine*) in the restaurant industry.

For more information, you can contact: Cliff Bramble at Hungry Hospitality LLC. By email at: cliff@hungryhospitality.com, phone: 678.488.9918 or online at Coursini.com.

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What's Going On from page 3

Eco-Products is now expanding its Vanguard formulation to other products, including its popular WorldView™ line of to-go containers.

◆◆◆◆◆ Every chef knows the importance of high-quality and sharp knives when it comes to creating the perfect meal. **Cutluxe, the innovative manufacturer of exceptional kitchen knives**, has been providing the very best utensils for chefs of all levels, and now the brand has unveiled three new knives joining its collection. Founded on an ambition to design and manufacture the perfect kitchen knife, Cutluxe works closely with professional gourmet chefs, analyzing their performance and details to create the ultimate knife at accessible pricing. The new range includes a 9-inch Carving Knife, allowing chefs to expertly slice thin cuts of their favorite meats, a 10-inch Bullnose Butcher Knife, ensuring the perfect clean-cut, and a 10-inch Scimitar Butcher Knife to trim fat and slicing meat.

Alabama News
Mugshots Grill & Bar plans to build a new restaurant on 2 acres on State Highway 59 in Foley Alabama, across from the Tanger Outlets, according to Buff Teague of JLL. Mugshots is a



restaurant chain based in Birmingham. Streamline Development also has plans to develop the adjacent 3 acres.

◆◆◆◆◆ Lebanese bistro **Epice with its home located in Nashville is opening in the summer of 2023** in Birmingham, Alabama. The Hardwick, a mixed-use space coming to 2308 1st Avenue South, will feature restaurants including Epice, along with retail and residential space. Owners are family, Maher and Andrew Fawaz. The restaurant can be reached at 833 936-3873.

◆◆◆◆◆ **The Board of the Sicilian Olive Leaf Tea Company has announced the Appointment of Gina Keatley as the New Chief Executive Officer.** Gina Keatley has a broad and extensive experience within the food and nutrition industry. Her insights include food technology, international cuisine development, sales and marketing, business development and sustainable agriculture. “I am eager to be a part of this innovative culinary adventure and look forward to our first product launch,



Gina Keatley

Matche, at the World Tea Expo in March 2022,” says Gina Keatley. Matche is a powdered olive tea leaves, dissolved in hot water to make tea or used as a flavoring. It is the first of its kind using the olive leaf (*Olea europaea*). sicilianoliveleaftea.com.

◆◆◆◆◆ **Under the McCormick For Chefs® foodservice portfolio, the Cholula® brand** that both consumers and operators know and love is expanding into a new category—seasoning mixes. Cholula Street Taco Seasoning Mixes are available in two flavors: Chile Pepper Carne Asada and Smoky Chipotle Carnitas. With street taco menu penetration having grown 64% over the past four years and 82% of patrons liking or loving tacos, these mixes make it easy to create on-trend menu offerings consistently without requiring skilled labor.



◆◆◆◆◆ **Ellianos Coffee** was recognized as one of the top 500 franchises in Entrepreneur's Franchise 500®, the world's first, best, and most comprehensive franchise ranking. The 43rd annual Entrepreneur Franchise 500® is a highly sought-after honor in the franchise industry. Recognized as an invaluable resource for potential franchisees, the 2022 Franchise 500® ranks Ellianos Coffee as one of the top 500 franchises for its outstanding performance in areas including unit growth, financial strength and stability, and brand power. “The past year has been one of the most challenging for businesses in recent memory, which made putting together our 43rd annual Franchise 500 list more enlightening than ever,” says Entrepreneur Editor in Chief Jason Feifer. “The companies named to this year's list showed us how being resilient, supportive, and nimble can help navigate extraordinary challenges and also underscore the grit and innovation that define entrepreneurship.”

◆◆◆◆◆ **ItsaCheckmate**, a leading technology provider for streamlining digital orders and menus, announced an [expanded] partnership with **Grubhub**, an leading online food delivery marketplace. As part of the improved experience for restaurant owners, ItsaCheckmate added Grubhub to its line of digital ordering platforms, making it easy for restaurant staff to manage their Grubhub menus and orders in one spot. “We're excited about our enhanced integration with Grubhub, making it easier than ever for restaurants to streamline their menus and orders directly within their existing Point of Sale systems,” said Vishal Agarwal, founder and CEO of ItsaCheckmate.



◆◆◆◆◆ **Fish City Grill and Half Shells has named Tim Green the company's new VP of Operations.** Green most recently served as the company's VP of Business Development. Company CEO and co-founder Bill Bayne believes that Green will be a strong part of the company's growth plan. Green has been with Fish City Grill for 18 years, and during that time has contributed to operational leadership, IT operations, development and facilities, as well as spearheading new store opening construction. Prior to Fish City Grill, Green had expansive industry experience with Texas Land & Cattle, Tony Roma's, Sysco Foods and others. **Fish City Grill and Half Shells plans for the opening of at least 3 new restaurants annually.**

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Love food from page 8

you need. You love food; that doesn't mean you know every aspect of business, and that's okay. Reach out to get the help you need so your questions are answered and you are guided toward success. There are plenty of people who will be happy to help you navigate your way.

“We are helping several people with their business goals of being involved in the food industry,” added Davis. “We look forward to helping many more, too. Whether you franchise a Big Shake or you get your product on the grocery store shelves, take the leap to make it happen and follow your foodie passions. You won't regret it!”

Big Shake's currently has four locations, in Franklin, Tenn., Columbia, Tenn., Huntsville, Ala., and Madison, Ala. Additional locations in Nashville and Tuscaloosa are underway. Chef Big Shake became famous for

his signature shrimp burgers, which were featured on the hit show “Shark Tank.” They have sold hundreds of thousands of them. The restaurant has also become famous for its hot chicken plates, chicken sandwiches, hot chicken and waffles, hot chicken tacos, and more. They also feature a variety of fish entrees, including whiting and catfish. Diners can choose their level of heat, ranging from “cry baby” to “executioner.”

About Big Shake's Hot Chicken & Fish: “Chef Big Shake,” was named after and founded by Shawn Davis, a man who worked his way up from restaurant dishwasher to chef to entrepreneur. After being passed up on the reality business show “Shark Tank,” he received the funding he needed to take his business national. Today, he owns Big Shake's Hot Chicken & Fish restaurants. Davis has also been featured on such shows as Man vs. Food, Food Paradise, Access Hollywood, and QVC, among others. To learn more about the restaurant chain, visit the site at: <https://www.bigshakeshotchicken.com/>.

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NEW NETWORKING GROUPS COMING SOON!

Inflation from page 1

prices by just 5.8% on average. This is not a large enough of an increase to maintain margins in today's environment.

A quick calculation to help gauge how much to increase prices: divide your cost increase by the inverse of your desired gross profit margin.

As an example, suppose your prime costs (sum of food and labor cost) are 55% today and you expect them to increase by 2% in the next few months. To maintain your 55% prime cost, you need to increase your menu by 4.4% — $2 / .45 = 100\% \text{ minus } 55\% \text{ prime cost, expressed as a decimal}$. If your prime costs are 50%, you would increase menu prices by 4% ($2 / .5$); if they are 60%, menu prices would need to increase by 5% ($2 / .4$).

Ultimately: the lower your gross profit margin, the more you must increase your prices to maintain your margin.

A quick calculation to help gauge how much to increase prices: divide your cost increase by the inverse of your desired gross profit margin (in other words divide by your desired prime costs).

As an example, suppose your desired prime costs (sum of food cost and labor cost) are 55% (gross profit margin = 45%) and you expect costs to increase by 2% in the next few months. Generally speaking, to maintain your 55% prime cost, you need to increase your total menu by 1.85% — $(\$1.00 \text{ cost} + \$0.2 = \$1.02 \text{ new cost}) / .55$. If your desired prime costs are 45%

(GP=55%), you would increase menu prices by 2.26% ($1.02 / .45$);

Ultimately, the higher your gross profit margin, the more you must increase your prices to maintain your margin.

Most vendors are not in the mood for discounting in today's environment — but it is worth a shot. Some higher-volume items may be available for contract purchasing at a discount, or a long-term price lock. And, your CPA may have access to a service that gives a range of prices being paid for the same product by various vendors. Consider asking for this information to see if another vendor might offer better pricing.


Your POS system may also provide reporting on food costs — or you may analyze those with a pencil and calculator, but either way it is time to review your menu items for ones that may need an additional price increase due to ingredients, consider eliminating loss leaders, and adding dishes that utilize ingredients less affected by price surges. Your most popular items should yield your highest profits; remove dishes that aren't popular or that yield low profits.

While reviewing, look for dishes that can be tweaked — chicken wings were a prime example in 2021. The chain Wingstop embarked on a major marketing campaign and launched "Thighstop," whereas other restaurants pivoted to serving chicken tenders instead. To prevent future problems, identify inflation-susceptible ideas and replace them with more steady and secure ones.

Due to supply chain issues and labor shortages at large-scale production facilities, it may be worthwhile to

consider smaller, local vendors as well. Many full-service restaurants have shifted to local purveyors in recent years to keep up with consumer desires; while supplies are inherently limited due to operational size, they are less likely to be impacted by worker shortages in a processing plant or be held up by transportation delays.

While it is likely higher prices will continue for some time, savvy restaurant owners and operators can protect profits by taking steps now. Ask your CPA for advice, especially if your CPA specializes in restaurants and can provide specific insight based on data and experience. One positive is that consumers seem willing to pay higher restaurant prices due to their desire to

dine out — and hopefully that trend lasts longer than high food costs. 

About Bob Patterson: Bob is the founder and president of Patterson & Company Certified Public Accountants. Founded in 2011, Patterson & Company CPA provides clients with specialized, industry-tested tools and expert knowledge. With expertise in the hospitality industry as well as other service-based businesses, the firm offers year-round accounting and advisory services, supporting all back-office tasks through their BOSS advanced online platform that manages payroll, bookkeeping and vendor payments alongside the tax planning and compliance services of a full-service CPA firm. Prior to founding Patterson & Company, Patterson was president, CEO and a partner in Consumers Choice Coffee. He is a Certified Public Accountant, a Certified Fraud Examiner and a Chartered Global Management Accountant. For more information, visit restaurant.cpa. On Facebook at www.facebook.com/pattersoncpa or LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/company/patterson-&-company-cpas-llc.



FOHBOH Executive Team from left: Drew Pickard, Terrence Gordon & Michael Atkinson

FOHBOH acquires Dallas-based 214EATS

Plans to tackle multi-billion dollar ResTech industry


Dallas, TX - FOHBOH, the world's first digital community for restaurant operators and executives, has announced the acquisition of 214EATS, a Dallas-based, full-service digital marketing agency for restaurants. This appropriately timed union positions FOHBOH (industry slang for "Front of House, Back of House") as a first-in-kind, intelligence-based digital marketing, and operational consulting agency for the embattled hospitality industry.

"The proliferation of the restaurant technology space has restaurant operators inundated with constantly emerging ResTech systems and new sources of data," says Michael L. Atkinson, an industry insider and FOHBOH's founder. "Operators are expected to ditch their legacy systems and take on new technologies that may not be in their long-term interest. FOHBOH assists operators with navigating a custom-fit tech-stack, which in turn leads to the harvest of essential bits of actionable data that will guide them into better decisions."

By offering consultative-based services, driven by the restaurant's historic data, FOHBOH provides a unique model featuring the combination of "front of house" marketing analytics with "back of house" operational insights.

"Our restaurant clients have been forced to pivot and question everything from their profit centers, staffing, purchasing, and customer behavior," says Terrence Gordon, FOHBOH's President & Founder of 214EATS. "This merger combined with our unique tech-stack enables us to provide answers through data, and guidance that complements the services they rely on us for."

Datassential estimates 80 percent of restaurants use outdated legacy solutions. Yelp predicts the addition of 76,800 restaurants per year (even with COVID) with an addressable market of almost 800,000 locations — many of which seek a marketing and technology refresh. FOHBOH's clientele includes Chilis, Golden Corral, and Cheesecake Factory while also catapulting emerging brands like Torchy's Tacos, Front Burner Concepts, United Franchise Group, and others.

"The restaurant industry is creative and fun," says Gordon. "We want operators to focus on what makes them great, while we help them navigate new technologies and make decisions based on data trends, not guesses." 

About FOHBOH: FOHBOH — FOHBOH.com — helps forward-thinking restaurant organizations take action by merging marketing insights with operational data to elevate them to the next level.

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Are you guessing on your customer service quality?



John Tschohl ♦ Restaurateur and founder of BellyMelly

Providing outstanding customer service at the right price is the “Golden Rule” of most companies. It is worth remembering that we all experience customer service every day. Customer service is a critical piece of your business, and you should fine-tune it as much as you can. Here are some well-known facts on customer service

Fact: 90% of companies say they deliver superior customer service and only 8% of people think these same companies deliver superior customer service. Which goes to show, you should not be guessing when it comes to evaluating your customer service.

Think you don't have to worry? Guess again!

Take your mobile phone and your service contract. If you're like me, it's hard to tell. The contract has been deliberately written so complex that most people don't read it. This, by the way, is why just about everyone hates mobile service providers—and why wireless carriers have some of the lowest customer service ratings of any industry.

Fact: The average American spends 13 hours per year and 43 days per lifetime on hold for customer service. When it comes to customer service, your customers care far more

about competent and helpful service.

Fact: 73% of dissatisfied customers cited incompetent, rude, and “rushed” service as the #1 reason why they abandoned a brand.

Fact: 86% of consumers will immediately quit doing business with a company because of a bad customer experience

Fact: Bad customer service is more than just a potential liability, it's a huge cost to your business. Consumers are far more likely to share bad customer experiences due to their frustration.

Fact: It is 6-7 times more expensive to acquire a new customer than it is to keep a current one

Fact: The average business hears from only 4% of its dissatisfied customers. Very few people have time for your mistakes. Even fewer people are going to take the time to let you know about them, and why should they? You're the one that screwed up.

Fact: your customers can do quite a few things much better than you can, and if your business isn't embracing this fact by viewing customer service as a branch of your marketing department with tremendous ROI, you're doing yourself a disservice, as well as your customers.

Fact: 9 out of 10 U.S. consumers say

they would pay more to ensure a superior customer experience. Customers expect consistent quality of customer service; with a similar, familiar look and feel whenever and however they contact your company.

American firms spend all their Customer Service Training dollars on surveys. That's total overkill. Few spend any money training employees on Customer Service. Customer Service training will tip the scales toward making your business more successful for your employees and your bottom line.

Take responsibility

Be... fast and accurate

People want answers and to move on with their busy lives. One simple and straightforward way to solve problems faster is simply to be available at all times, 24/7 with a ‘live’ person that answers the call within 3 rings. That way no one is ever having to check your hours to get in touch the next day. It's easier to resolve issues and you will stand out from the competition as a company that deals with their customers right away.

Be... respectful and friendly

Customer service should be filled with positivity. Greet your customers, use their names, and always express appreciation for their business. Inject

positivity into your day, the results will be eye-opening.


Be... a listener

Lead with your ear rather than your mouth so you can connect and problem-solve. How can you meet your customer's needs, if you don't know them? To understand their needs, just listen to the “voice of the customer” and take action accordingly.

Be... a solution provider

Ask your customer what they think would be a good outcome. They probably have something in mind that they feel would make sense given the circumstances. Even if that final answer is not exactly what you want, the customer may also feel that they are not getting exactly what they'd hoped.

Be... amazing

Bear in mind that the customer will feel incredible if they feel that you are taking extra steps to help them. 

John Tschohl is a professional speaker, trainer, and consultant. He is the President and founder of Service Quality Institute (the global leader in customer service) with operations in over 40 countries. John is a self-made millionaire traveling and speaking more than 50 times each year. He is considered to be one of the foremost authorities on service strategy, success, empowerment and customer service in the world. John's monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

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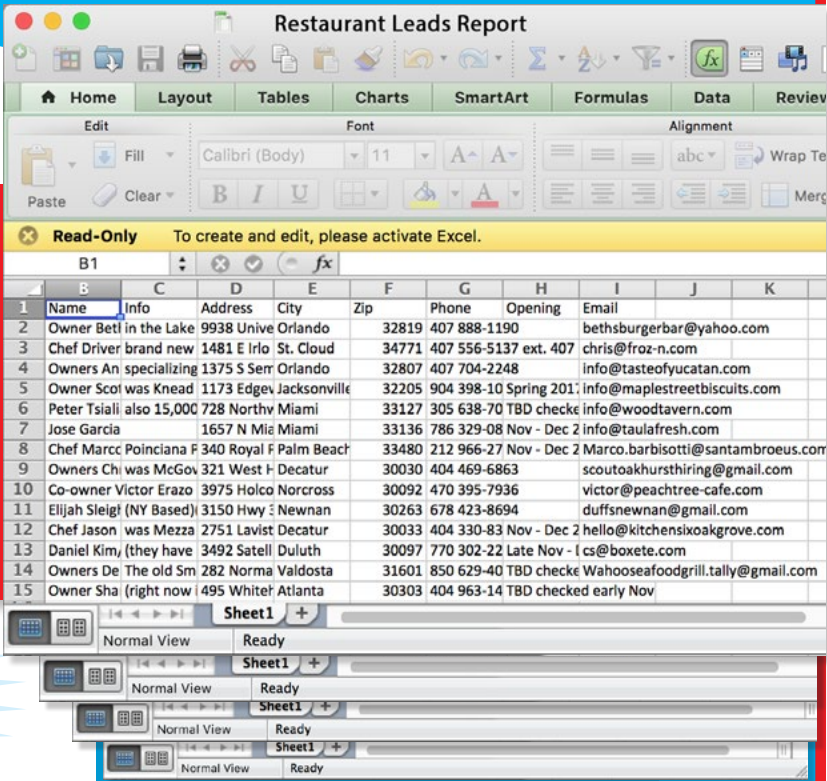
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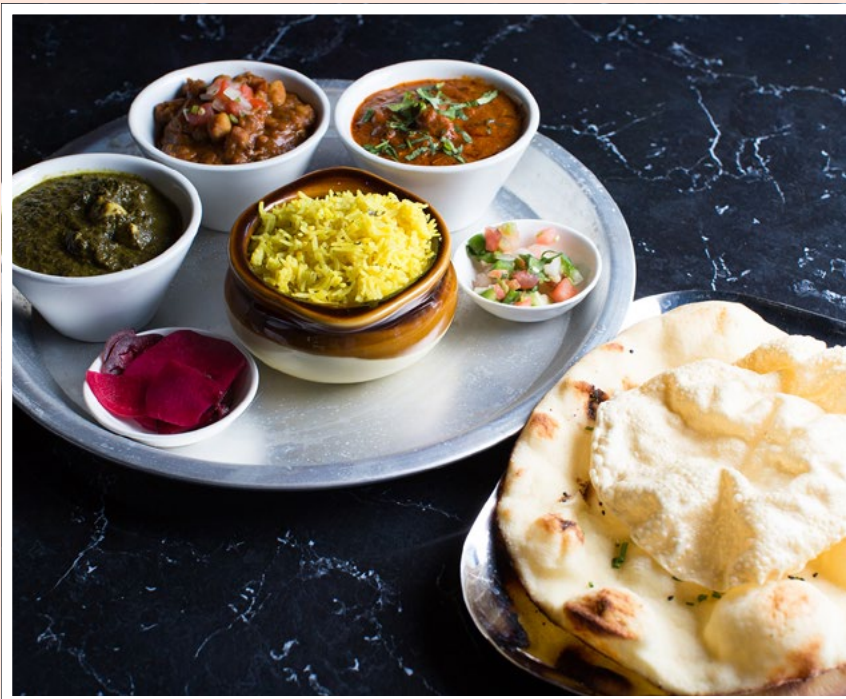
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Curry Up from page 1

cuisine. When we discovered Curry Up Now, we jumped at the opportunity to package our love for traditional Indian food with an engaging brand and the convenience of a fast casual setting," said franchisee Pathik Patel, president, VAAP Management. "With companies like Google, Apple, Amazon and more announcing expansions in the Triangle area, we recognize the growth and vibrancy of this community and can't wait to bring something new to the table."

With menu items like Chicken Masala Burrito, Sexy Fries, Naughty Naan and Deconstructed Samosa, Curry Up Now offers playful takes on traditional Indian street food and street snacks. Its flexible restaurant footprint is ideal for prime real estate and conversion options ranging from 1,300 to 3,500 square feet. The franchise group is currently seeking and evaluating properties for its first two locations with a focus on Morrisville and Research Triangle Park (RTP).

"Raleigh and Durham frequently rank as top places to live, work and play. Curry Up Now caters to the lunch and dinner crowd, so the residential, retail and office park environment found within the greater Triangle area is going to be a perfect fit for our first of many locations in the state," said Akash Kapoor, CEO and Founder of Curry Up Now. "We have great franchise partners in Pathik and his family, and we have full confidence that they will successfully grow the Curry Up Now brand in North Carolina."

In the last ten years, husband-and-wife co-founders Akash and Rana Kapoor have expanded the Curry Up Now empire to include three food trucks, 16 brick-and-mortar restaurants spanning coast to coast, and several digital kitchen outposts nationwide with more than 50 restaurants in varying stages of development.

In 2021, Curry Up Now signed multiple, multi-unit franchise deals to expand in California and Texas, and opened a new brick-and-mortar location in San Ramon, California, after operating as a food truck for several months. The brand also successfully implemented its first five

digital kitchen outposts and opened new locations within two well-known California universities' student unions: Stanford University's Tressider Memorial Union and the University of California San Diego's (UCSD) Price Center.

In early 2022, Curry Up Now plans to open its first location in the Dallas area in the Grandscape development, located in The Colony, Texas, as well as its first Austin location in the DOMAIN Northside complex. The brand is working with Fransmart, the industry leading franchise development company behind the explosive growth of brands like Five Guys Burgers and Fries, The Halal Guys and Qdoba Mexican Grill, as its exclusive franchise expansion partner to build the brand.

"A key factor in our interest in franchising with Fransmart was the patience and effort they put into creating a good two-way relationship with us throughout this process," said Patel regarding his Curry Up Now franchising experience.

Curry Up Now was established in 2009 by husband and wife team Akash and Rana Kapoor, and ably supported by co-founder and now Senior VP of Operations, Amir Hosseini. The concept, which is known for its innovative spin on traditional Indian cuisine, has been recognized in publications such as Zagat: '5 Hottest Fast-Casual Chains,' EATER SF: 'SF's Best Indian Restaurants, and many more. Curry Up Now currently operates 16 brick-and-mortars and three food trucks nationwide, and has both corporate and franchised units in development across California, New Jersey, Colorado, Utah and Georgia. **TR**

About Fransmart: As the leading franchise development firm in the country, Fransmart – fransmart.com – turns emerging restaurant concepts into successful national and global brands. Founded by Dan Rowe, the man who identified and grew brands such as Five Guys Burgers & Fries and QDOBA Mexican Grill from single unit businesses to the powerhouse chains they are today, Fransmart's formula for success is finding emerging brands ripe for expansion and building successful multi-unit franchise businesses across the U.S. and globally. Fransmart's current and past franchise development portfolio brands have opened more than 5,000 restaurants worldwide, and facilitated franchise investments that have cumulatively generated 1-billion in revenue to date.

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