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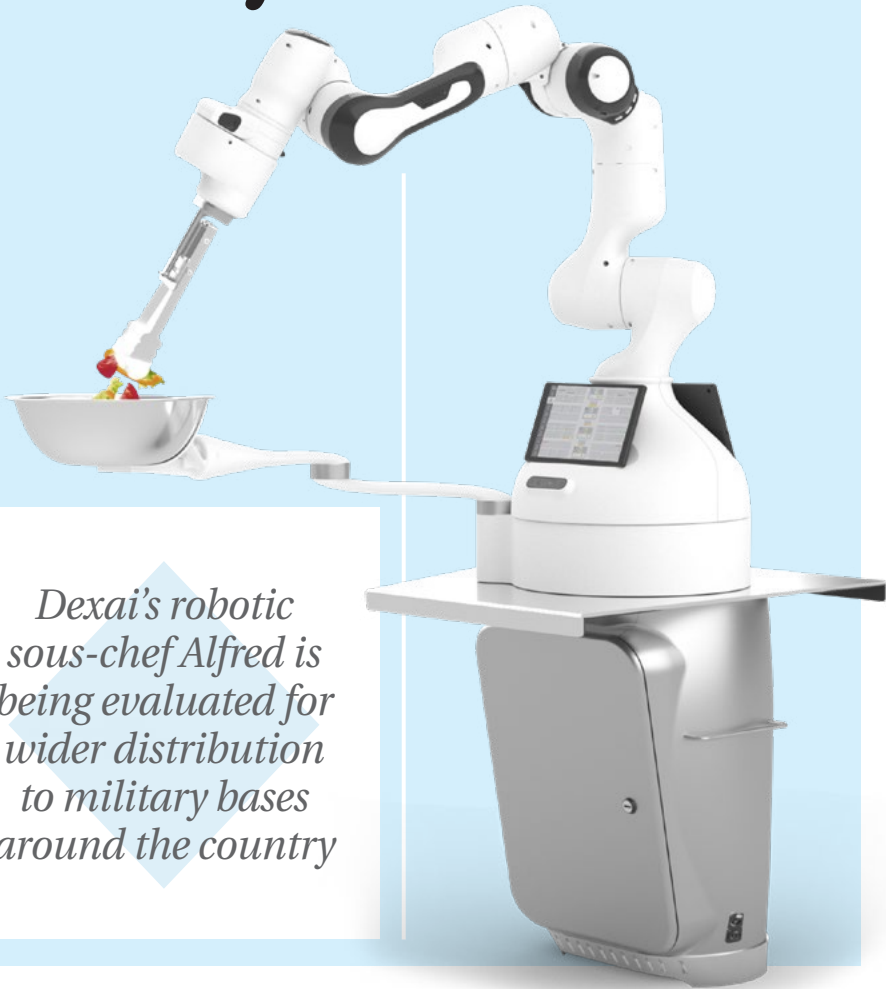
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Dexai Robotics to automate food services at military installations

Boston, MA – Dexai Robotics, a leading provider of intelligent robotics solutions for commercial kitchens, announced that it has signed a \$1.6 million contract with the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) to automate food services in multiple military installations around the country. Dexai was contracted to supply 10 “Alfred” sous-chefs – an automated food preparation robot designed to improve production and quality of operations, reduce food waste, and lower risks of viral and microbial transmissions.

The first Alfred robot started operation at the end of 2021 at the Monarch Dining Facility of Travis Air Force Base in Fairfield, California, making Travis AFB the first Department of Defense entity to implement Alfred. The Monarch DFAC is open to all 7,300-plus active duty personnel assigned at Travis and serves an average of 950 customers per day. Monarch's installation of

See **DEXAI** page 14



Dexai's robotic sous-chef Alfred is being evaluated for wider distribution to military bases around the country



Flippy, the autonomous kitchen assistant, will be deployed at the country's first fast food chain to address the 'new normal' challenges and deliver an optimal customer and team member experience

White Castle selects Miso Robotics for new era of artificial intelligence

White Castle®, the country's first fast-food hamburger chain, announced a planned pilot with Miso Robotics – creators of the first autonomous grilling and frying kitchen assistant, Flippy – to accelerate the adoption of artificial intelligence and robotics in the restaurant industry. As part of the deployment, White Castle will bring the new version of Flippy, Robot-on-a-Rail (ROAR), into kitchens for testing and future integration.

The deployment will put autonomous frying to work for enhanced production speeds, improved labor allocation and an added layer of health and safety in the cooking process. Committed to delivering the best customer dining experience, White Castle's selection of Miso Robotics marks a move by the pioneering chain to modernize operations for even faster, fresher and delicious meals, every time.

Like many sectors, the restaurant industry has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and has been forced to reexamine business operations and best practices. Through the adoption of innovative and forward-looking technologies – like robotics automation and artificial intelligence – restaurants can build a future focused kitchen that reassures

See **WHITE CASTLE** page 12



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What's Going On

Important new products, corporate news and industry events

At its recent annual board meeting in Raleigh, the **North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association (NCRLA)** elected Raleigh restaurateur, **Amber Moshakos**, to serve as the board chair for a one-year term. She was sworn in by the board of directors along with a new slate of officers, including outgoing board chair, Nish Patel, who will continue to serve on the executive committee as immediate past chair. Moshakos is president of LM Restaurants, a Raleigh based, family-owned hospitality management group which designs, develops, builds and operates award-winning restaurants across the Southeast. She leads the overall operations and senior staff activities as well as LM Restaurants' business development and strategic initiatives in vendor negotiations, real estate transactions, marketing, restaurant construction and design.



Amber Moshakos

BentoBox, a website, e-commerce, and marketing platform for over 8,000 restaurant concepts worldwide, has released



Rise Southern Biscuits and Righteous Chicken, the nation's fastest-growing biscuits and fried chicken concept, announced a multi-unit franchise deal to bring its award-winning southern comfort fare to Florida. **Franchisee Don Schnurr**, along with his family, are slated to open at least seven Rise locations in the Greater Orlando Metro area, the first of which will mark the brand's debut in the Sunshine State.

The franchisees are currently eyeing a location for their first store, scouting territories ranging from Winter Garden to Celebration to The Mall at Millenia. The Florida agreement builds on the nationwide expansion Rise enjoyed last fall when the brand announced the signing of its first California lease in Thousand Oaks. Outside of the Golden State, the Durham, North Carolina-based concept has most recently expanded to Virginia and Oklahoma, signing multi-unit deals in each state. Rise is partnered with Fransmart, the industry-leading franchise development company behind household brands like Five Guys Burgers & Fries and The Halal Guys, as its exclusive franchising partner to grow the brand.

the fourth and final installment of its Restaurant Delivery Consumer Trend Report, as part of a year-long study tracking how U.S. consumers' delivery and takeout habits have evolved through COVID-19 recovery.

Jamba and Blendid has announced the addition of two new Jamba by Blendid autonomous robotic kiosk locations. The new locations at Georgia College in Milledgeville, Georgia and Kennesaw State University in Marietta, Georgia mark the first Jamba by Blendid openings on college campuses, expanding beyond the current pilot locations in a shopping mall and big box retailer. This is a significant step as Jamba and Blendid continue to explore opportunities to open more Jamba by Blendid kiosks in a variety of non-traditional venues, including gyms, hospitals, airports, and more.

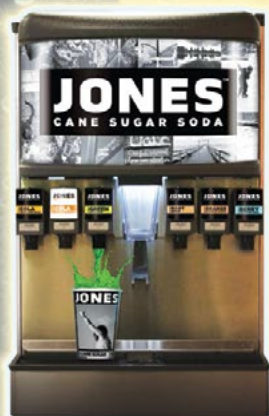


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Appell Pie Neighborhood dominators

Howard Appell ♦ Today's Restaurant Publisher

June 2004: Can you remember what was going on in the world at that time? I looked back at some of my Appell Pie columns and this one struck me in light of what we are facing today...

Many months ago I wrote about how the high price of gasoline would affect business. Now as we approach a National average of over \$2.00 per gallon we must prepare for a much different business environment.

The cost of gasoline is spiraling upward and the guesses are that they won't stop until they reach \$3.00 a gallon sometime during the late summer. One of my readers asked me if I was obsessed with terrorism based on some of my previous columns. The answer is no, but I am concerned. These prices represent economic terrorism, which eventually will turn our economy further downward. For an economy based on mobility via motor transport these high prices will bring us to a sudden halt.

What can we do about the high price? Probably nothing. Writing to your Senator or Congressman will do little but waste your ink. They are helpless too. Writing to the car manufacturers may work if you said you would refuse to buy a new car until they raised the fuel economy to 60 miles per gallon.


Who am I kidding? You don't have to write to them. You won't be able to afford a new car if these prices continue upward.

What can we really do about it? We MUST re-adjust our thinking and our lifestyles. As a restaurant owner or manager you realize that your core customers must come from the neighborhood in which your business is located. Much of your customer base will decide not to drive to you from across town as they used to do. You have to start to think outside the box now. Local advertising directed to your core neighborhood is essential. Mailings and ads in local newspapers with coupons are one way to build your base now. Rewards programs for customer loyalty is a great way to keep the locals coming in. You may even consider altering your menu

choices to appeal to a larger audience. Believe it or not delivery service can be done on bicycle or mopeds. In Europe and Asia motor scooters and bicycles are the main means of transportation in some cities.

Ask every customer you have now to fill out a form with their email address and birthday or their favorite dish on the menu.

If you do 200 dinners on a regular Saturday night and you have a full liquor bar, but your rush is over at nine o'clock, try booking a local jazz band or an oldies group to perform and extend your selling hours. Advertise the fact that you have the entertainment. E-mail is a great way to reach thousands of people with very little expense. Ask every customer you have now to fill out a form with their e mail address and birthday or their favorite dish on the menu. Give them a soft drink for doing so. Once you have the address you can contact them with your message. Don't overdo it. Once a week or twice a month is fine. The bottom line is that if you do something now, when gas reaches \$3.00 a gallon and the economy comes to a grinding halt you at least will have a fighting chance to keep your customers and gain allot of new ones and therefore survive this challenging economic period.

Today as Russia invades Ukraine and threatens the whole western world using the failed tactics of past would be world dominators, you must find ways to emerge from the pandemic and take steps to survive with rising fuel prices and rapidly rising food costs. I have no doubt we will find the way, but this generation is going to have to get tough to survive much like the generation of WWII. 

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Running your restaurant in the Great Resignation

David Scott Peters ♦ Today's Restaurant Contributor



You've heard of the Great Recession, but have you heard of the Great Resignation? The term describes the labor crisis we're currently suffering through. While the phrase was coined as part of the 2021 labor crisis, honestly, I don't see it changing in 2022 based on what I'm seeing today. While it's a real challenge, there are things you can be doing today to attract and keep employees for the long run in your restaurant.

The unfortunate reality is that we did this to ourselves as an industry over decades.

In early October 2021 at the South Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Show where I was a speaker, the keynote speaker, John Pollock with Technomics, the numbers people for the restaurant industry, said in his presentation that the steady decline in hospitality workers wanting to work in our industry and their happiness or lack thereof was nothing new. It had been getting worse year after year. COVID didn't create it, nor did it make it that much worse, but it did continue that downward spiral.

About a week after I heard that report, Restaurant Business released an article, "Restaurant Workers Are Quitting at Historically High Rates." They reported that nearly 7% of our nation's restaurant and hotel workers quit their jobs in August of 2021. They said no other industry came close to that level of voluntary departures.

What is a restaurant owner supposed to do? Here is a short list of what you should be considering as a part of your long-term plan broken into two sections:

- 1. Attraction
- 2. Retention

Attraction

1. Think about higher wages. We've been fearful of \$15 minimum wage coming from coast to coast. This labor crisis made the \$15 minimum wage a non-debate. It's not when it gets here. It's here. If you hadn't noticed, to attract good employees, wages are going up all over the place. Now, in the beginning of

the pandemic labor shortage, the knee jerk reaction was to pay as much as they had to attract new employees. I said to my members, put the brakes on. Because once you let the toothpaste out of the tube, there is no putting it back. Once you pay those higher wages, that's your new wage bracket. I did say that if your marketplace starts to go up, then you have to go with it. Not the knee jerk version from \$10 to \$25, but if your marketplace was around \$15 starting wage and now you have to be at \$18 or \$20 to get cooks in the door, that's something to think about if that's what your competition is starting to pay. Develop a budget to understand how to calculate the impact of increased wages.

2. Flexibility in scheduling. I will tell you flexibility is the number one reason why line employees work in the restaurant business. And this labor crisis has taken that away from many of them. Too many restaurant owners are making their problem their employees' problem. Servers working 40 hours or more per week was unheard of before this labor shortage. Usually, their goal is to work as few hours as possible to make as much money as possible and now they're working 40 or more hours per week. Line cooks love overtime, but for the last 12 months, 16 months, 18 months, they've been working overtime every single week. They're burnt out. They're no longer able to go to a concert or go see a friend or take a day off or swap schedules. They're working all these hours because they're all you have to remain open. If you want to attract people, the flexibility is key. To help my members get there, for the first time ever in my career, I advised some of them to close one or two days per week so their employees could have a scheduled, guaranteed break.

3. Provide a path for growth. Show your employees a path for promotions. Now, not everybody wants to grow in this industry. If there isn't a path, or if there's somebody who doesn't really care about moving up, point to the opportunities for personal development.

It might be English as a second language, learning how to sell better, learning how to communicate with other staff members better, product knowledge from wine, beer, or food. Make it clear in your restaurant they're always learning and becoming a better version of themselves. That's huge. And when you can show people that, you will attract good talent.

Retention

1. Consistent management. There needs to be a manager on every shift to help support your team members, to make sure the same rules are written for everybody, applied to everybody and everyone's held accountable. Employees love rules. What they hate is

See **DAVID SCOTT PETERS** page 9

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Left: Sachi Nakato Takahara and Hiroe Nakato sit under a portrait of Tetsuko Nakato. Top: The staff of Nakato Japanese Restaurant in Atlanta.

How three generations of women established one of the most successful southern restaurants

Atlanta, GA - Can you imagine being 64 years old, going to a new country where you didn't speak the language, buying land and a restaurant and introducing a completely new type of cuisine to a region, where residents never heard of, let alone experienced that type of food before?

This is exactly what Tetsuko Nakato did 50 years ago, when she came from Japan and opened Nakato Japanese Restaurant in Atlanta. Although the first dozen years were exceptionally trying, Nakato emerged and has retained the reputation as one of the


premiere and authentic Japanese restaurants in Atlanta as well as the entire the Southeast. Today the restaurant is being run by Tetsuko's granddaughter, Sachi Nakato Takahara, the third generation of female Nakatos to take the helm.

Not only has Nakato become a culinary landmark, having recently been selected by the National Trust For Historic Preservation as one of 25 historic and culturally significant restaurants in the country, but throughout this time they have consistently been considered one of the

best restaurants in Atlanta. In January, Nakato was named as the Best Japanese Restaurant by Atlanta Magazine and Best Sushi in Atlanta from several other local publications.

Through their journey as female business owners, the Nakato women have had to adapt to sexual biases from vendors and clients, learn to communicate with guests and staff, understand the changing palates of Atlantans, stay ahead of dining trends while consistently travelling to Japan to find the most talented chefs to bring back with them to work at Nakato,

showcasing Japan's most cutting-edge culinary trends.

Second generation owner, Hiroe Nakato jokes that in the 70's and 80's locals would consider Sushi to be "fish bait." Hiroe's daughter, Sachi Nakato Takahara, who took over managing Nakato in 2009, has educated longtime guests about Sushi, starting them out with California Rolls and Shrimp Tempura Rolls and then gradually get them to try rolls with raw fish, and now they're eating Sashimi and Nigiri including species of fish indigenous to Japan, that they've never heard of before. 

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iMatrix Systems launches from stealth with new IoT cloud smart sensor technology

Lake Tahoe, NV – iMatrix Systems recently announced that the company has emerged from stealth with an initial round of angel funding exceeding \$2 million to launch a complete SaaS iMatrix Cloud IoT solution, including a portfolio of wireless sensors. Initial offerings include Cold Chain solutions for temperature, humidity, door open/close alerts, leak detection, and Hydroponic Farming related sensors for the emerging Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) and Internet of Things (IoT) markets. The company focuses on IoT-related systems involving Environmental Sensors, Agriculture and Building management controls, and sensors. iMatrix cloud can also operate on-premise for customers needing to maintain complete data control.

The company debuts the iMatrix Micro Gateway bridge to enable all wireless sensor configuration, control, monitoring, and analytics managed through the iMatrix proprietary cloud services. This breakthrough technology leverages robust cloud services for monitoring and effective edge management for various markets. iMatrix is an ideal monitoring/management security solution for agriculture, residential and commercial buildings, the emerging commercial cannabis industry, water and irrigation systems, heating/ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, and critical infrastructure.

Founder and serial entrepreneur Greg Phillips has spent more than 35 years in executive roles in product development explicitly targeting communications products including SCADA systems, IoT, Cloud Computing Platforms, Broadband wireless equipment ranging from Base Station to multi-radio meshed network gateways and subscriber units. He founded the first Australia-wide Internet Service

provider and successfully exited with a sale to Asia Online at the peak of the dial-up Internet Access market. Phillips has designed and licensed communications products for industry leaders, including Analog Devices, Nortel, IBM, Toshiba, GEC, Telstra.

"IoT and IIoT devices power our global economy with billions in revenue today and expect to reach \$1.6 trillion by 2025," said Phillips. "Currently, we're nearing 30 billion IoT devices in use, with as many as 60 billion or higher by the close of 2025. These devices can do everything from monitoring ambient conditions, creating a home

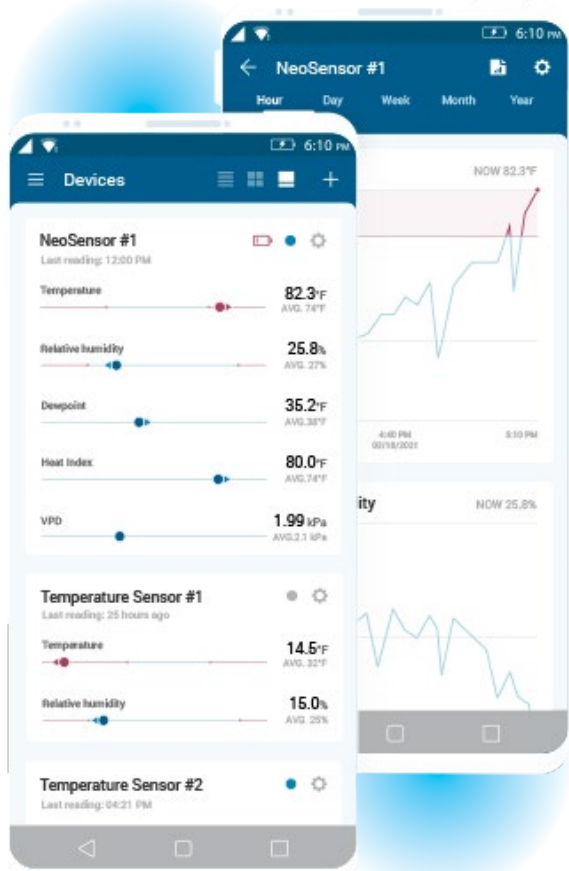
or corporate security system, remotely controlling our cars, and much more. And we believe the iMatrix suite of offerings is an ideal fit for the highest growth markets of this decade."

"We have spent the last two years building a team of amazing engineers building a massively scalable cloud sensor collection and tracking system. The well hierarchically structured and clean User Interface design provides the mobile and Web-based user with concise monitoring,

configuration, including a sophisticated multi-layer notification system for alarm conditions."

Target markets for iMatrix products include the temperature logger vertical, medical markets for the blood supply and biospecimen chain, restaurant, and hospitality for food and spirits, the shipping industry (in the temperature-controlled Cold Chain environment), home and health (including RVs, hotels, vacation homes), temperature

See **IMATRIX** page 14



"We have spent the last two years building a team of amazing engineers building a massively scalable cloud sensor collection and tracking system."

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Clean juice reports booming growth in 2021

Continued product innovation and growing demand for organic foods keys to record-setting growth

Clean Juice credits its continued success on its marketplace differentiation as the first and only 100% USDA-certified organic juice bar.

Charlotte, N.C. - Clean Juice®, the first and only national 100% USDA-certified organic juice bar franchise and quick service restaurant has released its complete 2021 financial report showcasing continued growth and exceeding expectations across the franchise's key performance indicators including same-store sales (SSS) and guest count (SSGC). Despite the ongoing global pandemic and seasonality impact, the company reported its best fourth quarter ever including a cumulative SSS growth of over 20% and SSGC growth of 23%. For the full year of 2021, Clean Juice had a total SSS growth of over 16% growth and served more than 3.3 million total guests in 2021, up 41% from the previous year.

Clean Juice credits its continued success on its marketplace differentiation as the first and only 100%




USDA-certified organic juice bar, trailblazing a new path in this niche market segment that other concepts have failed to emulate successfully. The company also continues to invest in a series of new menu innovations and center-of-plate menu additions

that have proven delightful to both current and new guests looking for organic, nutritional and healthy fast-casual meals while on the go. The company also recognized the growing demand for organic products and the number of prospects taking part in the "Great Resignation," by following their passion and entrepreneurial spirit in joining the franchise as a partner in lieu of corporate jobs.

"We are thankful for the continued blessings of serving our guests and our Franchise Partners. We are quite proud of our growth trajectory, especially when compared to similar quick service juice bars or 'healthy' restaurants that have been in operation for 25 years or more," said Landon Eckles, founder, and CEO of Clean Juice. "Going into the year, and in particular Q4, we launched several company-wide initiatives under the "Year of the Guest" theme to mitigate pandemic-related guest concerns and the normal seasonality trends we've seen in the past. It's pretty clear that our team's ability to read the market, understand guest buying patterns, and our grinding Franchise Partners' ability to quickly pivot and lead with a servant's heart helped us surge in 2021 for all four quarters."

Clean Juice continued to intrigue and delight its guests with unique and creative permanent and seasonal menu innovations, including new organic toasted sandwiches, seasonal soups, limited-time offerings like The Apple Crisp Bowl and new organic cleanses including The Super Greens Cleanse. These innovations, coupled with channel proliferation to reach guests more conveniently including through their first-party app, improved the brand's SSGC by 18% in December alone and 41% year over year.

"By staying true to our mission of providing the best quality, fully organic food and beverages in the industry, and continually expanding our menu offerings with exciting, all-natural

organic ingredients and center-of-plate items, we've continued to grow and strengthen our brand in joyfully serving more than 3.3 million guests, said Eckles. "And guess what, we're not stopping here. We're just getting started," he said, referring to one of the company's ten core values. 

Other notable highlights from fiscal fourth quarter and 2021:

- ◆ New brand ambassadorship partnership with Tim Tebow and the Tim Tebow Foundation
- ◆ Launch of its first-ever national advertising campaign
- ◆ Named to the Inc. 5000 for the third consecutive year
- ◆ Store Unit Growth: Ended the year with 118 open units (and over 67 in development) in our fifth year of franchising
- ◆ Q4 franchise openings in 4 new states: Connecticut, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Montana
- ◆ Ushered in the launch of the Cleanse Club - a new customized, subscription-based
- ◆ Cleanse Club in partnership with Lunchbox

About Clean Juice®: Landon and Kat Eckles started Clean Juice® in 2016 as the first and only USDA-certified organic juice bar franchise and is rooted in the "healthy body and a strong spirit" (3 John 1-2) scripture and highlights the importance of an organic, plant-based diet. Clean Juice® offers organic cold-pressed juices, smoothies, açai bowls, salads, sandwiches, wraps, and other healthy foods in a warm and welcoming retail experience. In its short history, Clean Juice has amassed dozens of achievements and awards, including most recently being named #154 in Entrepreneur Magazine's 2021 Franchise 500® ranking and the #1 spot as Franchise Gator's 2021 Fastest-Growing Franchises list. Clean Juice – www.cleanjuice.com - continues to seek and welcome qualified prospects to its family of franchise partners.

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Chef Gordon Ramsay

Chef Gordon Ramsay relocates restaurant headquarters to Texas

Add celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay to the list of people and businesses trading California for Texas. Ramsay has relocated his North American restaurant headquarters to Las Colinas, which is in Irving Texas, from Los Angeles, California. Irving, is a 12,000-acre master-planned community that features more than 200 restaurants and many hotels.

Gordon Ramsay, the host of the TV show Hell's Kitchen, made the expansion as part of his plan to open more restaurants across North America. The newly Texas-based team plans to launch many restaurants in cities including Chicago, Boston and Miami, in 2022.

What started in 1998 with Chef Ramsay's first-owned restaurant, Restaurant Gordon Ramsay, the Gordon Ramsay brand has evolved

into restaurants in three continents, six countries, and dozens of cities. The Michelin-starred Chef brings a restaurant experience for every taste and budget.

The CEO of Gordon Ramsay North America, Norman Abdallah, will oversee the opening of 75 company-owned restaurants across the country in the next five years, according to Dallas Morning News. According to the report, the Dallas restaurants likely won't open until late 2022 or 2023. **TR**

About Gordon Ramsay: Gordon is a British chef, restaurateur, television personality, and writer. His global restaurant group, Gordon Ramsay Restaurants, was founded in 1997 and has been awarded 16 Michelin stars overall; it currently holds a total of seven. After rising to fame on the British television miniseries Boiling Point in 1999, Ramsay became one of the best-known and most influential chefs in the UK.

David Scott Peters *from page 5*

the inconsistency in management enforcing those rules. When you have a leader on every shift, everybody is held to the same standard. They execute better. That consistency in management keeps people there longer.

2. Make sure employees feel appreciated. Making employees feel appreciated doesn't mean they have to feel loved. It means they feel like they are important to the business, that their work matters. To get into the weeds with this one, read the book, The Five Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace by Gary Chapman and Paul White. Make sure you get a copy today.

3. Create a positive work environment. Become an employer of choice. When a customer asks your team member if they like working in your restaurant, you want them to say it's awesome. If they say it sucks, or say they're looking for another job, or they don't give a positive response, that means you're not an employer of choice. In this case, your culture needs a reboot. I also covered the topic of keeping your employees and becoming an employer of choice in

episode 23 of my podcast, "The Restaurant Prosperity Formula," available anywhere you get podcasts.

I don't know if we'll always call it The Great Resignation, but restaurant owners will always remember this time in their businesses as a time when they had to go to great lengths to find good employees and even greater lengths to keep them. If you follow the three ideas for attracting employees and even more importantly, the three things to keep employees, you'll get results. Simply putting forth the effort to attract and keep your employees is an indication to me that you're looking at ways to become an employer of choice. The key is to take action today. **TR**

About the Author: David has been a highly sought-after speaker since 2003 when he first entered the circuit. David has wowed audiences from 30 to 500 at trade shows, food distributors, restaurant associations and hospitality groups. If you want a high energy, dynamic presentation that will have your audience excited to go home and implement systems in their restaurants that help them make more money, get their lives back and have a solid management team... then look no further and hire David to speak at your next event. www.Davidscottspeters.com

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What's Going On from page 3

has announced its partnership with SnappyEats, a leading restaurant online ordering system. The Boostly and SnappyEats integration will enable over 8,000 restaurants to drive more incremental revenue, increase customer retention, and generate more feedback and reviews through Boostly's innovative platform. According to recent research, restaurant customers who opted-in to texting spend \$12-\$15 more per transaction than customers who are not opted-in to a texting program, and they generate an average return on marketing spend of over 718%.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
◆ Saputo Dairy USA (SDUSA), one of the largest manufacturers of cheese and dairy products in the United States, has introduced **Vitalite™ dairy-free mozzarella-style shreds for foodservice operators across the United States.** A new vegan-certified, dairy-free, cheese alternative, Vitalite™ products offer great taste, texture and melting performance, making them perfect for vegan pizza, pasta, tacos, salads and sandwiches. The launch of the Vitalite™ brand into the U.S. follows the success the brand has enjoyed in the dairy-free category in the United Kingdom since 2003. David



Cherrie is the VP of Marketing and Innovation. Vitalite™ products can now be purchased through major food-service distributors across the U.S. Visit the company website at saputousafoodservice.com.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
◆ **ARF Financial recently announced the promotion of Laurie Morris to Vice President.** Laurie brings more than 20 years of experience in marketing and small business finance to the position. ARF is a leading financial services company for restaurateurs and the hospitality industry. ARF offers unsecured business loans, lines of credit and interest only loans. "Restaurant owners call us first because we are not a cash advance or factoring company. We have nothing to do with your credit card transactions. The loan you receive is tax deductible resulting in lower overall cost of funds. The payments you make are fixed and will not change during the term of the loan – as your revenue grows you keep more of it," stated Laurie." To learn more visit www.arffinancial.com. Laurie can be reached by cell @ 678.618.5216.



Laurie Morris

The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), a supporting agency under the Department of Defense, has contracted the kitchen automation innovator,

Dexai Robotics, to install its robotic sous-chef, Alfred, in a number of military bases across the United States. The \$1.6 million contract is a pilot program consisting of a total of 10 Alfred robots. The first Alfred was recently deployed at Travis Air Force Base in Solano County, CA, where it's already become something of a local celebrity. The Air Force and DoD have started the initiative to reduce food waste, improve sanitation, and facilitate staffing requirements in the country's military dining facilities. Alfred is already proving more than capable of all that and more at Travis AFB's Monarch Dining Facility, which is open to over 7,300 active duty personnel and serves an average of 950 customers per day. Following the announcement, Dexai is gearing up to scale operations and aims to ship hundreds of Alfreds ahead of Q3.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
◆ **On February 24, Mission Restaurant Supply hosted a Grand Opening Celebration for the new McAllen megastore. The 22,500 sq. ft. state-of-the-art building is located at 4310 N. 10th Street in McAllen, Texas.** In January 2021, Mission Restaurant Supply broke ground at a new location in McAllen. This new location is Mission Restaurant Supply's first facility that was built from the ground up. The new megastore has an extensive showroom, store, and fully stocked warehouse with everything needed for a foodservice operation - commercial equipment, kitchen supplies, dining room supplies, furniture, janitorial supplies, and more. One of the highlights of the new location is a test kitchen that is available for equipment demonstrations, product training, and special events. This new location provides Mission with an additional Distribution Center that will service the Rio Grande Valley area. Mission Restaurant Supply –missionrs.com - got its start as a small ice machine and refrigeration sales and leasing company in 1988. Today, Mission Restaurant Supply is proud to be one of the nation's largest dealers of foodservice equipment and supplies.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
◆ **Big Mama's & Papa's Pizzeria, a U.S.-based company, restaurant chain operator, and franchisor, announced a landmark master franchise deal with Canadian company The Patel Group –** led by hotelier **GK Patel**, who is expanding his existing portfolio with the addition of the popular contemporary eatery which currently has 15 locations throughout Los Angeles County in California. This marks the first master franchise agreement for Big Mama's & Papa's, which plans to have 52 franchise locations throughout

the Canadian province of Ontario – with at least two planned to open this year. The deal was brokered between Ray Perry, Big Mamas & Papas Franchising, LLC President & COO, and Sam Wadera, a restaurant veteran and Managing Partner of The Patel Group, who will also be leading BMPP's development in Ontario, Canada.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
◆ **RDE, Inc., the owner and operator of Restaurant.com,** the nation's largest restaurant-focused digital deals brand, announced its launch of a subscription-based program for restaurants. This new program will enable restaurant partners more ways to market to potential diners based on each restaurant's needs and goals. A restaurant can choose from a variety of services such as email features, customer insights, tailored marketing content, and reviews to attract new customers. By leveraging the marketing expertise at Restaurant.com, restaurants will now have a more robust marketing program for filling their empty tables. Visit Restaurant.com for all details.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
◆ **Big Whiskey's American Restaurant & Bar and Whiskey's Florida LLC, a subsidiary of Nosnaws Corporation, to bring Big Whiskey's to South Florida.** Nosnaws Corporation with its restaurant development group, NOS Development LLC began looking at Big Whiskey's earlier, however going forward was delayed by the opening of its new concept, Walt's American Grille & Bar in Boca Raton, and the delays of 2020 into 2021. The first location of the three-store deal will open in Broward County by the end of 2022. The additional two stores of the deal will open in Miami-Dade, Broward and PB County areas. Additionally, expansion plans include the Tampa and Orlando areas in the near future. Founder and COO is Paul Sundy. Online at Bigwhiskeys.com.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
◆ **Smokin' Oak Wood-Fired Pizza & Taproom is expected to double in size during 2022 and have 100 locations open in the next five years.** The brand currently has five locations open and operating throughout Minnesota, Colorado, Nebraska and Iowa. Offering one-of-a-kind franchising opportunities to continue its national expansion, Smokin' Oak Pizza will open several locations during the first half of 2022 in Texas, Florida, Arkansas, and an additional location in Grand Junction, CO. Matt Mongoven partnered with restaurateur, Linda Black to keep openings going up in a major way.



◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
◆ **Today's Restaurant** invites you to submit your information for the What's Going On column at any time. E-mail your company, product or event info to terri@trnusa.com. Try to keep the word count at 50-75 words. Get free publicity for your company, product or service!

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NEW NETWORKING GROUPS COMING SOON!

White Castle from page 1

customers of the best standards in food preparation. White Castle's decision to pilot Flippy in the kitchen creates an avenue for reduced human contact with food during the cooking process – reducing potential for transmission of food pathogens. The implementation also brings intelligence to cooking, tapping into sensors, intelligent monitoring and anticipated kitchen needs to keep food temperatures consistent, that ensure optimal quality and a perfect bite for customers. With Flippy in the kitchen automating repetitive, time consuming and dangerous tasks like frying, team members can be redeployed to more customer-experience driven tasks.

"White Castle is an industry innovator, and we take a great amount of pride in our history – never forgetting about the future ahead," said Lisa Ingram, 4th generation family leader and CEO of White Castle. "With 100 years of quick service success, the time has never been more perfect to envision what the next century of White Castle and the restaurant industry looks like. Miso Robotics understood where we could improve and stay true to White Castle's brand of taste, innovation and best-in-class dining. A great customer and employee experience is in our DNA, and we are thrilled to bring the future into our kitchen with solutions that will transform the industry and make the White Castle experience all that it can be for generations to come."



Founded in 1921, White Castle became the first fast food restaurant. Throughout its nearly 100-year history, White Castle created the framework for the modern QSR business model and reinvented the restaurant experience. As the company approaches its centennial anniversary, it Flippy ROAR's deployment commemorates another historic moment in the chain.

"Miso Robotics couldn't be more excited to bring Flippy ROAR into White Castle," said Buck Jordan, CEO and Co-Founder of Miso Robotics.

"Artificial intelligence and robotics brings a very real opportunity to continuously enhance the cooking process and optimize taste for restaurants. White Castle's brand is iconic, navigating new challenges to bring their menu to more customers, prepared in a healthier environment by staff in better working conditions that adhere to social distancing needs is something only Miso Robotics can do. We look forward to being a part of White Castle's next 100 years."

Flippy ROAR will deploy later this fall. The deployment will test speeds

in production, taste, quality and operational optimization with backend POS integration. Following integration, Flippy ROAR's zero-footprint design will be tested to improve employee and food preparation, for wider location integration.

About White Castle®: White Castle –white-castle.com - America's first fast-food hamburger chain, has been making hot and tasty sliders as a family-owned business for more than 99 years. Based in Columbus, Ohio, White Castle started serving The Original Slider®, made from 100% USDA inspected beef, in 1921. Today White Castle owns and operates more than 365 restaurants dedicated to satisfying customers' cravings, morning, noon and night and sells its famous fare in retail stores nationwide, in a growing number of international locations, and at military exchanges around the world. The Original Slider, named in 2014 as Time Magazine's most influential burger of all time, is served alongside a menu of creatively crafted sliders and other mouthwatering food options, including White Castle's Impossible™ Slider, named by Thrillist in 2019 as the "Best Plant-Based Fast Food Burger." White Castle's commitment to maintaining the highest quality products extends to the company owning and operating its own meat processing plants, bakeries and frozen-food processing plants.


About Miso Robotics: Miso Robotics - www.misorobotics.com - is revolutionizing the restaurant and prepared food industries with innovative robotics and artificial intelligence solutions. Miso was founded with a mission to leverage AI technology to help chefs cook food perfectly and consistently and enable restaurants to increase labor productivity, reduce costs and drive profitability while improving the overall dining experience. Miso employs a respected team of scientists, roboticists, engineers and industrial designers from Caltech, Cornell, MIT, Carnegie Mellon, Harvey Mudd, UCLA, USC, Art Center and UNC Chapel Hill.

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As a business owner, you can sell the same items or services at the same — or lower — prices as your competitors. What can you offer that will give you a competitive in that situation?

The answer is this: Exceptional customer service. Not only will doing so increase your customer base and revenues, but it will also save you money by reducing employee turnover. Given today's economic climate, it is critical that you do whatever you can to increase your odds of being — and remaining — successful.

Unfortunately, few companies are willing to invest the time and money necessary to provide customer service training for their employees. Most owners and executives think it is unnecessary, that employees simply know how to provide good service to their customers. The truth is that they don't.

Just as athletes know they must constantly train in the fundamentals of their sports to be winners; employees must be trained constantly in the fundamentals of customer service. Schools and colleges don't offer customer service courses, so

where are your employees going to get the training, they need? You must provide it.

Customer service training is not an expense; it is a high-yield investment.

Ninety-nine percent of your company's contact with customers comes through your frontline employees. The sad fact is that those employees are the least paid, least trained, least valued, and least appreciated people you employ. They deserve better. When not trained in how to provide exceptional customer service, many employees become frustrated, burn out and leave.

Customer service training is not an expense; it is a high-yield investment.

It is a profit-producing strategy. If you want to instill a service culture in your company, you must make a commitment to do so — one that starts at the top and travels through management to your frontline employees.

The return on investment when you train your employees is great. You will realize increased sales, improved employee morale and productivity, fewer customer complaints, a drop in employee turnover, and an increase in customer loyalty.

You might be thinking that your employees already provide great service to your customers, but you might be turning a blind eye to what is really going on in your organization. For example, when customers ask your employees where they can find a certain product, do those employees simply point or do they walk customers to the product? Do your employees call customers by name? Do they thank them for their business? Are they proactive in asking customers if they can be of help? Do they smile? Do they make eye contact with customers?

Those are just a few of the elements

of exceptional customer service—and they must be taught. You can't, however, train employees once a year and expect them to perform to the highest standards. If you want to drive a customer service culture in your organization, you should train employees every four months with something new and fresh. That training should focus on quality, accuracy, dependability, speed, human relationships, and attitudes.

When you give your employees the tools and skills, they need to take care of your customers, they — and your customers — will stay with you.

For more detailed information on John Tschohl and the Service Quality Institute, you can visit him online at www.customer-service.com.

About the Author: John Tschohl is the founder and president of the Service Quality Institute—the global leader in customer service—with operations in more than 40 countries. He is considered one of the world's foremost authorities on all aspects of customer service and has developed 17 customer service training programs that are used by companies throughout the world. His monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge at www.customer-service.com. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

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Dexai from page 1

Alfred is part of a pilot program that includes nine additional robots in different military dining facilities around the country. With Alfred, the U.S. Air Force hopes to reduce food waste, improve sanitation, and facilitate staffing requirements in their dining facilities. The Air Force and U.S. Space Force have expressed interest in using robotics in other operational functional areas under this industry program.

*Alfred utilizes
artificial intelligence
and computer vision to
assess and adapt
to its surroundings.*

"We are very excited to be working with Dexai to test and integrate innovation and technology into our food and beverage operations. Our goal is to make our operations more efficient, safer, easier, and more sustainable," said Air Force Food Services Center Food and Beverage Policy, Procedures and Strategic Initiatives Chief Jim Krueger. "In terms of functionality, ease of implementation, and flexibility, Alfred far surpassed anything else we saw on the market. The fact that it can be optimized to each facility's unique needs was also a significant differentiator. We're confident that this pilot program will be just the beginning of a long Air Force and U.S. Space Force career for Alfred. I can't wait to see what other roles and ideas we can develop with the commercial industry under this program."

Alfred utilizes artificial intelligence and computer vision to assess and adapt to its surroundings. Thanks to its ability to manipulate a variety of standard kitchen utensils, Alfred can be installed in any existing commercial kitchen and can prepare a wide variety of meals in a diversity of cuisines.

"Anyone who's worked in the restaurant industry will tell you that no two kitchens are exactly alike," said David Johnson, Dexai's CEO and co-founder. "From the floor plan to the food-making process, each commercial kitchen has a unique environment with unique needs. Alfred's ability to recognize and adapt to those unique demands, wherever it's rolled out, puts the robot in a league of its own."

Dexai traces its origins to a collaboration between researchers from The Charles Stark Draper Laboratory, MIT, and Harvard, and was founded in response to widespread labor shortages in the restaurant industry. As of November 2021, employment levels for restaurants and bars were down 6.1% from their pre-pandemic peak in February 2020. According to the National Restaurant Association, 78% of restaurant owners across the U.S. reported they don't have enough employees to support current demand. **TR**



About Dexai Robotics: Founded in 2018 as a spin-out from The Charles Stark Draper Lab, Dexai is dedicated to developing market-ready, scalable robotics & AI solutions to address real-world needs. In response to the persistent labor shortages affecting the food service industry, Dexai's co-founders, David Johnson and Anthony Tayoun, developed Alfred — the first and only intelligent, adaptable, food prep robot designed for use in any existing kitchen. Alfred utilizes cutting-edge AI and computer vision technologies to identify and manipulate a wide array of food items and kitchen utensils to prepare salads, bowls, and other meals without any alteration to a restaurant's layout or recipes. Dexai recently raised an oversubscribed Seed Round led by Hyperplane Venture Capital. Rho Capital, Harlem Capital, Contour Venture Partners, and NextView Ventures also contributed to the financing round. Visit dexai.com.

iMatrix from page 7

loggers for business locations, and agriculture (including cannabis) and food supply chain.

"Consider the fact that IoT devices have intimate access to the closest details of our lives and our businesses," said Phillips. "With access to a leak monitoring, and freezer and refrigeration systems, a hacker can view and record anything the sensors can see. Suppose a hacker intercepts data packets during transmission and creates false flags, either fabricating false locations or sensor readings or preventing real emergencies from being detected. In these cases, they can steal the crucial information your business relies on to keep you safe and ahead of competitors. iMatrix's secure data collection system keeps our customer's data secure."

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