

Today's Restaurant

THE FOODSERVICE INDUSTRY AUTHORITY

VOLUME 29

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Global Robot Waiter Market Outlook & Forecasts Report 2023-2028

Growth in investments & innovations in hospitality industry fueling developments



Dublin- The [“Global Robot Waiter Market - Outlook & Forecast 2023-2028”](#) report has been added to ResearchAndMarkets.com’s offering.

The global robot waiter market was valued at USD 324.12 million in 2022 and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 35.14% from 2022-2028.

The robot waiter market is highly competitive, with established players like Bear Robotics, Keenon Robots, and Richtech Robotics offering advanced, customizable solutions. Partnerships between robot waiter manufacturers and restaurants are increasing, enabling smoother integration of these autonomous servers into existing operations.

As competition intensifies, companies focus on improving technical

capabilities and the overall customer experience, offering diverse load capacities and functionalities to cater to various dining establishments. This dynamic landscape underscores the

These robots are designed to serve food and drinks, take orders, and interact with guests...

potential for robot waiters to transform the restaurant industry.

The Asia Pacific region was the primary contributor to the global robot waiter market, responsible for more than 30% of the total revenue 2022. This substantial share can be attributed to the robust demand for robot waiters from Japan and South Korea, where the adoption of robot waiters is due to high technological advancements.

The demand for robot waiters in East Asia, particularly in China, Japan, and South Korea, has surged in the wake of multiple challenges, including a shortage of skilled labor, rising inflation, and increased wages driven by the aftermath of COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Robot chefs and waiters gained prominence in Asian markets during the early stages of the pandemic as lockdowns and pandemic control measures led to labor shortages.

The robot waiter market in North America is expected to experience significant growth and adoption across the restaurant & hospitality industry. The United States and Canada are showing increasing interest in robot waiters, primarily driven by the restaurant industry’s desire for automation and efficiency.

Further, European countries, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and

See **ROBOT WAITER** page 14

Red Mango unveils ambitious franchise growth strategy to expand into Florida

Booming growth and economic appeal inspire Red Mango’s move to Sunshine State

Dallas, TX - [Red Mango](#), a company focused on wholesome offerings, specializing in frozen yogurt, smoothies and power bowls and juices, recently announced its endeavor to introduce new business opportunities to Florida with plans of opening 10 new locations across the state in the next 3 years.

Red Mango’s focus on Florida expansion is driven by factors drawing many businesses to the state, such as its [booming population growth](#) resulting in more mouths to feed and its famous warm weather that drives demand for frozen treats. Not only does Red Mango fulfill these obvious opportunities, but the brand differentiates itself with healthier and nutritious offerings, filling a gap in the market and generating a lucrative

See **RED MANGO** page 13



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Howard Appell ♦ Today's Restaurant Publisher

From the dawn of civilization man has been doing business in one form or another. Business was conducted in it's purest form. I want your goat and I am willing to give you three pieces of pottery and an axe. Currency did not come into use for many years after.

In ancient times John and Michael would exchange their offerings and the deal would be completed.

In today's economy currency or money is again in short supply and many people have been going back to the original way of buying a goat but with a modern twist. Today we know this method of shopping and paying for goods and services with other goods and services as Barter.

There are thousands of barter companies around the country and they all work on the same premise. Businesses join the group and offer their products for sale. You can purchase a goat that another member is offering for a dollar value and pay for it with an equal value of your products. Let's look at how it works in today's economy.

John's Restaurant needs a new fryer. John would contact a barter company and join the group. A one time membership fee is usually paid to the barter company. Once John is a member he will have access to the other members of the group and the information about the products they are selling. Most barter groups have

websites that allow John to view the offerings and purchase items. After investigating all of the members in the group John finds a used fryer that Michael's Restaurant Supply is selling for \$400.00.

In ancient times John and Michael would exchange their offerings and the deal would be completed. In the new barter world Michael and John would agree on a price and would submit information back to the barter company who maintain the balance of trade dollars in each one of their accounts. Let's assume both John and Michael have established accounts with 1,000 barter dollars in each one of their accounts. John would transfer 400 of his dollars to Michael's account and Michael would provide John with the fryer. John's account is now 600 and Michael's is now 1400. Just like a checkbook transaction. The barter company charges a fee for the transaction either to the buyer or the seller depending on company policy.

How did John get the 1,000 barter dollars in his account? Steve, Mary, Bill, and many more members came to his restaurant to eat and paid John with their barter dollars which were credited to John's account. John actually paid for the fryer with his food but did not hand it to Michael directly.

Barter works for companies that have a low cost for their products and for selling excess space like a hotel room or seats at a show that hasn't sold out.

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Important new products, corporate news and industry events

Once a warehouse supporting citrus production in Orlando's Packing District, the **Great Southern Box Building** has undergone a **transformative journey to become The Southern Box Food Hall** which will house food vendors, a brewery and versatile event hall. The project, integral to the overarching vision of the Packing District's redevelopment, promises to be a cornerstone of the revitalized district. Located on Orange Blossom Trail in Orlando, the 13,000+ Sq-ft building, is in the process of being retrofitted by local architecture firm, dap design. Once complete, the new Great Southern Box Company Food Hall will feature eleven vendor stalls, two outdoor patios, a micro-brewery led by Orange County Brewers, and a 5,254 SF event space. [The hall will be managed by Chef Akhtar Nawab](#) and his company, Hospitality HQ. Hospitality HQ (HHQ) is a creative consulting and management group in Brooklyn, New York offering bespoke solutions for culinary-driven concepts across the U.S., ranging from food halls to full-service restaurants,

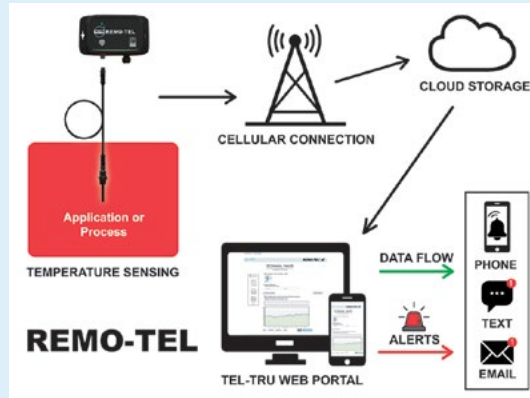


Rawls Neville

fast casual concepts, hotels, venues and more.

◆◆◆◆
 ◆◆◆◆ **G&R Farms, a third generation premier Vidalia Onion grower in southeast Georgia, announced the new hire of Rawls Neville in the position of sales manager was effective April 1, 2024.** Neville is an industry veteran who started his career as a farm hand and has held jobs as an Operations Manager at both Four Corners Farms and Van Solkema

Tel-Tru Manufacturing Company, a leader in temperature measurement solutions, has introduced the **Remo-Tel Smart Wireless Temperature Monitoring System**. This latest technology will revolutionize industrial processing with advanced automation and data-driven decision capabilities. The



Remo-Tel system is designed to streamline temperature data logging for a broad range of industrial applications. Food and beverage, pharmaceutical, and industrial processors are now able to fully optimize their techniques through predictive analysis and informed decision-making. Visit teltru.com.

◆ **Le Macaron French Pastries**— the leading French pastries and macaron franchise in the United States, is poised for success as it expands its footprint through franchising. With 15 successful years of operation, the concept has 75 active stores nationwide and an additional 12 locations in development, looking to introduce more kiosks, pastry shops, and food trucks to new communities. They currently have a location at 140 W Franklin St in Chapel Hill, and one at 8480 Honeycutt Rd in Raleigh, NC. Founded by Rosalie Guillem and her daughter Audrey, Le Macaron French Pastries brings the essence of French patisseries to the United States. After leaving France and founding the first location in Sarasota, the brand has grown nationwide.



◆◆◆◆
Custom Made Inventory (CMI), a leading innovator in the packaging industry, recently announced the expansion of their relationship with

Gosh Enterprises, the parent company of well-established brands including

See **WHAT'S GOING ON** page 10

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Ali Group North America to rebrand as Welbilt organizational changes announced

Vernon Hills, IL – Filippo Berti, Chairman and CEO of Ali Group has announced a number of organizational changes affecting the North American market, to become effective immediately.

The two organizations in North America (Ali Group North America and Welbilt) will merge and operate under one brand, which will be Welbilt. “This strategic move leverages Welbilt’s strong brand reputation,

significant market presence, comprehensive customer solutions and well-established relationships particularly within the QSR sector, with the goal of offering the most complete turnkey solutions package in the industry,” said Berti.

The Welbilt logo has also been redesigned to reflect a fusion of both companies’ cultures.

The Corporate Executives of the newly formed North American group

will be: Filippo Berti, Chairman and CEO; Bradford Willis, CFO; Rob August, Executive Vice President (with focus on sales and distribution); and Tom Hotard, Executive Vice President (with focus on operations and engineering). Current Welbilt CEO Kevin Clark will be appointed to the Board of Directors of the North American group, and will focus on special projects such as those that will facilitate the integration of Ali Group North American companies into Welbilt.

The newly nominated Group Presidents:

- ◆ Nate Jackson
- ◆ Will Means
- ◆ Erica Motes
- ◆ Oscar Villa

Ali Group companies outside of North America are not affected by this change.

“This integration represents not just a merging of products and services, but a unification of our teams’ talents, expertise and vision,” Berti said. “It is a significant step towards strengthening our market position and delivering unparalleled value to our customers, setting a new standard in the industry and ensuring our continued growth and leadership.”

About the Ali Group: Founded in 1963 by Luciano Berti, the Ali Group is an Italian corporation with headquarters located in Milan, Italy, and North American operations based in Chicago, Illinois. Through its subsidiaries, the company designs, manufactures, markets and services a broad line of commercial and institutional foodservice equipment used by major restaurant and hotel chains, independent restaurants, hospitals, schools, airports, correctional institutions and canteens.

The Ali Group – aligroup.com - and its more than 110 global brands employs approximately 14,500 people in 29 countries and, in terms of sales, is the world’s largest group in this industry. It has 74 manufacturing facilities in 17 countries and sales and service subsidiaries throughout Europe, the Middle East, Africa, North America, South America, and Asia Pacific.

“This integration represents not just a merging of products and services, but a unification of our teams’ talents, expertise and vision”

To ensure a seamless transition and continued leadership, the company has introduced a new Group President role. These individuals will support the Corporate Executives in overseeing the numerous companies.



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Welbilt Rebranding Initiative



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Wawa breaks ground on first Georgia stores

26 new Wawa stores planned for southern and coastal Georgia markets, with first locations opening in late 2024

WaWa, PA - Wawa, a privately held, family-owned chain of more than 1,040 convenience retail stores currently operating in six states and Washington, D.C., is getting closer to bringing its unique food and beverage offer, store experience and community commitment to Georgia.

On March 7, the Company celebrated the official start of construction on its first two Georgia stores Located at: US 341 & Community Road, Brunswick, GA 31520 and 356 West Orange Street Jesup, GA 31545. The events officially introduced Wawa to the community, shared expansion plans and welcomed VIP customers, local officials and charity partners. Finally, at the Community Partnership Day events, Wawa announced contributions to its first community partners – the Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia and the USO Georgia with first grant awards totaling more than \$10,000 to support local initiatives.

“It’s official – Wawa is coming to Georgia, and we couldn’t be more thrilled to share details of our exciting growth plans with our newest soon-to-be neighbors!” said Robert Yeatts, Sr. Director of Store Operations for Wawa. “Our two groundbreaking events gave us the opportunity to meet new faces and share with our new markets a little bit about our history and what makes Wawa such an ideal fit for communities here. We are thrilled to break ground on our first stores and get closer to our first



grand openings in 2024.”

About Wawa’s Growth & Expansion in Southern and Coastal Georgia At the groundbreaking events, VIP customers, local officials and community partners received a first look at Wawa’s initial plans for the market including opening the Brunswick and Jesup stores in late 2024 and hosting groundbreaking events on May 1 for new stores located in Hinesville and Pooler. Wawa continues to build a pipeline of sites in southern and Coastal Georgia and currently has sites under contract in: Brunswick, Jesup, Hinesville, Pooler, Waycross, Bainbridge, Tifton, Valdosta

and Albany. Over the next 5-8 years, Wawa plans to build and open 26 stores in southern and Coastal Georgia, opening 3 to 4 stores per year. To build each store, Wawa will invest approximately \$7.0 million and employ, on average, 140 contractors and local partners. Once open, each store will employ an average of 35 associates, with Wawa expecting to create almost 1,000 long-term new jobs as a result of expansion in Georgia.

About Wawa, Inc.: Wawa, Inc., a privately held company, began in 1803 as an iron foundry in New Jersey. Toward the end of the 19th Century, owner George Wood took an interest

in dairy farming and the family began a small processing plant in Wawa, PA in 1902. The milk business was a huge success, due to its quality, cleanliness and “certified” process. As home delivery of milk declined in the early 1960s, Grahame Wood, George’s grandson, opened the first Wawa Food Market in 1964 in Pennsylvania as an outlet for dairy products. Today, Wawa is your all day, every day stop for freshly prepared foods, beverages, coffee, fuel services and surcharge-free ATMs. Wawa stores are located in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Florida and Washington, D.C. with nearly 1,000 locations to date. The stores offer a large fresh food-service selection, including Wawa brands such as custom prepared hoagies, freshly-brewed coffee, hot breakfast sandwiches, hand-crafted specialty beverages, a dinner menu including burgers and an assortment of soups, sides and snacks.

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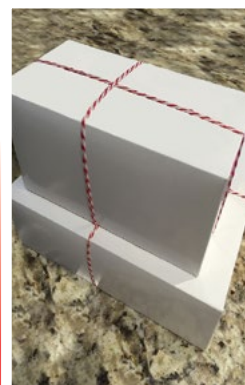
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Culinary Institute of the Pacific Taps CIA for new workforce development program

Honolulu, HI - Kapi'olani Community College and the Culinary Institute of the Pacific announced a collaboration with The Culinary Institute of America (CIA), the world's premier culinary college, on a [new workforce and professional development program](#). The program, designed for both professional chefs and people aspiring to join the foodservice and hospitality workforce, will offer in-depth, weeklong courses highlighting the cuisines of the Pacific Rim, Asia, Latin America, along with other global, plant-forward cuisines, contemporary garde manger, and more. Phase one of this program will launch early fall, with eight to 12 one-week-long programs taking place over the next year. The program kicks off September 16-20 2024.

"The collaboration between the Culinary Institute of the Pacific and the Culinary Institute of America (CIA)



Chef Roy Yamaguchi

marks a pivotal moment aimed at truly creating a world-class culinary institute. By enlisting the support of CIA to introduce specialized classes for industry professionals and work force development, we're not just expanding our educational repertoire; but more importantly, highlighting the value of culinary education to the greater visitor industry and local community. This initiative will uplift the Culinary Institute of the Pacific, signifying a commitment to excellence and a dedication in fostering a community of highly trained, skilled, and innovative culinary professionals. It's a bold step towards realizing our goal of becoming globally competitive in culinary education and enriching the culinary

landscape in Hawai'i for generations to come." - Chef Roy Yamaguchi, Director of the Culinary Institute of the Pacific

Yamaguchi, who was recently named Culinary Institute of the Pacific's program coordinator will collaborate closely with the CIA's chef instructors to develop a long-term and mutually beneficial relationship between the two organizations.

"We are excited to collaborate with CIP to provide this workforce development program," said Chef David Kamen, director of client experience at CIA Consulting. "These hands-on programs—set against the beautiful backdrop of Diamond Head—provides a dynamic learning environment and will help ensure the talent

pipeline in the islands remains robust for years to come."

About the Culinary Institute of America: Founded in 1946, The Culinary Institute of America is the world's premier culinary college. Dedicated to developing leaders in foodservice and hospitality, the independent, not-for-profit CIA offers associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees with majors in culinary arts, baking & pastry arts, food business management, hospitality management, culinary science, and applied food studies. The college also offers executive education, certificate programs, and courses for professionals and enthusiasts. Its conferences, leadership initiatives, and consulting services have made the CIA the think tank of the food industry and its worldwide network of more than 50,000 alumni includes innovators in every area of the food world. The CIA has locations in New York, California, Texas, and Singapore. For more information, visit www.ciachef.edu.

About Culinary Institute of Pacific: The programs at The Culinary Institute of the Pacific (CIP) at Kapi'olani Community College planted its roots in 1946, then known as the "Hotel and Restaurant" program, under the Territorial Department of Public Instruction located at the Palama Settlement facilities. Since then, the program has moved from the Ala Wai Clubhouse to the Pensacola Campus to where it currently stands along the slopes of L'ahi. The program has recently expanded its footprint to include the Culinary Institute of the Pacific at Diamond Head where two state-of-the-art culinary laboratories have been built and will soon be home to three prized facility additions: a Tasting Studio, the Food Creativity Center, and the highly anticipated CIP restaurant. The CIP program prides itself as a conduit for supporting the State of Hawaii's culinary industry through a multitude of educational avenues, both short and long term, including bachelor's degree transfer pathways, associate degrees, certificates, workforce development, and non-credit programming. The Culinary Institute of the Pacific programs extend across the University of Hawai'i Community Colleges System.

"It's a bold step towards realizing our goal of becoming globally competitive in culinary education..."



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Eight tech trends shaping casinos

Step into the future of gaming: How are AI, contactless tech, and robotics revolutionizing your casino experience? Uncover the top eight innovations that will change the casino floor as you know it.

The casino industry is undergoing a remarkable transformation, driven by the advent of groundbreaking technologies. These innovations not only enhance the gaming experience but also offer unprecedented convenience and security to guests. From the utilization of artificial intelligence and robotics to cross-platform experiences, casinos are setting new standards in entertainment and service. Let's dive into how these technological advancements are revolutionizing gaming, with eight tech trends shaping casinos.

Safe Bet: Leveraging AI

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in casinos is reshaping the gaming industry, streamlining operations, and elevating player experiences. [OPTX](#), for example, leverages AI to monitor gambling behaviors, providing actionable insights that assist casinos in optimizing player engagement and operational efficiency. [Gaming Analytics](#) uses AI for deep analysis of player data, enabling casinos to fine-tune their operations and create personalized gaming experiences. These companies serve as examples of AI's diverse applications in the casino sector,



from data analysis and customer support to fraud detection and game customization. These advancements are pivotal in evolving casino operations, significantly enhancing the overall gaming environment.

Shaking Up the Casino Floor with Robotic Bartenders

The allure of robotic bartenders in casinos extends far beyond their novelty; it's their efficiency and precision in crafting drinks that truly stand out. Brands like [Cecilia.ai](#) are pioneering in this space with robotic (and interactive) bartending systems that not only mix cocktails quickly but do so with consistent quality. These systems, capable of crafting a wide range of drinks from classic cocktails to custom creations, offer guests a 24/7 engaging experience that marries taste with cutting-edge


This service revolution enhances guest satisfaction by blending advanced technology with the personal touch of uninterrupted service.

AI. The introduction of such automated systems into the casino environment also infuses the casino bar with a sense of modernity and innovation, appealing to guests who seek unique and futuristic experiences. The presence of robotic bartenders like Cecilia.ai demonstrates how technology can

enhance traditional aspects of the casino experience, making every visit memorable and ensuring that guests keep coming back for more.

Delivery Robots: Bringing Convenience to Gaming Floors

Following the innovative trend of robotic bartenders, casinos are not stopping there; they're bringing the convenience one step closer to the guests. With the introduction of delivery robots like [Techmetics Robotics](#), and Pudu Robotics' [BellaBot](#), casinos ensure that guests no longer need to leave their gaming spots for refreshments, and instead have the refreshments come to them. These robots efficiently navigate the bustling casino floor, delivering drinks, snacks, and even cards or chips right to the players. This service revolution enhances guest satisfaction by blending advanced technology with the personal touch of uninterrupted service, making every casino visit exceptionally convenient and enjoyable.

In wrapping up, the tech trends shaping casinos aren't just game-changers—they're reshuffling the deck for a more engaging, streamlined, and secure player experience. As the industry bets big on innovation, these technological advancements ensure that the house keeps on winning. 

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Kitchen + Cocktails to open uptown Charlotte restaurant at Queen City Quarter at 210 E Trade St. by June. Kevin Kelley is the owner. Kevin has other national locations. The restaurant will offer an extensive Southern Comfort food menu and unique colorful cocktails among a warm atmosphere.



Londa's To-Go soul food has opened in Charlotte. Located at 1540 West Blvd. The restaurant is co-owned and operated by Yolanda Crowder who offers takeout orders for her menu, consisting of fried chicken yams, pork chops, cabbage and peach cobbles along with other southern and soul dishes.

Whataburger, the fast food chain known for its Texas origins, is planning to open its first location in Charlotte soon. Zoning records from the city of Charlotte show that plans for a Whataburger at 12809 Albemarle Road have been approved. The fast food restaurant is part of a larger development known as Clear Creek Crossings on Albemarle Road. Florida-based Equinox Development is spearheading the Clear Creek Crossings project.

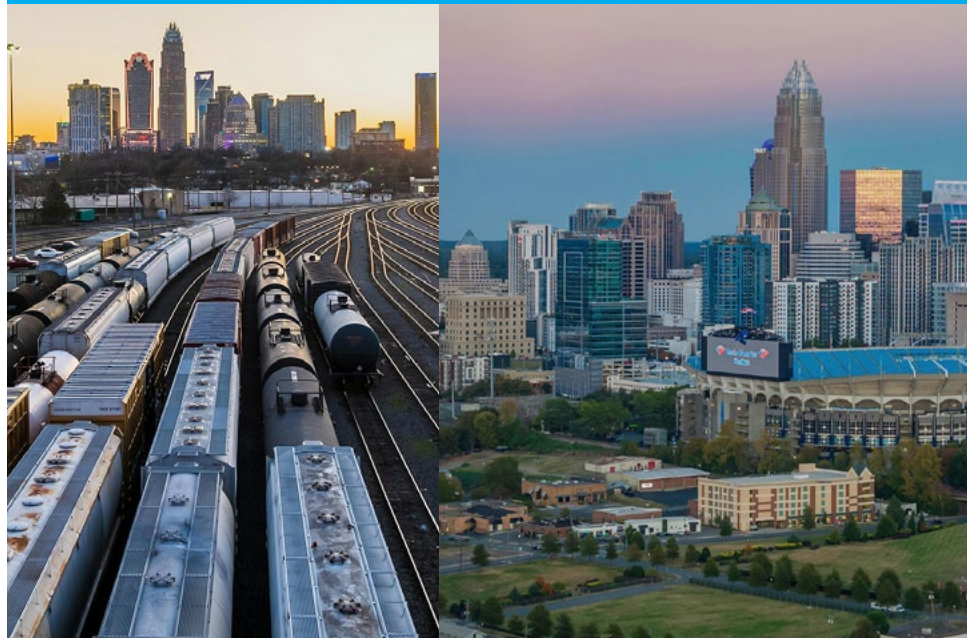
Hawthorne's NY Pizza & Bar will open a new location in Charlotte sometime this year where Early Girl Eatery was until recently at 1515 S Tyrone St. Hawthorne's NY Pizza & Bar was established in 2004. Offering authentic New York Pizza, Italian fare, and warm hospitality to eight locations across Charlotte, Mint Hill, Huntersville and Harrisburg, they are continuing to grow. "Since we opened, our goal has been to provide our customers with top

The 4,000 sq.-ft. taproom of **Lost Worlds Brewing, opening by May 1st**, at **1100 Metropolitan Ave.** in Charlotte. This will be their second NC location. It will be surrounded by archeological artifacts. Offering craft beers, cocktails, wines and ciders, the brewery will overlook the Sugar Creek Greenway. Founder Dave Hamme will also have a menu with beer pairing dinners and live music. Visit Lostworldsbeer.com for all details.

The Peach Cobbler Factory, a national franchise specializing in cobblers with ice cream, will make its Charlotte debut at Whitehall Corners at 8506 S. Tryon St this summer. The franchise owners, Paul Foster and Nathaniel Frye are also planning another location. The Peach Cobbler Factory has several other locations in the U.S.



TRN FEATURED RESTAURANTS CHARTER



John Marenic ~ the President of Marenic Food Service Consulting

John began the firm with its main focus in kitchen design and consulting services and has since grown to include many facets in the Hospitality Industry. John has over 40 years of experience in the Hospitality Industry and has completed projects in over 61 countries and in every segment of the Industry.

"We offer a complete food service support network to dealers, distributors, bottlers, packagers, architects and franchises, including design and "on-site" global construction supervision."

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Marenic Food Service Consulting, Inc. was founded as a food facilities design firm. "Since then we have added a comprehensive package of management consulting services as well as architectural development, automated design, equipment supply (through our "Preferred Dealer Network") and



John Marenic

Seminar Services, says John." "Our client list has grown to include many nationally and internationally respected food service facilities, architects, developers, dealers and suppliers. So, whether you're a single-unit, chain, fast-food, full service, convenience store, hotel, casino, airline, sports complex, hospital, country club, architect, developer, dealer, supplier or corporate cafeteria, we are fully equipped to handle your needs."



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This approach emphasizes your participation at each stage of the project. Creating a successful food service involves many disciplines: management, architecture, facilities design, equipment selection, food technology, marketing, budgeting, installation supervision, training and up-to-date knowledge of the food service industry. “We help translate your project goals into many specialized “Languages” of the other team members, and follow the project through to a successful opening day.”

John holds a US patent and has completed projects for the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), United States Tennis Association (USTA), International Olympic Committee, US Agency for International Development (USAID), several celebrity chefs and The White House. John was a crew member during Operation Sail 76 and continues sailing today.

He is a former board member with Junior Achievement International, holds three Presidential Volunteer Awards, an Eagle Scout and has been in several of the leading Hospitality Industry publications. **TR**

About Marenic Food Service Consulting, Inc.:
Marenic Food Service Consulting, Inc. is located at 5811 Old Well House Road in Charlotte, NC 28226. Contact them by phone at (954) 817-1183 or you can also email info@marenic.com.



quality, fresh ingredients.” – Head Chef & Partner, Carlo Martinez.

◆ **Folia, a tropical garden-themed cocktail bar** with veteran mixologist [Bob Peters](#) at the helm, will open at 1440 S Tryon St in Charlotte this summer. Built on hospitality, led by

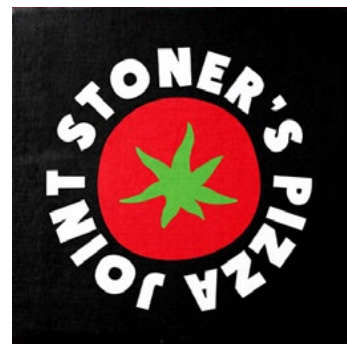
chef Chris Coleman and partners Sean Potter and AJ Klenk, is a Charlotte-based hospitality group that also has Haymaker and [the Goodyear House](#). Built on Hospitality has a few other concepts and one more in progress also set to open this summer, Chief's which is location at 3024 N Davidson St. in Charlotte. Visit the Groups website at bultonhospitality.com. They are also a Goodyear Giving 501(c)(3), doing good for the community. Projects include: a school built in Nicaragua, partnerships with Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, the YMCA and Boys to Men. Funds Raised: \$65,000

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
Savi Provisions will open soon at 2151 Hawkins St. in Charlotte, NC. They are opening other locations also in North Carolina. Since its inception in Atlanta Georgia in 2009, Savi Provisions has developed and implemented a model that is based upon a flexible community focused growth strategy. Founded by Paul Nair, an entrepreneur, developer, and

enthusiast for the nostalgic purveyor, Savi Provisions has revisited and refined the role of the original grocers who built generational relationships with their neighborhood. “Each of our locations is given best-in-class tools and training to work closely with local farmers, vineyards, distilleries, and distributors to serve their community in the best way possible.” Savi Provisions is a neighborhood destination market with locally sourced gourmet and organic foods, fine wines, and spirits.

BUILT ON HOSPITALITY

◆ **Stoner's Pizza Joint**, a quick-service pizza franchise, announced that it will be opening two new corporate owned stores in Fayetteville, NC and Travelers Rest, NC. The 2 new stores are part of 6 openings anticipated this year in 4 states. The addresses for the



new locations are 3035 Legions Rd., Fayetteville, NC and 146 Walnut Ln., Ste D, Travelers Rest, SC. “We are excited to bring the Stoner's brand to the Fayetteville and Travelers Rest communities,”

said Chief Operating Officer, Ashley Dempsey. “We are experiencing tremendous growth in the North and South Carolina markets and know our delicious recipes will be a great fit in these neighborhoods.” **TR**

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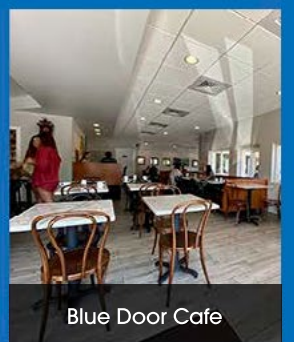
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What's Going On from page 3

Charleys Cheesesteaks & Wings, Lenny's Grill and Subs, and Bibibop Asian Grill with a new three-year contract. Gosh, a renowned entity committed to sustainability and quality in the food and beverage sector, has entrusted CMI with a diverse selection of 36 packaging items. The strategic partnership between CMI and Gosh is set to encompass a comprehensive range of packaging solutions, combining custom-designed items that align with the unique branding of Charleys Cheesesteaks & Wings, Lenny's Grill and Subs, and Bibibop Asian Grill, along with high-quality generic options. This collaboration highlights CMI's commitment to tailoring packaging solutions to the distinct needs of its clients while upholding standards of sustainability, innovation, and cost-effectiveness. Today, CMI stands as a leader in packaging solutions, catering to small, medium and national brands. CMI's journey from a simple printing company to a multifaceted packaging expert reflects its commitment to innovative, customized solutions for its clients. For more information visit the website at cmi.com.



Mogogo on board – This is a custom cart that Norwegian cruise lines are using. Yariv Kadosh, CEO and Co-Founder

of Mogogo stated, “At Mogogo, we love taking on challenges from our customers. When Mr. Dieter Xiao, Senior Manager of Restaurant Operations and Development at NCL, approached us with a unique task. He wanted us to customize our Roll'n cart for room service on their newest vessel and make it marine-grade. We had to understand the unique demands of cruise lines

and figure out how to make our carts even more heavy-duty while retaining the athletic look that we are known for. We replaced the leather handle with a stainless steel one and added a bumper to protect the cart and the walls, among other necessary adjustments.” Mogogo is an international brand, born from an interdisciplinary passion for Design x Food; a common vision to re-imagine and manufacture Food and Beverage Furniture for the world of Hospitality Visit the website for all of their service products online at www.mogogo-buffet.com.



Convenience stores saw record sales in stores in 2023, according to newly released data from the National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS). Total convenience industry sales in 2023 were \$859.8 billion, of which \$327.6 were from in-store sales. Overall, total industry foodservice sales—which includes prepared food; commissary; and hot, cold and frozen dispensed beverages—represented 26.9% of

in-store sales, up 1.3 percentage points in 2023 from the year prior. Profits from foodservice were even more impressive: 37.3% of total in-store profits. Four of the five categories that comprise foodservice made the top 10 in-store sales categories, led by prepared food, which grew 12.2% to \$51,500 per store per month, making it the No. 1 category for in-store sales. Other foodservice categories in the top 10 were hot dispensed beverages, cold dispensed beverages and commissary items. The NACS State of the Industry Summit will be held this year on April 3-5, 2024 at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare Chicago in Rosemont, IL.

ITW Food Equipment Group recently announced that it has received the 2024 ENERGY STAR Partner of the

Year — Sustained Excellence award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The Sustained Excellence award is the highest honor among ENERGY STAR awards. This year marks the 17th consecutive year ITW Food Equipment Group has been recognized as an ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year and 15th consecutive year receiving the Sustained Excellence award. “The development of energy-efficient products is an absolute priority for our brands—Hobart, Traulsen, Vulcan, Wolf, Baxter and Stero—and we are honored to be recognized again for our initiatives,” said Todd Blair, director of marketing, ITW Food Equipment Group. “We are committed to manufacturing more efficient commercial kitchen equipment for foodservice and food retail professionals, so they can have peace of mind knowing they are



using equipment that decreases impact on the environment, as well as improving their bottom line.” More background information about ENERGY STAR's impacts can be found online at www.energystar.gov/impacts.

Alamo Drafthouse Cinema has opened its first Florida location. Located at 9118 Strata Place in Naples, the place is themed after cinema's

See WHAT'S GOING ON page 13

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Proactive leadership in a changing foodservice market

By Aaron Allen

Gone are the days when procrastination in decision-making could yield results. For modern restaurant CEOs, embracing a proactive strategy is crucial. Leading chains once adopted a 'wait and see' stance towards market disruptions, but now, successful executives recognize the importance of not just foreseeing but actively steering their organizations through [emerging trends](#) and challenges. While some await a return to [previous sales](#) or profit margins, the most successful leaders are gaining a competitive edge by out-working and out-investing their peers in this dynamic landscape.

Pizza Companies with "Wait and See" Approaches Lose Market Share

For CEOs seeking a competitive edge, the lesson from the [pizza industry](#) is clear: innovation drives market leadership. Domino's, through a commitment to [innovation](#), has surpassed traditional leaders like Pizza Hut. This demonstrates the risk of a passive 'wait and see' approach. Being proactive in embracing digital advancements, delivery, and convenience can significantly impact market position. Understanding the competitive landscape is key to formulating strategies that not only keep pace but also set new industry standards.



Aaron Allen

In today's business landscape, especially for CEOs, indecision can significantly hinder company progress.

While most foodservice executives recognize the need for innovation to keep pace with evolving consumer demands and behavior, many resist creating these new ideas on their own: they'd rather someone else take the risk than stake their capital.

The players in the middle of the rank have caught up (after Domino's proved the case for digital, delivery, and convenience investments) but there hasn't been much shuffling of the rank. And some players that procrastinated or took a "wait and see" approach lost their places among the biggest.

The Coffee Players Are Not Waiting: Gaining Market Share

In terms of who are the leading players, the [coffee segment](#) doesn't seem to have changed much over the last decade. And that's true for the big players, Starbucks and Dunkin' are still the #1 and #2 by sales in the U.S. However, the ranking for the third and fourth players has been reshuffled. While Dutch Bros was not on the radar of the large and mid-size QSR chains ten years ago, it climbed to third place, taking sales from other players.

Convenience, experience design, speed of service, marketing modernization, improvements to analytic capabilities, coupled with knowing where

to grow, are a few of the things those outmaneuvering the competition are constantly working on.

Decisiveness as a Competitive Advantage

In today's business landscape, especially for CEOs, indecision can significantly hinder company progress. Decisiveness, often fueled by a blend of courage and impatience, is essential to break free from organizational stagnation. While the fear of making bold investments in the face of declining sales and [margins](#) is natural, it's often more costly in the long run to remain passive. Successful leaders understand that investing in new capabilities and forward-thinking strategies, even if it seems risky, is crucial to addressing challenges proactively rather than succumbing to slow, detrimental losses.

Waiting may hurt less, but it costs a lot more in the long run.

About Aaron Allen & Associates: [Aaron Allen & Associates](#) works alongside senior executives of the world's leading foodservice and hospitality companies to help them solve their most complex challenges and achieve their most ambitious aims, specializing in brand strategy, turnarounds, [commercial due diligence](#) and value enhancement for leading hospitality companies and [private equity](#) firms. Our clients span six continents and 100+ countries, collectively posting more than \$300b in revenue. Across 2,000+ engagements, we've worked in nearly every geography, category, cuisine, segment, operating model.

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Elite Food Group's brand evolution and strategic expansion

Elite Food Group has significantly enhanced its presence in the hospitality and food service industry by acquiring Murphy's Deli and updating its High Tower Cafe and High Tower Coffee brands, all part of its broader strategy to improve dining experiences and incorporate modern amenities for property managers.

Houston, TX - Elite Food Group, a leading name in the hospitality and foodservice industry, announced recently significant strides in brand development and technological advancements since the acquisition of Murphy's Deli less than two years ago. This initiative reflects the company's commitment to enhancing dining experiences and providing modern amenities to property managers, aiding in the attraction and retention of tenants as the trend of returning to the office gains momentum.

Under the strategic direction of Elite Food Group, Murphy's Deli has undergone a comprehensive brand refresh, including the development of a new, modern design aesthetic, several remodels of existing locations, and the integration of convenience technology to streamline the customer experience. These efforts have not only revitalized the brand but also significantly improved service efficiency and customer satisfaction.

In parallel, Elite Food Group has applied similar transformative strategies to High Tower Cafe and High Tower Coffee, focusing on modernizing these brands to meet the evolving needs of today's consumers. Through these efforts, Elite Food Group aims to provide property managers with attractive,

modern amenities that support their efforts to attract and retain tenants, especially as more employees return to office settings.

Masad Baba, Co-Managing Partner at Elite Food Group, expressed, "Our aim has always been centered on leading through innovation and flexibility. Our acquisition and rejuvenation of Murphy's Deli, combined with our initiatives at High Tower Cafe and High Tower Coffee, highlight our dedication to surpassing the expectations of our clients and their customers."

Elite Food Group has pioneered a novel approach by incorporating technology and reimagining spaces, thereby establishing a benchmark in the sector, and solidifying its status as a frontrunner in offering contemporary, convenient, and appealing food service solutions. The company continues to be committed to its goal of providing outstanding service and innovative products that cater to the evolving requirements of businesses and consumers.

George Zanabeh, another Co-Managing Partner, shared, "People who work and live in upscale office buildings and complexes expect, and rightfully deserve a top-notch dining experience nearby. We're proud to offer this service every day. Essentially, our commitment is unwavering, and we are actively seeking franchisees who are equally devoted to maintaining this standard of excellence as we aim to accelerate growth of both brands through franchising." 


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Red Mango from page 1

new business opportunity for Florida residents.

"Red Mango's strong presence on the East Coast, particularly in states like New York, has fueled our development strategy to expand into the South. We're targeting markets like Florida, where those who have relocated from the Northeast and may already know and love Red Mango can play a pivotal role in bringing the beloved brand to their new home state," said Sherif Mityas, CEO of BRIX Holdings LLC, parent company of Red Mango. "Red Mango offers entrepreneurs a chance to build their own business and generate wealth in a market ripe with demand."

provide delicious and nutritious offerings to their communities. The push to bring Red Mango further South is fueled by parent company BRIX Holdings LLC, which is making strategic moves to deliver more of its small business ownership opportunities than ever before to these markets overflowing with prospective franchise owners.

"Red Mango represents a beacon of wellness in our community. It's a place where individuals seeking nutritious options and delightful flavors come together to nourish both body and soul," said Sebastian Gurbuz, owner of three Red Mango locations across New York and New Jersey. "As a franchise owner, it's immensely rewarding to witness the positive impact our offerings have on people's lives." 

"As a franchise owner, it's immensely rewarding to witness the positive impact our offerings have on people's lives."

Red Mango boasts a network of over 60 locations across the United States, all owned and operated by small business owners looking to

About BRIX Holdings, LLC: BRIX Holdings, LLC is a Dallas-based, multi-brand franchising company specializing in food-service chains with superior products within better-for-you segments. "Our mission is to provide superior franchise opportunities. We focus on brands that are both attractive to the rapidly expanding single-unit owner/operator franchise market and have the potential to grow into national and international award-winning chains." The current BRIX Holdings' portfolio includes [Red Mango®](#), [Yogurt Café Smoothie & Juice Bar](#), [Smoothie Factory + Kitchen](#), [Pizza Jukebox](#), [Orange Leaf®](#), [Frozen Yogurt](#), [Humble Donut Co.®](#), [Souper Salad®](#), and [Friendly's®](#).

What's Going On from page 10


greatest golf films. Alamo Drafthouse Cinema programs the most anticipated Hollywood blockbusters old and new. Offering a Dine-in Cinema with drinks, beer and a miniature golf course, it is an all day entertainment center.

ES Family of Companies (CES), a portfolio company of Cooper Management, LLC, and a leading supplier of Food Equipment, Supplies, and Service, has acquired **Total Restaurant Supply**, a leading seller of Food Equipment and Supplies to restaurants. The transaction closed on March 29th, 2024, and an official announcement was made to TRS's employees at the Company's Rochester, MN headquarters that day. The acquisition is a continuation of CES' efforts to expand its Food Industry offering. Founded in 2000 and headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, CES is a leading supplier of Equipment, Supplies, and Service to the food industry throughout the



Upper Midwest. For more info, visit CESFamilyofCompanies.com.

◆◆◆◆
◆ **I Heart Mac & Cheese has signed a lease for a new headquarters in Boca Raton.** Their new headquarters will be located at 6600 N Military Trail, encompassing part of the Office Depot corporate lot. I Heart Mac & Cheese will relocate many of its employees to the 3rd floor of the building. The new location will occupy over 7,000 sq-ft of the massive development, which is currently undergoing redevelopment, including the conversion of one office building into 500 multifamily units and the provision of 407,500 square foot of office space across the remaining

two buildings. Additionally, the campus will feature a luxury gym spanning 36,700 square feet and 42,000 square feet of retail space. It is currently in the City's site plan approval stages and should begin construction late 2024. 

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Robot waiter from page 1

France, are gradually embracing robot waiters, albeit at a somewhat slower pace compared to Asia. The European market is driven by a combination of factors, including a strong focus on enhancing customer experiences and the need for labor optimization.

Market Trends & Opportunities

Rising automation in the restaurant industry

The restaurant industry has witnessed a significant rise in automation in recent years, driven by technological advancements and the pursuit of efficiency, cost reduction, and improved customer experiences. This trend encompasses automated solutions, from check-in/check-out processes to in-room services and dining experiences. One prominent aspect of this automation trend is observed in the global robot waiter market, where robots are being deployed in hotels and restaurants to enhance the guest experience. These robots are designed to serve food and drinks, take orders, and interact with guests, all while providing an innovative and futuristic dining experience.

Increasing focus towards enhanced customer experience

In recent years, the robot waiter market has seen a significant shift in priorities, with a growing emphasis on enhancing the customer experience and optimizing

labor efficiency. This trend reflects a broader transformation in the hospitality industry as businesses aim to provide superior service while managing operational costs effectively. One of the key aspects of this trend is the integration of advanced technologies into robot waiter systems. These technologies include improved sensors, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning algorithms that allow robots to navigate crowded dining areas, avoid obstacles, and interact with customers

Market opportunities & trends

- ◆ Rise in Automation in Restaurant Industry
- ◆ Increased Focus on Enhanced Customer Experience & Labor Efficiency
- ◆ Growth in Investments & Innovations in Hospitality Industry

Market growth enablers

- ◆ Rise in Number of Restaurants, Cafes, Catering, & Food Services
- ◆ Labor Shortage & Cost Reduction
- ◆ Adoption of Advanced Technology in Developed Countries

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