

Today's Restaurant

THE FOODSERVICE INDUSTRY AUTHORITY

VOLUME 30

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How to make a menu change to lower cost?

Considerations for doing it thoughtfully and profitably

Rising food costs and uncertainty in the foodservice supply chain has many restaurant operators looking for ways to save money, while maintaining quality, without having to raise menu prices. It's an ongoing tightrope walk which has recently been escalated due to talks of tariffs, weather events and economic volatility.

According to the National Restaurant Association, menu prices rose 0.4% in February, against a 0.2% increase in food prices, adding to a 3.7% increase over the past year. In some cases, it's unavoidable but there are options to consider and explore in advance.

For many it means switching out products for a new manufacturer. But that can be a tough decision to make, especially for specialty menu items. The very things many restaurants are known for and helps keep customers coming back.

That's the situation Mr. Brew's Taphouse faced. A 12-unit franchise with locations in Wisconsin, Kansas, Kentucky, Arizona, and Tennessee, Mr. Brews prides itself on excellent craft beer and gourmet burgers made with freshly ground meat. That freshly ground meat is topped by soft brioche buns which is a crucial ingredient in a good-tasting burger. And while saving



Chelsea Perrault

From food products to disposables, operators are having to dig in and make some hard choices.

even a little can add up for a company that goes through roughly 4,000 cases of buns a year, any loss in quality and taste could render those savings moot. So any solution couldn't be based on price alone.

Understanding that changing anything on a menu, including prices, needs to be done thoughtfully and methodically, for those considering making a modification, particularly to one of their specialty items, there's a few things to consider in advance.

Be willing to consider a change

This may be the hardest part and justifiably so. It's one thing to switch out where you get your napkins or the lime wedges you use behind the bar. It's a much bigger decision to change a signature ingredient or menu item. But it's always a good idea, irrespective of the current climate, to at least consider alternatives that may be available. Especially if they can be found at a better price.

Consider all the pricing variables

Pricing for restaurant items goes far beyond simply the amount of dollars and sense it costs to buy a case. Are there additional savings that can be found by purchasing a specific volume? Would you find even more savings by

See **MENU CHANGE** page 11

3Natives continues expansion with six new cafes

Fresh from impressive 2024 growth, the healthy lifestyle franchise will expand in Florida and Pennsylvania in 2025.

Tequesta, FL – [3Natives Acai and Juicery](#), where health-conscious consumers go to enjoy freshly prepared and healthy bowls, smoothies, salads and wraps made with sustainably produced ingredients, is celebrating remarkable 2024 success that positions the franchise brand for even more expansion in 2025. The brand achieved 40 percent store growth, adding 13 locations and breaking into three new markets, while launching new technology and operational efficiencies last year. For Q1 this year, the brand reports 27.9% systemwide sales growth over the same quarter last year. Now, the company expects to open another six locations this year, including its 50th, and one in a new state, as well as introduce menu innovations to continue to build a powerful presence in the healthy fast-casual dining space.

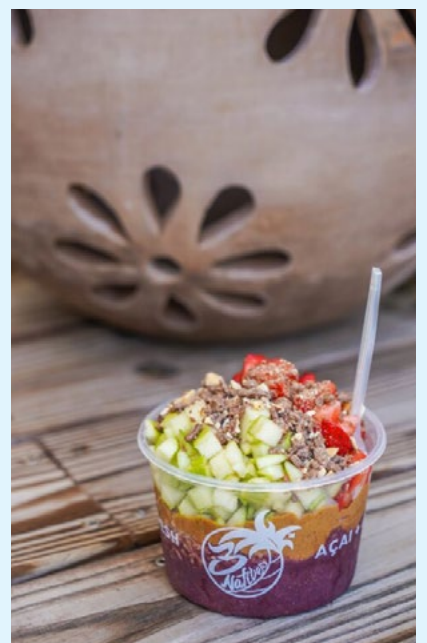
"We're proud of the success achieved in 2024 and already in Q1 this year by our franchise teams, and



we're looking forward to welcoming new owners to help us elevate the brand even more," said Anthony Bambino, founder and CEO of 3Natives. "As we continue to expand into new markets, we are looking to attract potential

franchisees who are passionate about offering a fresh and delicious product line to those living a healthy lifestyle."

Bambino founded the healthy living café concept in 2013. The brand specializes in acai bowls and juices made with



fresh, never-frozen fruit, along with salads, hot and cold wraps, smoothies and other healthy favorites. Most selections are ready for guests in under two minutes.

See **3NATIVES** page 12



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Appell Pie

What to expect from tariffs

Howard Appell ♦ Today's Restaurant Publisher

Tariffs can have several important effects on the restaurant industry, depending on which goods are impacted. Here's a breakdown:

1. Increased Food Costs

If tariffs are placed on imported food products (like seafood, beef, produce, or specialty items such as olive oil or wine), restaurants must pay more for these ingredients.

Higher ingredient costs often lead to menu price increases, which can discourage price-sensitive customers.

2. Supply Chain Disruptions

Tariffs can complicate sourcing, especially for restaurants that rely on specific international goods (e.g., Italian cheeses, French wines, Mexican avocados).

This could force restaurants to find new suppliers, adjust menus, or face occasional ingredient shortages.

3. Reduced Profit Margins

Independent restaurants, which often operate on thin profit margins (3-5%), may struggle more than large chains to absorb new costs.

Some businesses may choose to cut costs elsewhere (reducing staff, trimming marketing budgets, etc.) to stay profitable.

4. Menu Changes and Innovation

Some restaurants respond by adapting menus to focus more on locally sourced or tariff-free ingredients.

This can lead to more "farm-to-table" concepts and greater use of domestic suppliers, potentially creating new culinary trends.

5. Impact on Equipment and Supplies

Tariffs aren't limited to food. If kitchen equipment, furniture, or packaging materials from countries like China are taxed, restaurants could face higher startup and maintenance costs.

6. Customer Behavior Changes

If tariffs lead to broader inflation and higher living costs, customers might dine out less often or spend less per visit.

Budget-conscious dining options, promotions, and loyalty programs

become even more important to attract customers.

What you should do to offset the effects of the tariffs

Experts agree that there are some steps can be taken:

- ♦ Reduce the items on your menu, especially those with ingredients that are imported.
- ♦ Use locally grown produce and protein when available
- ♦ Create seasonal menus using available products
- ♦ Advertise, advertise, advertise
- ♦ Create special events promotions
- ♦ Listen to your customers ideas by creating suggestion cards for each table or create a suggestion landing page on your website.
- ♦ Speak with experts who have proven methods of creating traffic in restaurants. Like the Birthday Club that promotes birthday celebrations at your restaurant. www.jointhebirthdayclub.com.
- ♦ Increase catering and delivery options
- ♦ Use a third party buying service like Strategic Supply Chain Partners to reduce costs. www.ssc.partners.com
- ♦ Make your customers feel special with loyalty programs and going out of the normal to create a welcoming atmosphere.

Maybe the most important thing to remember is that these tariff conditions are not long lasting so keep your head in the important aspects of running your business. Be flexible, be involved and be patient. Mom always told me that the only constant in life is change and she was right.

In short: Tariffs can raise costs, create supply chain issues, and pressure profit margins — but they can also force innovation and a shift to local sourcing. The level of impact depends on how dependent a restaurant is on imported goods and how flexible it can be in adjusting its operations.

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Important new products, corporate news and industry events

Restaurants Recently Closed

Downtown Pourhouse located at 20 S Orange Ave in Orlando has just closed after 15 years of business. Their sister concept is Dapper Duck, which will continue to operate.

Annie's Bait & Tackle, which was located at 4334 127th St. West in Cortez, has closed. They were a staple on the Intracoastal Waterway in the historic fishing village of Cortez, serving food and drinks along with their bait shop. Bruce Shearer has been the owner since 1995. Manatee County has plans for a new marina for that location.

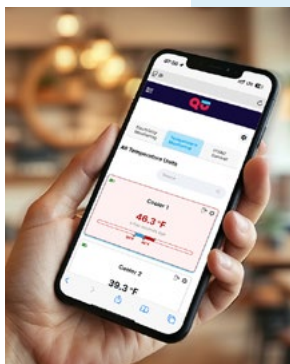
In Naples, **Lamoraga Restaurant** has permanently closed its doors, after being open since 2014. It was located at 3936 Tamiami Trail.

Silver Springs Diner, 5300 E Silver Springs Blvd in Silver Springs has closed.

Ragtime, located 207 Atlantic Ave, in Atlantic Beach, which was a Seafood Restaurant & Tavern has closed after 25 years of business. From their Website: "An Atlantic Beach, Florida favorite for over 25 years, Ragtime Tavern has earned numerous accolades for our creative cuisine, expertly handcrafted



The **Americas Food & Beverage Show and FH LATAM** have joined forces in 2025 to redefine the culinary landscape, promoting international business relationships through a platform which presents the best solutions for food and beverage preparation. The Show will be held this year September 10-12 at the Miami Beach Convention Center. Visit www.americasfoodandbeverage.com for all details.



beers, outstanding service, and lively atmosphere." No reason for the closure is known at this time.

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Qu, a leader in unified commerce for enterprise restaurants, unveiled a

first-of-its-kind Smart Kitchen solution at the Restaurant Leadership Conference: Qu is a fully integrated Energy and Equipment Intelligence system leveraging patented technology

around IoT sensors and edge computing. Built on Qu's powerful data-first platform, the new capabilities feature real-time equipment monitoring, energy optimization and predictive maintenance — creating one of the industry's most advanced and comprehensive smart kitchen platforms — designed to give operators greater visibility, control and cost savings across back-of-house operations at scale. This launch comes at a critical time for restaurants facing rising

operating costs. Repair and maintenance expenses have climbed 31% since 2019 (2025 State of Repairs Report, 86 Repairs), while energy now consumes nearly 6% of average restaurant operating costs, according to The Carbon Trust. Equipment downtime alone costs the industry an estimated \$46 billion annually (2022 State of Repairs Report, 86 Repairs). "Restaurants are facing an operational tipping point," said Amir Hudda, CEO of Qu.

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 With 17 million birthday diners actively looking for the perfect place



to celebrate, **The Birthday CLUB** is helping Florida restaurants boost traffic, increase average tickets, and maximize birthday-driven revenue. Founded by **Dyson Barnett**, "The Birthday CLUB is a turn-key marketing and gifting platform that connects restaurants with local birthday diners through our massive list of birthday diners, personalized birthday mailers, VIP memberships, and prepaid dining experiences." "Birthdays are a billion-dollar opportunity for

See **WHAT'S GOING ON** page 6

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Restaurant forecast: Crafting success through strategic risk management

Kim Gore ♦ Today's Restaurant Contributor

As 2025 unfolds, the restaurant and hospitality industry stands at a pivotal crossroads. After years of navigating pandemic-driven disruptions, the sector is recovering with renewed optimism. However, fresh challenges—ranging from economic uncertainties to labor shortages—underscore the critical need for robust risk management strategies to secure future success.

While the resurgence of corporate

travel may help counterbalance a projected dip in leisure spending, the hospitality sector must address significant economic and operational challenges. A forward-looking approach will be vital for thriving in this dynamic landscape.

Addressing profitability hurdles

In 2024, U.S. restaurants achieved a record-breaking **\$1.1 trillion** in sales, highlighting the industry's resilience.

This growth was bolstered by economic improvement, reduced inflation and stabilized interest rates. Yet, obstacles remain on the horizon.

In 2025, tightening consumer budgets due to rising credit card debt—reaching **\$1.14 trillion** in 2024—may limit discretionary dining expenditures.

Labor shortages also persist, pushing wages higher. By mid-2024, 82% of food and beverage operators were still actively recruiting, with chefs and cooks accounting for **30% of open roles**. Outsourcing high-risk tasks like delivery services can mitigate rising auto insurance premiums, which are projected to increase in 2025.

Given these pressures, proactive operational adjustments and strong risk management practices will be essential for maintaining profitability in 2025 and beyond.

Solving labor challenges through flexibility and support

Labor shortages remain a persistent issue, but solutions are evolving. Competitive pay is no longer sufficient; fostering a positive work environment that focuses on worker well-being is critical.

Toxic workplace cultures and poor management contribute significantly to employee turnover, with **37% of restaurant workers** citing inadequate management as a key reason for leaving.

Investing in leadership training and workplace harmony initiatives can address these issues. Anti-violence and de-escalation training are increasingly important due to workplace aggression.

Flexibility also plays a significant role in job satisfaction. Over half of hotels now offer **flexible scheduling**, and restaurants are beginning to follow suit. Personalized benefits, such as childcare support and mental health programs, can further enhance employee retention and satisfaction.

Building resilience through risk management

Economic and environmental uncertainties will continue to challenge restaurant operators in 2025, especially in disaster-prone areas like Florida.

Inflation-driven cost increases for food, utilities and supplies, combined with regulatory changes and climate disruptions, demand a focus on enterprise risk management (ERM).

Restaurants must integrate risk management with HR and insurance strategies to remain resilient. Proactive measures—such as regular facility maintenance and robust safety practices—can enhance insurability and financial stability. Investments in hurricane-resistant structures or water-detection systems showcase a commitment to risk reduction, making businesses more appealing to insurers.

Technology: Opportunity & risk

Technological advances are also transforming the restaurant industry, offering tools to boost efficiency, drive sales and enhance the customer experience. Self-ordering kiosks have gained traction, while AI personalizes guest interactions, manages reviews and encourages repeat visits.

However, these innovations bring cybersecurity risks. Tools like QR codes, while convenient, are vulnerable to exploitation by cybercriminals. In 2023, the average cost of a hospitality-related data breach rose 14% to **\$3.36 million**. Restaurants must prioritize cybersecurity measures and work with brokers to ensure their policies address these evolving threats.

Key strategies for restaurants in 2025

To navigate the complexities of 2025, restaurants should focus on these actionable steps:

Enhance management training: Equip leaders with tools to create a positive workplace culture. Address workplace aggression and harassment to boost morale and retention.

Engage the workforce: Tailor benefits strategies to employee needs. Focused efforts on employee satisfaction can lower turnover and recruitment expenses.

Fortify cybersecurity: Work with brokers to identify vulnerabilities

See **SUCCESS** page 10

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Broward Nelson Fountain Service: A generational story

Broward Nelson provides beverages gases, installs soda equipment and water purification systems to thousands of restaurants, bars and nightclubs across south Florida. Broward Nelson's CO2 helps carbonate soft drinks as well as power draft beer systems. Broward Nelson is a 3rd generation company. Started by Brandon & Scott's grandfather, purchased by their fathers, and then passed down to them.

1st Generation: Mel & Al

Broward Nelson Fountain Service really started, as most Great things get started, with two women. Mel Spencer was stricken with Tuberculosis and was admitted to the Deborah Sanitorium for multiple years. Through their wives, Yola and Rhoda's, fund-raising efforts towards this cause, Mel Spencer and Al Roseman also became acquainted. Mel, a restaurateur in New York City and Al, a stalwart, in the CO2 Business.

Together they decided to leave New York, move to Hollywood, FL & go into business. Mel & Al came down in the summer of 1970, and their families soon followed that fall. Lee, 18 years old at the time, enrolled at the University of Miami, and Bruce, was just starting high school.

While the 2nd generation patriarchs



were being educated, Mel & Al got to work, purchasing Broward Fountain Service, a 300 customer, 3 truck operation selling and distributing CO2 and soda equipment. In 1972 Broward Fountain Service purchased Nelson Carbonic and Broward Nelson Fountain Service was aptly named.

Mel & Al ran a tight ship. Their most notorious trait came with their delivery fleet. The motto was "Drive 'em until the wheels fall off". Bungee cords holding doors together, no A/C, and steel bumpers sparking as they bounced off the road were all too commonplace in those formative years.

2nd Generation: The Lee & Bruce Years

Once Lee joined BNFS after graduating from University of Miami, Mel & Al gave him the "grunt work" to start. Lee started out scraping, painting and filling cylinders. After a few months, Lee decided he needed to get out of the warehouse and start making some deliveries. Around this time, BNFS was servicing around 400 customers on the east coast of Florida from Boca Raton to Florida City.

In the mid 1970's, Mel & Al started learning everything they could about carbonators, pumps and how a soda

system worked. The next logical step was selling bar guns and other fountain equipment to their current customers, making BNFS a one stop shop for all of south Florida's beverage needs.

As the business grew, Lee stopped making deliveries and moved into an office role. Wanting to learn everything he could, he started coming in early & staying late to count out trucks, collect cash from drivers, write up calls and make sure deliveries were on time & accurate. Lee stated "He worked half days for years, from 5:30 am to 5:30 pm."

Bruce, following in Lee's footsteps joined BNFS after graduating from University of Florida in 1976, doing the same things Lee did back in '74: scrape, paint, fill, repeat.... He then moved on to deliveries and installations with Bill Regan and the two of them rode together for years learning as they went, installing soda systems and CO2 systems. Bruce ended up reporting to work at the Palm Beach location in 1984 where he remained until 1994, when the entire operation was moved to Fort Lauderdale.

By the mid 1980's, BNFS had grown to 20 drivers in the south Florida area servicing around 1500 customers all east of US 27. As stated successful businesses have a businessman, and a mechanical guy. Lee understood the business side of

See **BROWARD NELSON** page 12

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What's Going On from page 3

restaurants, yet most don't have a system to capture this market", said Barnett. "TBC ensures restaurants are top-of-mind when customers plan their celebrations." To learn more, call Dyson at 352.565.4307 or visit jointhebirthdayclub.com.



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Graeter's Ice Cream, America's oldest family-owned and operated craft ice cream maker, and **New Riff Distilling**, a Kentucky-based distillery known for its award-winning bourbon, have announced their first-ever collaboration: Graeter's Bourbon Ball Ice Cream. Inspired by the classic Kentucky confection, this indulgent new flavor is now available to order for nationwide shipping at Graeters.com. "We are thrilled to collaborate with New Riff Distilling to create a flavor that celebrates two iconic treats: Kentucky Bourbon and ice cream," said Richard Graeter, fourth-generation president and CEO, Graeter's. "Working with the team at New Riff to taste and select a special Single Barrel, our team has created the perfect fusion of our hand-crafted process and New Riff's exceptional distilling, delivering a unique experience that honors the rich flavors of Kentucky." For detailed info, visit Graeters.com.



Gourmet Impressions, LLC has developed an innovative kitchen tool that enables users to imprint custom messages, logos, and designs onto edible surfaces. The **Gourmet Impressions Custom Message Food Press** is designed to enhance food presentation across various settings, professional restaurants and large-scale events. This patented tool is lightweight and constructed from three plastic components, including a snap-off pegboard letter system. Its cost-effective design makes it suitable for mass production and widespread distribution. The press allows for personalization in the culinary industry, providing opportunities for branding, creative plating, and unique food displays. "The ability to personalize food in this way opens up new possibilities for chefs, restaurateurs, and food brands," said Richard Errera, CEO of **Gourmet Impressions, LLC**. "From team logos on pizzas to celebratory messages on pastries, this tool brings a new dimension to food presentation." Online at www.impressfood.com.



In Clermont, plans for the commercial part of the redevelopment of the **Lumberyard District** include, **The Sawmill**, a two-story open-air entertainment center which will feature **music, food, drinks and entertainment**. The 12-acre site, the location of a lumber mill, is located along Lake Minneola at 1111 Carroll Street.



Epicurean Butter, maker of premium flavored butter. This exciting collaboration aims to advance Epicurean Butter's presence across retail and foodservice segments – two industries where FoodMix's deep history and expertise are instrumental in driving brand awareness and engagement.

Epicurean Butter is a brand-favorite thanks to its chef-created flavors that enhance dishes while simplifying the cooking process. Through the partnership with FoodMix, Epicurean Butter is reinforcing its commitment to expanding its retail footprint and strengthening its foodservice offerings. "As a trusted culinary partner to professional chefs and home cooks alike, we are thrilled to work with FoodMix to share our passion for making gourmet easier," said Abbey Arellano, brand manager at Epicurean Butter. www.Epicureanbutter.com.



Hobart has introduced its new PWN Series Pot, Pan and Utensil Commercial Dishwasher, designed to wash a high volume of prep ware while saving on labor, water and chemicals for foodservice operations. The PWN features NSF pot and pan rating for 2, 4, & 6-minute cycles designed to clean the toughest food soils off a variety of prep ware. With the ability to accommodate up to 10, 12, or 20 sheet pans per cycle, this high-capacity prep washer ensures foodsoilremovalinanykitchen. The PWN

See **WHAT'S GOING ON** page 12

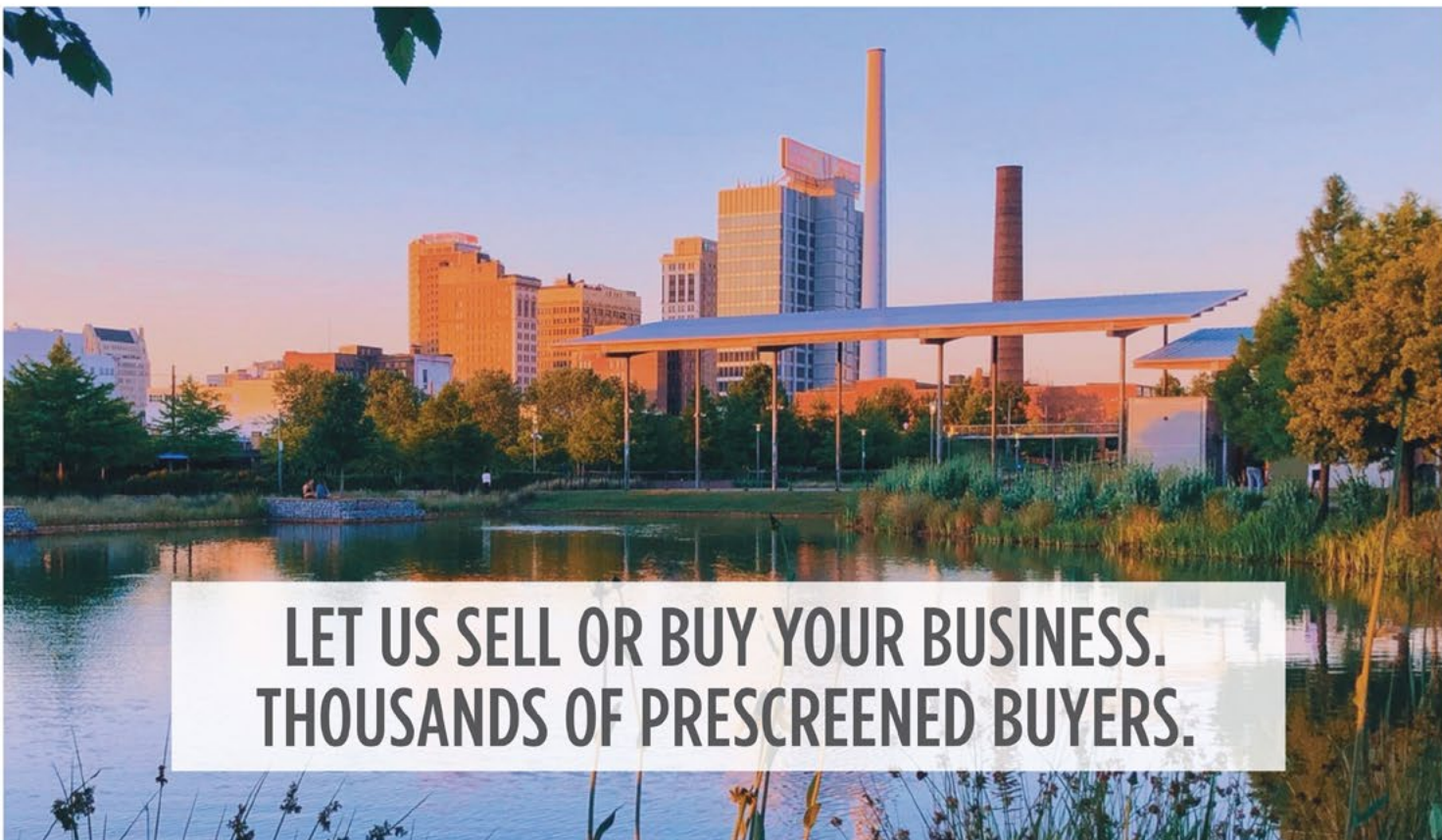
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 There's a new vending machine that's transforming nachos as you know it. **Gold Medal has launched Nachos Now**. This revolutionary nacho vending machine delivers warm, crispy chips and creamy, melty cheese at the push of a button. Built for convenience, Nachos Now provides the ultimate customer experience. Customers can dispense nacho chips and cheese at a user-friendly self-serve station. "Nachos Now is about solving problems for operators like speed of service, staffing limitations, and customer satisfaction. Nachos Now isn't just a piece of equipment, it's a game-changer for your business," says Gold Medal president, Adam Browning. Visit www.gmpopcorn.com.



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FoodMix Marketing Communications, an independent full-service food and beverage branding agency, has announced its partnership with



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Brand first: Building a restaurant identity that lasts

Paul Segreto

The clinking of glasses, the hum of conversation, and the aroma of sizzling food drifting from open doors—it is the soundtrack of Main Street, where a dozen restaurants line the same block, each vying for the attention of the same foot traffic. Diners stroll past, scrolling through reviews and peeking at menus, making snap judgments before even stepping inside. In this hyper-competitive space, being good is not enough. Blending in guarantees obscurity. Standing out requires intention, strategy, and above all, clarity in who you are and what experience you offer. The restaurants that win are those that create a complete identity—one that reaches beyond cuisine and into the psyche of the guest.

At the core of this strategy is brand identity, the compass that guides everything else. It is not about being flashy or trendy for the sake of attention. It is about being unmistakably you. Whether the concept is driven by modern wellness or rooted in family tradition, that personality must be expressed across every customer interaction. A clear, compelling concept might be a neighborhood farm-to-table bistro focused on seasonality, or a vibrant taqueria that blends street food energy with upscale presentation. Whatever



Paul Segreto

Culinary innovation plays a powerful role in making sure your restaurant is more than just a backdrop for social activity.

the identity, it must be cohesive—from the tone of the social media captions to the uniforms worn by staff. Consistency builds familiarity. Familiarity builds trust. And trust earns repeat business.

Authenticity makes a concept believable. When the brand story is real—when a family recipe anchors the menu, or the chef's heritage informs the cooking style—guests can feel it. That connection adds weight to every dish served and every conversation had inside the restaurant. Guests are not just eating a meal; they are part of something bigger. It becomes a place they tell their friends about, a location that lives in their memory, and a regular stop on their weekly routine.

Culinary innovation plays a powerful role in making sure your restaurant is more than just a backdrop for social activity. Dishes must stand out, not just for flavor, but for creativity and presentation. This does not mean overcomplicating the menu. It means offering things diners cannot get elsewhere—a fusion of global influences, an unexpected ingredient pairing, a signature item that defines your restaurant's identity. If you removed your logo from the plate, would someone still know where the food came from? That should be the goal. Special attention should be given to seasonal offerings that reflect the time of year and local events. These

limited-time features create anticipation and keep the regular experience from becoming stale.

The chef's involvement can elevate everything. A chef who steps into the dining room to talk about the inspiration behind a dish or the process of sourcing a rare ingredient adds layers to the experience. Food becomes storytelling. Storytelling becomes differentiation. It humanizes the brand and strengthens the relationship with guests. This is especially powerful in neighborhoods where many competitors may offer similar dishes or price points. Involving the chef in social media videos, menu notes, or even casual meet-and-greets can further reinforce that connection.

Environment shapes perception. Guests often decide whether they will return based on how a space makes them feel, not just what they ate. Comfortable seating, acoustics that support conversation, natural light, and thoughtful color schemes are not superficial details—they are part of the emotional architecture of your brand. Music should enhance mood, not compete with it. Artwork should reflect the story you are telling. Cleanliness, scent, layout—it all speaks. Restaurants should be designed not only for dining

See **BRAND FIRST** page 14

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Montreal, Canada

From [Association Restauration Québec - ARQ's Page](#)

Finance Minister Eric Girard tabled Quebec's budget for the 2025-2026 fiscal year yesterday in the National Assembly. While it had recently announced that many tax credits dedicated to businesses would be cut, the ARQ is pleased to see that its preliminary work in pre-budget consultations has borne fruit, since the tax credit relating to the declaration of tips has escaped the cut. In its requests, the Association stressed that its maintenance was essential to the good economic health of our industry. The minister has therefore listened to him.

An essential Tax Credit:

It should be remembered that this tax credit represents \$109 million reimbursed to restaurant owners per year. It compensates, up to 75%, for the part of social security contributions that employers have to pay on

tips declared by staff. As Quebec is the only province to consider tipping as a salary, it is a significant financial burden for business owners, over which they have no control, as it can vary according to the generosity of customers.

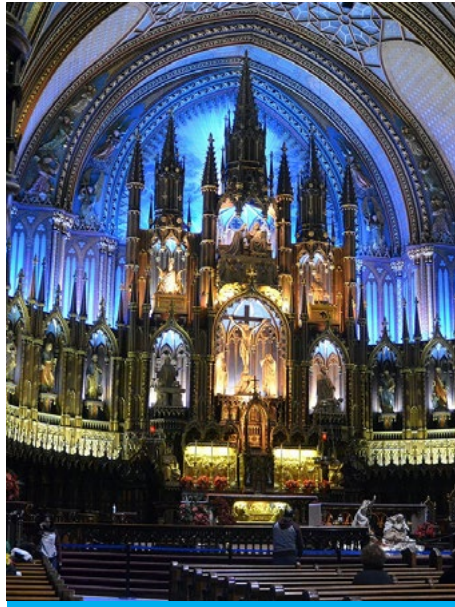


◆◆◆◆
◆ **SKYBIRD Fresh Asian Grill**, North America's newest fast-casual concept serving chef-inspired bowls and banh mi, is expanding throughout Montreal. A new location has opened at 14845 Pierrefonds



Bvd. Earlier this year, the fresh Asian grill concept opened its newest site in Montreal's Mile End at 248 Jean-Talon West. Co-owner is Andrew Infantino. Co-owner and restaurateur Rio Infantino, wants to open

more locations in the Montreal area and then plans to bring the concept to the U.S. For all information visit skybirdgrill.com.



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Still in its original location and using its original recipe and old-world standard of excellence, Schwartz's was founded in 1928 by Reuben Schwartz, a Jewish immigrant from Romania. Today, the deli is an integral part of the Plateau framework and surrounded by funky storefronts and trendy boutiques. Its trademark simplistic and communal style has been a haven for locals and tourists alike winter, spring, summer and fall, all seeking that perfectly unique experience.

Schwartz's prepares smoked meat the old-fashioned way, on location, using a secret blend of locally produced fine herbs and spices, marinated for 10 days; smoked overnight, steamed all day; and sliced "à la minute" by hand with love.

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Schwartz's Deli



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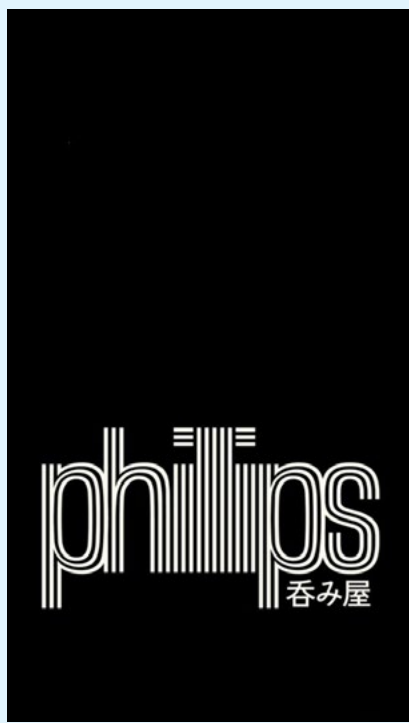
RESTAURANT CITY MONTREAL

spotlight: deli — Schwartz's Deli

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3 Pierre 1 Feu, a tribute to ancestral cuisine, Afro-Caribbean spirit, and Haitian roots with a touch of Texas BBQ, is preparing to debut in Montreal at 7070 Avenue Henri-Julien. This is the latest from Chef Paul Toussaint and pitmaster Damien Brockway. 3 Pierre 1 Feu will open in 2025, and it will be located within Jean-Talon Market. Brockway, from Austin, Texas, is the visionary behind Distant Relatives, where he blends African diasporic flavors with BBQ mastery. Recognized with the Michelin Guide Bib

Gourmand Award in 2024 and many other accolades, Damien's culinary journey is rooted in history and culture. "Chef Paul Toussaint, already at the head of several must-see restaurants in Montreal, adds a 5th establishment to its portfolio with 3 Pierre 1 Feu," according to the company's Instagram account.



◆◆◆◆ **Phillips Bar** offering refined Japanese dining, has opened late March in downtown Montreal. "Hand Rolls & Cocktail Bar par Olivier Vigneault & Antonio Park" The bar features a casual atmosphere and a menu highlighting makis and hand rolls, prepared in front of guests. Renowned chefs Antonio Park, Olivier Vigneault, and S'Arto Chartier-Otis have combined their expertise to create a menu inspired by the traditions of Japanese dining. Phillips Bar is located at 1170 place du Frere Andre, Montreal.



◆◆◆◆ **Today's Restaurant** invites you to submit your information for the What's Going On column. Just e-mail your company, product or event information to terri@trnusa.com and try to keep the word count around 100 words (or less). It's a great way to get free publicity for your company product, service or upcoming events!

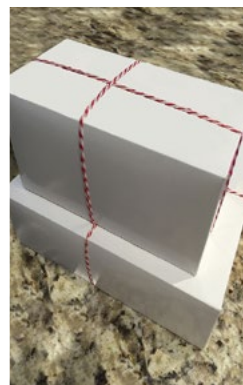


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Stampede Culinary Partners' survey signals growing food safety expectations

Bridgeview, IL - [Stampede Culinary Partners](#), a premier provider of innovative culinary solutions to the nation's leading foodservice and retail brands, released the findings of its comprehensive Food Safety Survey 2025. The extensive study, which surveyed over 6,200 consumers nationwide, underscores Stampede's continued leadership in food safety and highlights the critical role consumer trust plays in the foodservice and retail industries, with 93% of respondents indicating that food safety is a high priority for their families and nearly 60% reporting having experienced food-related illnesses in the past.

Key findings from Stampede's study reveal that 92% of consumers prioritize food safety when selecting restaurants or grocery items, reflecting an all-time high level of consumer awareness and concern. Additionally, the study showed that over 85% of respondents indicated a willingness to pay more for products clearly marked with enhanced food safety measures.

"Food safety remains paramount in the minds of today's consumers," said Brock Furlong, CEO of Stampede Culinary Partners. "Our study provides valuable insights into consumer expectations and affirms our commitment to exceeding industry standards through innovations like our proprietary Safety Lock Advantage program."

Stampede's Safety Lock Advantage program is a comprehensive approach to food safety, combining advanced technology, rigorous process controls, and continuous monitoring to ensure product integrity from production to

the point of purchase. This program aligns seamlessly with consumer expectations identified in the survey, where transparency and robust safety measures significantly influenced purchasing decisions.

"By proactively addressing food safety, we not only enhance consumer trust but also strengthen our relationships with partners across foodservice, retail, and distribution," continues Brock. "Our Safety Lock Advantage program exemplifies our dedication to safeguarding our partners' brands and the consumers they serve."

The survey also highlighted emerging trends, such as increased consumer scrutiny of ingredient sourcing, preparation processes, and sustainability practices, demonstrating a clear

shift towards informed and conscious consumption.

For more details on Stampede's Food Safety Survey 2025 visit <https://discover.stampedeculinarypartners.com/food-safety-report/>.



About Stampede Culinary Partners: Stampede Culinary Partners is an innovative culinary solutions provider serving America's top restaurant chains, leading retail brands, and food distributors. With a commitment to culinary excellence, quality, and food safety, Stampede proudly serves over 500 leading food-service brands, over 40,000 restaurants, over 60,000 retail stores, and 2,000-plus distributors nationwide. For over 30 years, Stampede has set the standard in culinary innovation and operational excellence. Headquartered in Bridgeview, Illinois, Stampede boasts nearly 530,000 sq. ft. of production and innovation facilities across Illinois, New Mexico, Georgia, and Ontario, which annually produce, store, and distribute 300 million pounds of retail and menu products including chicken, beef, turkey, pork, vegetables, prepared meals, and alternative proteins. Stampede consistently achieves the highest level of awards in its safety audits and certifications, including top scores from BRCGS, which are either accepted or required by 70% of the top 10 global retailers. Find them online at Stampedeculinarypartners.com.

Success from pg. 4

before adopting new technologies. Ensure cyber insurance aligns with industry-specific risks.

Prioritize infrastructure investments: Regular maintenance protects your property, reduces costs and strengthens your risk profile with insurers.

Adopt comprehensive risk management: Update policies to reflect current challenges. Explore alternative solutions, such as captives, to balance costs and coverage.

Securing a stronger future

The restaurant industry has demonstrated remarkable adaptability in the face of adversity. By embracing innovation, supporting their workforce and integrating risk management strategies, businesses can build a foundation for long-term success.

In 2025, success will require more than great food—it will demand a resilient, forward-thinking operation capable of weathering any challenge. **TR**

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

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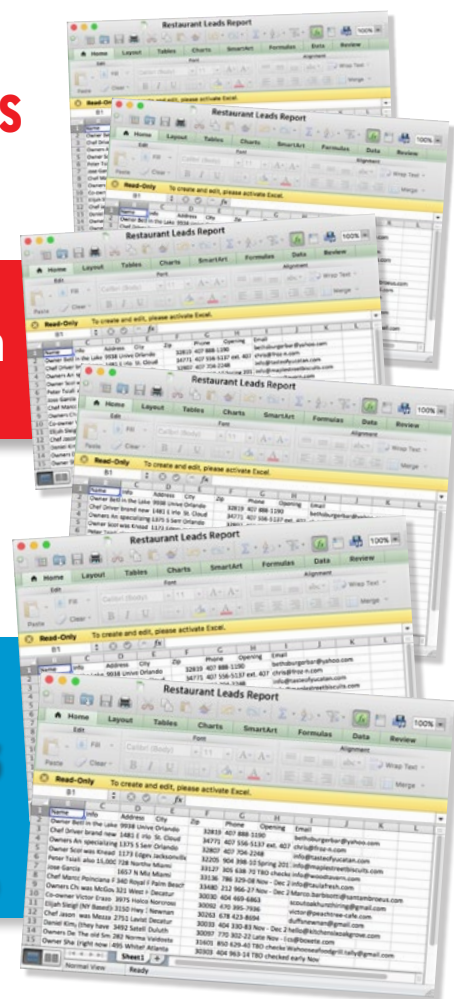
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Menu Change from page 1

partnering with a company that negotiates even better volume pricing based on the purchasing power of multiple brands? What kinds of rebates are available to you?

In the case of Mr. Brew's Taphouse, the decision to change their brioche bun resulted in a savings of roughly \$9,000 a year.

Make sure there's enough to go around

It's one thing to know that the product is available from your distributor. It's another to confirm that they can get the amount of product you need from the manufacturer to ensure there are no hiccups in the supply chain. This is especially important today. Most operators have long-time relationships with distributors and have an idea of what to expect. So due diligence in advance of any change needs to take place.

It's about what goes on the plate

Mr. Brew's Taphouse had more than 50 options for new brioche buns when we worked with them on this project. We helped them narrow down to a handful

of choices prior to the next step which is imperative. A taste test with as many stakeholders as possible. Try it out with several chefs at multiple locations and encourage them to be brutally honest with their opinion. Having buy-in from the back of house is so important for the change to be effective. If there's negative reactions, despite it possibly making the best financial sense, listen to those opinions as they'll probably match those of your guests.

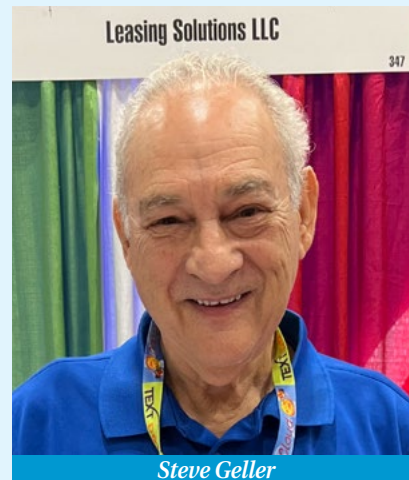
Clearly, we're facing a great deal of volatility in our industry right now. From food products to disposables, operators are having to dig in and make some hard choices. But hard choices shouldn't be driven by panic or uncertainty. And with specialty items that may set operators apart, this is even more crucial.

In the case of Mr. Brew's Taphouse, the decision to change their brioche bun resulted in a savings of roughly \$9,000 a year. That alone might not be a make-or-break number. But when that same strategy was folded into other purchases their cumulative savings was \$250,000 a year. So when approaching purchasing issues systematically, with a clear set of goals and parameters, you'll be in a much better position to make the decisions that work best for both you and your guests. **TR**

About the author: Chelsea Perrault is the Senior Client Manager, Channel Sales for the Waltham, MA-based Consolidated Concepts. As a Buyers Edge Platform brand, they optimize the foodservice supply chain and provide savings and solutions for multi-unit restaurants and their partners. <https://consolidatedconcepts.net>.

2025 AACFB President's award recipient: Steve Geller

Each year the AACFB President's Award is presented to an individual or individuals who have gone above and beyond to support the association and the commercial finance industry.



Steve has consistently demonstrated a deep commitment to the organization's mission.

Last week, at this year's AACFB Annual Conference in Las Vegas, President, Roderick Knoll, CLFP, presented the 2025 AACFB President's Award to **Steve Geller, CLFP** with Leasing Solutions, recognizing his outstanding contributions to the association and the commercial finance industry.

A dedicated AACFB member for over 25 years, Steve has consistently demonstrated a deep commitment to the organization's mission. He has served on numerous committees, generously sharing his time, knowledge, and leadership to help move the association forward. A familiar and friendly face at our annual conferences and Expos, Steve's presence has helped shape the collaborative and welcoming AACFB community.

Steve's service to the AACFB, CLFP Foundation, and numerous other industry organizations exemplifies exceptional service, leadership, and dedication to the industry. He truly embodies the qualities this award was intended to recognize.

"Please join us in congratulating Steve on this well-deserved recognition. We look forward to seeing Steve at the next AACFB meeting!" **TR**

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Broward Nelson from page 5

the operation as Bruce used his skills to get things done, work with drivers and grow the customer base.

In 1986, Mel and Al retired from BNFS and Lee & Bruce purchased the business.

*In 2015
Brandon & Scott
purchased the business
allowing Bruce & Lee
to ride happily into
the sunset.*

3rd Generation: The Scott & Brandon Years

Scott ventured up to Boston College after high school where he graduated with a political science degree in 2006. Scott had no plans of working for BNFS. He received an internship with Judge Leonard Fleet, also known as "Let 'em loose Lenny". That lasted about a week and Scott decided that this was not going to be his future. He called Bruce and was offered a job, at the bottom, following Lee & Bruce. Scrape, paint, fill, repeat (another common theme).

Brandon followed Scott up to Boston College where he graduated with a business degree in 2009. Lee said, "Brandon's


main goal in life was to work for Broward Nelson," "He had no intention of doing anything else." When he returned from Boston, he called Lee and was put to work. By now you can guess, scrape, paint, fill repeat, that lasted about 5 minutes.... Brandon was done with the warehouse and he started working his into deliveries and quickly made his way into the office, learning from Lee.

Between 2012 and 2015, Lee & Bruce started to back away from the day-to-day business. In 2015 Brandon & Scott purchased the business allowing Bruce & Lee to ride happily into the sunset.

Since that fateful transition, Broward Nelson has been on a steep upward trajectory. Market conditions, competitors losing focus on servicing their customers, and a strong Leadership, Admin, Sales and Operations teams have allowed them to grow exponentially.

Today BNFS operates out of 4 locations, servicing roughly 4500 Cylinder & Manifold customers, 1500 bulk customers and 300 Syrup customers from Orlando to Key Largo, many of which purchase all of the above. A Rockledge location was added in 2021, Ft Myers in 2023 and this year, Tampa.

"And we couldn't have done any of it without our Core Values," Lee stated. With the third generation comfortably in place, the future looks bright as Broward Nelson becomes not just south Florida's one stop shop, but all of Florida's beverage and CO2 provider.

Online at BrowardNelson.com. 

What's Going On from page 6

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in our brand and further strengthen our presence in Georgia and other markets we serve." ◆◆◆◆

Winston Foodservice has been honored with the A&W Supplier Award of Excellence for its outstanding performance and service in 2024.

Among approximately 35 equipment suppliers, Winston ranked among the top in overall satisfaction, based on evaluations from A&W Food Services of Canada Inc.

"This accomplishment serves as a testament to the dedication exhibited by the Winston team in your ongoing commitment to A&W Food Services of Canada Inc. over the years." said A&W's Thierry Giraud. Founded in 1956, A&W Canada has grown to over 1,050 locations, all



proudly Canadian-owned and operated. Known for timeless favorites like frosty A&W Root Beer™, fresh-cut Onion Rings, and their iconic Burger Family made with grass-fed beef raised without hormones or steroids, A&W continues to serve up quality and tradition. **TR** ◆◆◆◆

Father-son duo Scooter and Wil Harrington are expanding their relationship with [Huddle House](#) and bringing the iconic brand to **Soperton, GA**. The franchisees currently own and operate seven other Huddle House restaurants across South Georgia, including Eastman, Macon, Jeffersonville, Vidalia, and others. The Harringtons project a spring opening for Soperton. "We are thrilled to watch Scooter and Wil continue to build their Huddle House portfolio and welcome another location to a market they know so well," said [Peter Ortiz](#), Chief Development Officer for [Ascent Hospitality Management](#), parent company to Huddle House. "Their long-standing passion and dedication speak to their confidence

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3Natives from pg. 1

Today, 3Natives serves its clean cuisine in 45 locations nationwide. Last year's new openings included first-ever locations in Georgia, Arizona and New York – a major step in its nationwide expansion.

Five of the six new locations coming this year are in 3Natives' home state of Florida (Weston, Lantana, Vero Beach, Sarasota and Orlando), and the sixth will be in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, the first in that state. The brand is also kicking off 2025 with extended hours to capture new dayparts and menu innovations to appeal to a dessert-loving crowd. These sweet dishes are designed to expand 3Natives' appeal to customers seeking dessert options, making it a destination for both healthy meals and now healthy treats with a sweet spin:

Coco Breeze: A refreshing coconut-based bowl topped with granola, Nutella, strawberry, mango and coconut flakes.

Nutella Crunch: A decadent acai-based bowl featuring Nutella, granola, banana, strawberries and chocolate almonds. 

About 3Natives: Founded in 2013 by Anthony Bambino in Tequesta, Florida, 3Natives serves its healthy, delicious menu at 45 locations in Florida, Georgia, Oklahoma, New York and Arizona. 3Natives uses 100% organic and fair-trade acai, supporting a company that helps over 20,000 local family farmers in Brazil, protects over 2 million acres of rainforest and gives back 5% of the fruit's cost to the Brazilian community. The company is a leader in the healthy fast-casual space, offering a unique opportunity to tap into a rapidly growing market with a dynamic, innovative brand.

Classifieds

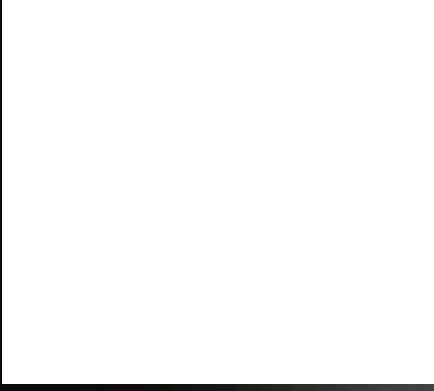
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but also for memories, photos, and comfort. The space is the first thing a guest experiences and the last thing they remember.

Service, though, is where loyalty is either won or lost. In high-density restaurant zones, the experience from the host stand to final check can determine whether a guest ever returns. The best food in the world will not make up for inattentive, robotic, or inconsistent service. Hospitality starts with hiring the right people—individuals who care, who notice, who remember. But it continues with culture. Staff must be trained not just in procedures but in values. They should know the story of the restaurant, the mission behind the concept, and how to deliver those ideas through their actions. Empower them to solve problems, personalize interactions, and act as ambassadors of the brand. A guest who feels genuinely seen and appreciated is not just a customer—they are an advocate.

Consistency matters. Service cannot fluctuate wildly between lunch and dinner, between weekdays and weekends. Systems must be in place to ensure uniform quality, and managers must lead with presence and accountability. Empowering staff with real-time feedback loops and regular team communication builds cohesion. From remembering a regular's preferred table to celebrating a birthday with a handwritten note, the little things make a big difference in a competitive space.

Operational efficiency supports the customer-facing experience. Smooth, coordinated back-of-house systems reduce wait times and elevate food quality. A breakdown in the kitchen becomes a disruption in the dining room. Restaurants must invest in tech solutions, training, and layout design to optimize flow.

Communication between front and back of house should be seamless. Quick ticket times and accurate orders are not optional—they are expected. And for off-premise dining, quality must never drop. Packaging, delivery timing, presentation, and temperature must reflect the same standards as dine-in. Your brand lives in every take-out container and delivery bag.

Marketing brings your message to the outside world. It is not about broadcasting promotions—it is about telling your story in a way that others want to share. Social media should reflect the energy and personality of the brand, not just act as a menu board. Behind-the-scenes content, staff spotlights, community shoutouts, and real-time interaction build loyalty. Encourage user-generated content. Feature it proudly. This turns your guests into your best marketers. Local events and collaborations with other businesses generate buzz and show your support for the surrounding community. Co-hosting pop-ups, participating in art walks or food festivals, and partnering with local producers deepens the roots of your business in the local economy.


Loyalty programs should not feel transactional. When done right, they feel like an invitation to be part of something exclusive. Think beyond the typical points system. Create VIP experiences. Offer surprise perks. Let regulars preview new menu items before they launch. Give your most loyal guests something to talk about—then listen to what they say in return.

Pricing requires constant evaluation. It is a balancing act between value perception and profitability. Menu engineering can help identify high-margin items worth promoting and low-performing dishes that may need revision or removal. Use data to guide decisions, but also pay attention to guest feedback. Pricing can communicate accessibility or exclusivity depending on how it is structured. Value can be found at any price point, as long as the experience feels worth it. Be transparent about sourcing and preparation methods when possible. Guests are more likely to accept higher prices when they understand what they are paying for.

Sustainability is no longer optional for restaurants seeking long-term relevance. Eco-conscious diners are looking for brands that align with their values. Reducing food waste, sourcing responsibly, eliminating single-use plastics, and composting are ways to operate with integrity. These efforts should be visible. Signage, menu notes, and digital content can highlight your commitment. Sustainability is not

just good for the planet—it is good for business when it is genuine and well communicated.

Adaptability keeps the concept fresh. Rotating menus tied to seasons or holidays offer reasons to return and reinforce a connection to time and place. Themed nights, pop-ups, collaborations, or temporary menu items create a sense of urgency and discovery. Restaurants that evolve while staying true to their core identity will always have something new to offer.

Ultimately, standing out in a crowded restaurant scene is about delivering an experience so defined, so consistent, and so emotionally resonant that guests cannot help but return—and bring others with them. It is about building a place that feels irreplaceable, not because it is perfect, but because it is personal. Every decision made—from the type of bread served to the lighting in the bathroom—either builds the brand or dilutes it. Attention to detail, clarity of vision, and a relentless commitment to hospitality are what separate the thriving from the forgotten. In a place where every restaurant is fighting for relevance, the ones that stand out are the ones that never stop crafting who they are and what they mean to their guests. 

About the Author: Paul R. Segreto is CEO & Founder of Acceler8Success. He specializes in Entrepreneurship Coaching, Management, Marketing & Development Consulting, Franchise, Business & Product Brokerage, Franchises, Restaurants & Service Businesses. You can reach Paul by phone or text at (832) 797-9851.

Today's Restaurant

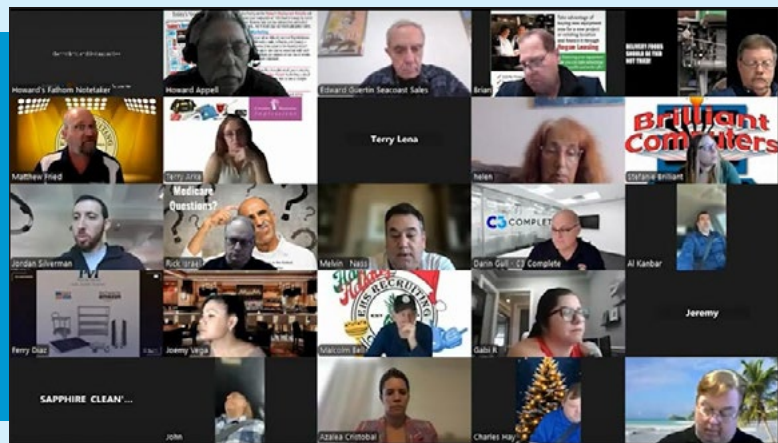
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Today's Restaurant

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CHAPTER 1 ♦ VIRTUAL MEETINGS ♦ FRIDAYS 11 AM

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