

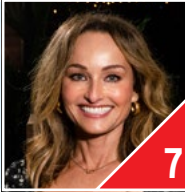
Today's Restaurant

THE FOODSERVICE INDUSTRY AUTHORITY

VOLUME 29

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2024 Pizza Tomorrow Summit & Florida Restaurant Show to highlight industry's top trends & opportunities

Orlando, FL - The Pizza Tomorrow Summit and Florida Restaurant Show return to Orlando's Orange County Convention Center on November 6-7, 2024. Co-located for the second consecutive year, these shows will feature nearly [300 exhibitors](#), offering attendees the latest innovations in food, beverage, kitchen equipment, and tech solutions. One admission gives pizzeria, restaurant, and foodservice professionals access to both shows. The Florida Restaurant Show is sponsored by the [Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association \(FRLA\)](#), and both events are produced by Restaurant Events, LLC. All attendees will have access to more

*The Pizza Tomorrow Summit and Florida Restaurant Show
Orange County Convention Center
November 6-7, 2024.*

than 40 hours of complimentary education plus engaging culinary demonstrations and competitions.

"Our two-day education program is designed to tackle the key challenges in today's pizzeria, restaurant and foodservice industry, from technology to sustainability," said Glenn Celentano, CEO of Restaurant Events, LLC. "We focus on practical strategies that attendees can implement immediately. This year, we've brought together top industry experts to provide real solutions. Our goal is to equip attendees with the tools they need to thrive and stay competitive."

While descriptions of the full lineup of sessions are available online at the

See **TWO SHOWS** page 4

Mountain Mike's expands with 10 Florida locations

Newport Beach, CA - Mountain Mike's Pizza, a leading family-style pizza chain for more than 45 years, known for its legendary crispy, curly pepperonis, 20-inch Mountain-sized pizzas and dough made fresh daily, announced development in Florida, establishing a coast-to-coast footprint and reinforcing the growing brand as a national pizza player. The 10-unit agreement will introduce 'Pizza the Way it Oughta Be!®' to the Sunshine State and add to the brand's rapid expansion activities across the country. The landmark deal was inked with multi-brand operators and first-time Mountain Mike's franchisees Sean Morrison, CEO of BizBox Restaurant Group and Ned Algeo, Founder of Multipli Capital. Locations are planned for Orlando, Tampa and Sarasota, with the first Florida restaurant expected to open next year.

"After nearly five decades of success and many milestones, the strong reputation we've established throughout the West is broadening to encompass other regions, and we're thrilled to bring Mountain Mike's



Pizza to Florida and complete our journey to being recognized as a coast-to-coast brand," said Jim Metevier, CEO of Mountain Mike's Pizza. "We expect Mountain Mike's to reach new heights in Florida's booming, entrepreneurial economy, and we are confident that new guests throughout the state will appreciate and enjoy our high-quality menu offerings, unmatched dine-in experience and community involvement."

Mountain Mike's makes delicious pizzas the way guests remember — handmade and with the freshest and finest ingredients.

Throughout Florida and beyond, the pizza segment is booming, as is the demand for Mountain Mike's mouth-watering pizzas and family-friendly

atmosphere. The brand continues to experience record sales, significant franchise momentum and new unit growth. In addition to the Sunshine State, Mountain Mike's is rapidly expanding throughout the U.S., including ongoing development in Arizona, California, Colorado, Oregon, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin. Mountain Mike's makes delicious pizzas the way guests remember — handmade and with the freshest and finest ingredients. From its legendary crispy, curly pepperoni, 100% whole milk mozzarella cheese and a variety of fan-favorite specialty pizzas, Mountain Mike's has something to satisfy every taste

"Our stellar brand reputation continues to be underpinned by exceptional unit economics and a menu that has won over pizza lovers for decades, yielding a confident and optimistic outlook that no summit is too high for Mountain Mike's Pizza," said Chris Britt and Ed St. Geme, Principal Owners of Mountain Mike's Pizza. "Our Florida development deal cements Mountain Mike's Pizza as a

See **MOUNTAIN MIKE'S** page 12

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Appell Pie

When is it best to advertise?

Howard Appell ♦ Today's Restaurant Publisher

Many business owners believe that when business is slow it's best to cut advertising and others believe when business is going great there is no need to advertise. Let's examine these ideas.

When business is slow

The goal of advertising during slow periods is to drive new demand, awareness, or position for future sales.

Advantages:

♦ **Less competition:** During slower periods, other businesses may reduce their ad spend, so you may face less competition, which can mean lower ad costs and more visibility.

♦ **Building pipeline:** Advertising during a lull can help build a pipeline for when demand picks up, positioning you as top-of-mind when customers are ready to buy.

♦ **Customer retention and loyalty:** Use this time to engage existing customers with value-add content, reinforcing relationships that could lead to cross-selling or upselling opportunities.

♦ **Best approach:** Consistent approach even if your budget is tight run awareness-building campaigns that don't require an immediate sale.

When business is good

The goal of advertising when business is good is to maximize momentum and expand market share.

Advantages:

♦ **High conversion potential:** Advertising when demand is high or during busy seasons may lead to faster, higher-converting sales.

♦ **Sustained market presence:** Running ads during peak times reinforces your presence, which can deter competitors and increase customer retention.

♦ **Budget availability:** If business is good, you may have more budget to experiment with new channels, ad formats, or campaigns that can fuel further growth.

♦ **Best approach:** Focus on more

conversion-oriented campaigns, like re-targeting or personalized offers, to capitalize on increased interest and purchasing intent.

Experts agree that every business should have a line item in their budget for advertising in bad and good periods. All businesses go through cycles of busy and slow times and by being consistent in your advertising and being flexible in your ad design will keep your product in their forefront of your potential customers minds.

The percentage of a business's budget allocated to advertising varies based on factors like industry, business goals, and growth stage. Generally, the following guidelines are used:

1. Standard budget recommendations

♦ **Small to medium businesses (SMBs):** Typically, 5–10% of total revenue is recommended for advertising and marketing.

♦ **Established companies:** Established brands with steady revenue may spend around 5% of revenue on advertising, focusing more on retention and brand awareness.

♦ **Growth-focused or new businesses:** Newer or growth-focused businesses may allocate 10–20% of revenue to build awareness, capture market share, and drive sales.

2. Industry-specific variations

♦ **B2C retail and e-commerce:** These companies usually spend more (10–15% of revenue) due to high competition and frequent customer engagement.

♦ **B2B businesses:** B2B companies may spend 2–5% of revenue if they rely heavily on direct sales. For growth, this can go up to 7–10%.

♦ **Restaurants and hospitality:** These typically spend about 3–10% of revenue, depending on location, competition, and whether they rely on seasonal promotions.

See **APPELL** page 12

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Important new products, corporate news and industry events



Chuy's is relocating its headquarters from Austin, Texas to Orlando, now that its \$605 million acquisition by Darden Restaurants Inc. has become final. Chuy's is the second major acquisition made by Darden since the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Olive Garden parent company bought Ruth's Chris Steakhouse in 2023.

We are Closed!

Pom Pom's Teahouse and Sandwicheria closed in October after about 20 years in Orlando. They were location at 67 N Bumby Ave.



The country's largest barbecue chain shuttered close to 100 restaurants last year in a move that reduced about 20% of the American footprint. Dickey's closed a net total of 85 locations with new openings factored in,

which is about 19% of the restaurants it operated in the United States at the start of the fiscal year.



Capogna's Dugout has also closed in Clearwater. The Gulf to Bay Boulevard restaurant was situated there for over 50 years!



Goody Goody Burger in Hyde Park Village closed on September 29. The

announcement came directly from the owners Social Media site, where they revealed their decision not to renew the lease. The restaurant was located at 1601 W Swann Ave. Goody Goody is part of the [1905 Family of Restaurants](#), which has other concepts in the Tampa Bay area.



the highest quality products in stainless & aluminum, says the company." With a product line that consists of both Stainless and Aluminum equipment PVIFS can be a "One-Stop-Shop" for all kitchen and restaurant needs. Shown is a Mobile Retractable Prep Station. Visit www.PVImanufacturing.com.

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honeygrow, the Philadelphia-based fast-casual restaurant celebrated for its fresh and customizable stir-fry, salads, and honeybars, is expanding its footprint further into Virginia, New Jersey, and Maryland. With new lease signings confirmed, honeygrow is set to bring its innovative culinary offerings to Fairfax, VA; Springfield, VA; Mt. Laurel Township, NJ; and Bowie, MD. Continuing its expansion in New Jersey, honeygrow has secured a lease for its new location in Mt. Laurel Township at East Gate Square shopping center, 1240 Nixon Drive, near the Moorestown Mall. In addition to New Jersey and Virginia, honeygrow

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

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Two shows for one admission from page 1

2024 [Program-at-a-Glance](#), highlights of key trends and opportunities featured in this year's program include:

Technological advances: Learn how AI-driven tools and emerging technologies are reshaping pizzeria, restaurant and foodservice operations. Presenters from various fields, including tech developers, restaurant operators, and systems integration experts, will provide actionable insights on using technology to streamline processes, improve customer service, and boost profitability.

Sustainability & eco-friendly practices: As consumer demand for sustainable dining options increases, experts from sustainability consulting, food

safety, and culinary operations will share strategies to reduce waste and adopt eco-friendly practices while maintaining profitability. Attendees will gain practical tools to balance environmental responsibility with operational efficiency.

Mental health & leadership: With ongoing staffing challenges, leading HR professionals, mental health advocates, and leadership consultants will provide solutions for building supportive workplace cultures. These sessions will focus on reducing employee burnout, improving retention, and fostering stronger, more cohesive teams.


Customer engagement & marketing: Marketing specialists, digital

strategists, and brand experts will offer data-driven approaches to increase customer loyalty, enhance brand visibility, and optimize social media strategies. Attendees will leave with clear tactics for strengthening their customer engagement and building long-term relationships.

Capital solutions & funding: Financial consultants, leasing experts, and industry advisors will cover essential topics on securing funding, navigating leases, and improving financial stability. These sessions will provide attendees with key insights to help them grow their businesses and ensure financial success.

Michelin-style cooking, focusing on how restaurateurs can elevate their menu offerings without sacrificing accessibility. Plus, he'll provide insights on personal branding to grow the business. **Sommelier Brian Connors** will lead a session on food and wine pairings for restaurateurs, guiding them on the business impact of curating the perfect beverage list. In partnership with the [American Culinary Federation \(ACF\) Central Florida Chapter](#), there will be three ACF-sanctioned, live-action showpiece competitions – including the Rapid-Fire Market Basket Competition, Mystery Basket Fruit & Vegetable Carving, and Cake Decorating – which will showcase regional culinary talent.

At [The Pizza Tomorrow Summit](#), the US Pizza Team (USPT) will host the **2024 Galbani Professionale Pizza Cup & Acrobatic Trials (GPPC)**. Some of the nation's most talented pizzaioli and pizza athletes will compete in **Non-Traditional Pizza**, **Best Cheese Pizza**, and **Pizza Acrobatics** to name a few. These exciting, two full days of demonstrations and competitions will provide chefs, foodservice managers, pizza, and culinary professionals with real-world inspiration and new ideas to elevate their operations. In addition, Tom Santos from General Mills will present his popular **Pizza Dough Boot Camp** on Wednesday afternoon.

Specialty Workshops: All attendees are invited to register separately for two in-depth workshops. [Restaurant Management 201](#), led by leadership and operations experts, will focus on team development and operational efficiency. A new addition is [The Restaurant Marketing Playbook](#), led by top restaurant marketers who will offer strategies to improve branding, customer engagement, and profitability. 

The Pizza Tomorrow Summit and the Florida Restaurant Show are owned by Restaurant Events, LLC, which also owns and produces the New York Restaurant Show and California Restaurant Show. The three restaurant trade shows and conferences offer access to the hottest menu trends, state-of-the-art design and decor, the best in business education, and hundreds of the leading vendors and purveyors dedicated to serving the restaurant & foodservice community — all under one roof. The content, developed in partnership with the State Associations and a Conference Advisory Board, is focused on all segments of the industry from independent restaurant owners to chain operators to commercial and institutional foodservice operations. Follow on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram at @pizzatomorrowsummit and @floridarestaurantshow.

The NEW Culinary Innovation Theater will feature live culinary demonstrations with Chef Jennifer Hill Booker

Operational efficiency: Logistics professionals and off-premises dining experts will provide practical advice on optimizing delivery, takeout, and catering services. Attendees will learn how to maintain operational excellence.

The NEW [Culinary Innovation Theater](#) will feature live culinary demonstrations with **Chef Jennifer Hill Booker**, a celebrated culinary educator, author, and owner of Bauhaus Biergarten. She'll share her expertise in leveraging community engagement as a critical success factor for independent restaurants. **Maneet Chauhan**, award-winning Indian chef and owner of eet in Disney Springs, will showcase her fusion of traditional Indian flavors with contemporary techniques while discussing culinary innovation and personal branding. **Matt Catherincchia**, founding member of Chefs Feeding Kids will present with **Chef Jamie Culliton** from the Nonna Slice House in Safety Harbor, FL, who will demonstrate Detroit Style Pizza while the two talk about social responsibility. Social media influencer and Michelin-trained **Chef Alex Trim**, known for his fine dining experience, will demystify high-end



Check out these TRN Network Members exhibiting at the Florida Restaurant Show & Pizza Tomorrow Summit Nov 6-7 in Orlando at the Convention Center...

Exhibitor	Booths
Today's Restaurant News ♦ Howard Appell DIGITAL TRADE NEWSPAPER	343 & 345
Leasing Solutions ♦ Steve Geller EQUIPMENT LEASING & FINANCING	347
Workwear Outfitters ♦ Terry Lena UNIFORMS	347
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C3 - Complete ♦ Darin Gull TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANCY	342
Ser.Vi ♦ Sal Iozzia ONLINE ORDERING WITH MARKETING	353
Seacoast Sales ♦ Ed Guertin ICE CREAM & DRINK EQUIPMENT	1745




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What's Going On from page 3

is actively growing its presence in Maryland with a new location coming to Bowie, MD. "We're excited to continue our strategic vision within multiple states that have truly embraced the brand for so many years," said Justin Rosenberg, Founder and CEO of honeygrow. "We have much more ground to cover and I'm extraordinarily proud of our team for always rising to the challenge of successful growth."



The Restaurant Group, a subsidiary of Clark Associates Inc., has opened at 8205 S. John Young Pkwy., according to a release. The 67,000-square-foot store is located within the Sand Lake Corners South shopping center. This is the 12th location for the chain, which dates back more than 30 years, joining stores in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and New Jersey.

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Ramblin' Joe's Coffee, a purveyor of specialty coffees from around the world and across the U.S., has just announced a new multi-unit franchise deal for Nashville, Tennessee. Secured with Nash Coffee Group, the new agreement will roll out five new Ramblin' Joe's locations over the next three years within the Nashville area. David Lambert is the CEO of Ramblin' Joe's Coffee. Their parent company, Lambert's Coffee, has been a leader in the coffee retail industry since 1971.



Ramblin' Joe's Coffee aims to steadily expand its footprint across the U.S. in the coming years, with a push in key markets like Texas, Tennessee and Colorado. Visit RamblinJoesCoffee.com for more detailed info.



Big Onion Hospitality, a leading casual dining group known for its food and quality-driven dining experiences, has announced the appointment of Shamari Benton as Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Benton will be responsible for overseeing all financial operations and strategies, supporting the company's ambitious growth plans and expanding its restaurant operations and real estate portfolio. "We are thrilled to welcome Shamari Benton to the Big Onion Hospitality team," said Arthur Holmer, CEO of Big Onion Hospitality. Big Onion Hospitality currently operates a complementary portfolio of restaurant brands, including Fatpour Tap Works, Hopsmith Tavern, Woodie's Flat, and their new brand, Woodie's Wings. Founded 2011 in Chicago, Illinois, Big Onion Hospitality -BigOnioninc.com - is a dynamic casual dining group renowned for its quality food, exceptional service, and focus on customer innovation.



Jason Brooks

locations, **Artistry Restaurants has appointed Jason Brooks to the role of Chief Operating Officer and Partner**, a new position created to help lead and direct the company's rapidly expanding portfolio of concepts and restaurants throughout the Southeast U.S. Brooks, whose career spans more than 25 years in leadership roles where he successfully managed the growth and operations of various multi-unit casual dining groups, is charged with the day-to-day oversight, operations and management of Artistry Restaurants' collection of brands, including Oak & Stone Craft Beer & Artisan Pizza, Shrimp Basket, Boca Kitchen, Atlantic Beer & Oyster, and Sandbar Amelia Island. Jason will also be instrumental in helping Artistry realize expansion plans at both **Oak & Stone and Boca that include five new restaurant openings by the end of Q2 2025 and a soon-to-launch sixth brand concept later this year.** "Jason Brooks is a seasoned leader in managing the growth and operations of well-known brands and developing people while delivering measurable bottom-line impact," said Chip Headley, Managing Partner, Artistry Restaurants - Artistryrestaurants.com - "Working with our brand leaders to deliver the art of hospitality, Jason's track record and appointment is well-timed as Artistry plans for the opening of new

With a rapidly growing roster that currently includes five brands and 29

See **WHAT'S GOING ON** page 14

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The 24th Annual Food Network South Beach Wine & Food Festival presented by Capital One

The Festival returns to EAT. DRINK. EDUCATE. February 20-23, 2025

Miami, FL – Mark your calendars! The website for the 24th annual Food Network South Beach Wine & Food Festival presented by Capital One (SOBEWFF®) is officially live and ready for visitors to explore and start planning their culinary adventures. The Festival will return February 20-23, 2025 to EAT. DRINK. EDUCATE all over the Magic City. Widely recognized as America's favorite gourmet gathering on the beach, the four-day Festival will bring together Food Network personalities, Grammy Award-winning musicians and more than 500 chefs and wine and spirit producers for an unforgettable celebration. All proceeds from the Festival benefit the Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management at Florida International University (FIU) and has successfully raised more than \$40 million to date.

The four-day Festival encompasses more than 105+ new and returning experiences, including a bevy of walk-around tastings, intimate dinners, late-night soirées, brunches, lunches, master classes, wine seminars and more. Standout programming for the 2025 Festival include:



Guy Fieri

◆ Rachael Ray will return to host the 18th annual **Burger Bash presented by Schweid & Sons®** on Thursday, February 20, 2025.

◆ **Taste of Italy** returns to the Design District, hosted by **Giada De Laurentiis** on Thursday, February 20, 2025.

◆ A new walk-around event **Alex vs Miami** hosted by **Alex Guarnaschelli and Eric Adjepong** on Thursday, February 20, 2025.

◆ The Festival takes the high seas with a **Sunset Stone Crab Sail** aboard

The Vessel on Friday, February 21, 2025.

◆ **Guy Fieri** will host a live iteration of the hit *Food Network*

Tournament of Champions on Friday, February 21, 2025.

◆ **Aarón Sánchez** will host the wildly-popular **Tacos & Tequila presented by Tequila Cazadores**, featuring more than 24 chefs serving up various iterations of Mexico's most iconic dish on Saturday, February 22, 2025.

◆ The return of **The Cookout** hosted by **JJ Johnson** presented by **Stella Artois** on Saturday, February 22, 2025.


◆ The annual **Tribute Dinner** will honor **Dominique Crenn and Gérard Bertrand** on Saturday, February 22, 2025.

◆ Interactive LIVE cooking demonstrations from Food Network personalities at the **Goya Foods' Grand Tasting Village** on Saturday, February 22 and Sunday, February 23, 2025.

◆ **Goya Foods' Heritage Fire** hosted by **Bryan and Michael Voltaggio** on Sunday, February 23, 2025.

◆ A **Miami Bakery Brunch** hosted by **Zak Stern** featuring Miami's buzziest bakeries on Sunday, February 23, 2025.

◆ A new grand finale event, **Asian Night Market** hosted by **Andrew Zimmern, Jet Tila and Aarti Sequeira**, will fea-

ture a special performance by Rev Run and close out the Festival weekend on Sunday, February 23, 2025. 

For additional ticket information and the complete line-up of events for the 24th annual Festival visit www.sobewff.org. Stay up to date all year long by following the #SOBEWFF hashtag on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.

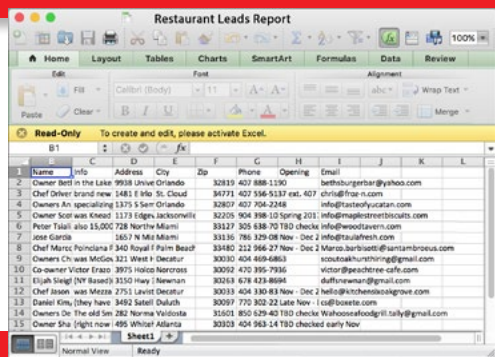


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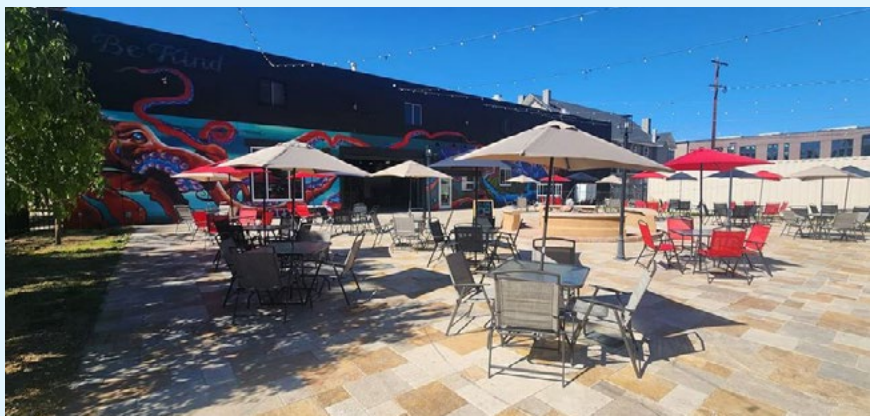
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◆ A new dining option is now open in Five Points. **Duets Tap and Grill**, located at 2403 Champa Street, had originally been renovated from Bell Printing into [the short-lived Liberati](#) and was [home to MobCraft's brief run in Denver](#) until it shuttered in April 2023. Duets co-owner is Jessica Eliassen. They have a massive patio. They restaurant and patio can seat over 500 and there are many extras with this new place. Contact them at 303.955.5035.

chain has locations in Nashville, Brooklyn and the Catskills. From their website: "Our bar 'out back' – housed in an old carriage house and equal parts local watering hole/cocktail lover's paradise."



◆ **Coffeegrapp**, an Indonesian-inspired, family-run coffee shop recently opened in Denver at 3800 Julian St. It is owned and operated by Brenda and Troy Carlson. "At Coffeegrapp, we stay true to our roots by offering our community the finest Indonesian Specialty Coffee beans." You can contact them at 720.751.8899.



◆◆◆◆
Urban Cowboy Hotels known for their bold blend of rustic chic and modern luxury has opened the **Urban Cowboy Public House** located at 1665 Grant Street. This is a Saloon-inspired place located in a converted carriage house that's part of the historic, 1880s-era [George Schleier Mansion](#). Urban Cowboy Hotels

◆◆◆◆
 Denver-based **Imperial Restaurant Group** has an expansion in the works in the Denver Metro area. The group, which currently owns [Imperial Chinese](#) on South Broadway, will be rolling



TRN FEATURED RESTAURANTS IN DENVER

— • Today's Restaurant Feature

The oldest restaurant in Denver

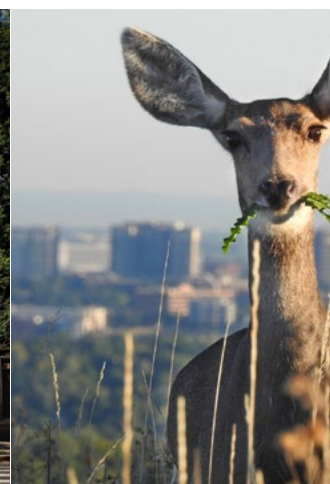
The oldest restaurant in Denver, Colorado, is the Buckhorn Exchange. Established in 1893, it's renowned for its wild game dishes and Western-themed decor. The restaurant features a unique atmosphere with historical memorabilia and is located near the Denver South Platte River. Over the years, it has become a beloved local institution, known for its steaks, game meats, and an extensive selection of wines and spirits. The Buckhorn Exchange also has a rich history, including serving as a gathering place for many notable figures throughout its long operation.



The Buckhorn Exchange, opened in 1893, founded by Henry H. "Shorty Scout" Zietz, a frontiersman and scout under the famous Buffalo Bill Cody.

Known for dishes like steaks, buffalo sausages, and Rocky The Buckhorn Exchange, Denver's oldest restaurant, opened in 1893, founded by Henry H. "Shorty Scout" Zietz, a frontiersman and scout under the famous Buffalo Bill Cody. Originally named the Rio Grande Exchange, it was a popular

spot for miners, railroad workers, Native American leaders, and early Denver locals. Zietz, known for his small stature and adventurous life, cultivated a relationship with many high-profile individuals, including Theodore Roosevelt, who dined at the Buckhorn in 1905 before a hunting expedition.



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The restaurant's rustic, Western-themed decor includes a remarkable collection of more than 500 taxidermy mounts and nearly 125 firearms, reflecting its Old West ambiance. The Buckhorn became the first recipient of a Colorado liquor license and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. It's celebrated for

its exotic meats, such as Rocky Mountain oysters, buffalo, and alligator, making it both a dining destination and a tribute to Denver's frontier past.

The Buckhorn Exchange Restaurant is located at [1000 Osage Street in Denver, Colorado](#). You can reach them at [303.534.9505](tel:303.534.9505). 



out a new fast-casual concept called **Imperial To Go**. The planned brand expansion comes in tandem with a deal the restaurant group recently closed in which it purchased four [Sushi-Rama](#) locations throughout the Greater Denver area. Visit [ImperialChinese.com](#).



◆ **Moonrise Coffee Company**, which started as a roaster, now has two cafes in Colorado. The 1st is located at [5322 DTC Blvd in Greenwood Village](#) and the 2nd is situated at 900 W 1st Avenue in Denver. Sarah and Kevin Jones, the owners/operators **plan to open a third this year**. Moonrise Coffee is small batched and air roasted blends.

“Born of Maui — made in Colorado. We have been fortunate to live our lives Mauka to Makai (Mountains to the Sea) splitting our time between Maui and Colorado; both the epitome of paradise in different yet similar ways, say the owners.” Online at [Moonrisecoffeeroasters.com](#).



Chef Scott Durrah

◆ **The Jerk Pit Smokehouse**, opened in October at 3210 Wyandot St. **Chef/owner Scott Durrah** plays

reggae music at his new place, which has a bar also. This is Scott's 7th restaurant that he has owned and now he still has his catering company. Chef Scott Durrah, a culinary legend whose career in the restaurant industry began in 1996.

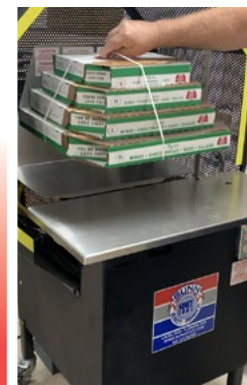
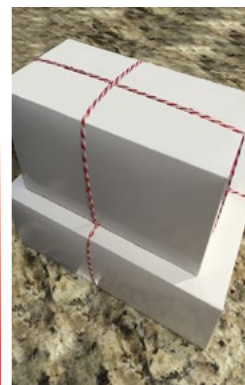
He launched The Jamaican Café in Santa Monica, CA, which quickly became a favorite among Hollywood stars such as Michael Keaton, Woody Harrelson, and Jamie Foxx. In 2004, Chef Scott moved to Colorado, where he opened four acclaimed restaurants. His establishments — Eight Rivers in Superior, CO; Eight Rivers at 32nd & Lowell; Eight Rivers in LoDo; and Jezebels Southern Bistro in LoHi — have been praised by the Denver Post, Westwood's "Best of Denver," 301 Magazine, LA Times, LA Weekly, and 5280 Magazine. He has also catered for NFL players, including: Von Miller, Elvis Dumervil. Contact them at [JerkPitSmokehouse.com](#).

◆◆◆◆◆
Today's Restaurant invites you to submit information for the What's Going On column. Email your company, product or event information to terri@trnusa.com. Keep the word count around 50-75 words. **TR**



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Strategies for navigating wage increases in the restaurant industry

David Scott Peters ♦ Today's Restaurant Contributor

Do you remember the anxiety in the restaurant industry when the \$15 minimum wage was looming? There was so much fear about how it might impact, and even destroy, businesses. Fast forward to today, with the advent of COVID-19 and the ongoing labor shortage in the United States, the landscape has shifted. Restaurants are now offering wages higher than \$15 per hour to stay competitive. In places like Los Angeles, a proposed \$22 minimum wage adds another layer of complexity. So, how can a restaurant not only survive but thrive in these challenging conditions? Let's explore effective strategies for navigating wage increases in the restaurant industry.

Embracing higher restaurant wages: A necessary shift

Before we delve into solutions, it's important to acknowledge that, despite the challenges, the self-correction of higher wages was overdue in the restaurant industry. While this correction may pose a negative impact on establishments running on slim profit margins, there are ways to adapt and thrive.

The proactive plan for restaurant success

Step 1: Establish a budget

The foundation of success begins with a budget, a comprehensive review of the trailing 12 months. By creating a template that factors in sales, costs and monthly expenses, restaurateurs can predict their financial outlook for the coming year. This sets the stage for developing a proactive plan.

Step 2: Adapt to dynamic labor costs

Understanding that labor costs are not static is crucial. Monthly variations, seasonal fluctuations and unexpected factors can all impact labor expenses. A rigid adherence to industry standards is no longer feasible. Restaurateurs need to adapt to the ever-changing landscape of labor costs.

Step 3: Schedule on budget

With a budget in place, the next step is to implement a scheduling system aligned with financial targets. The goal is to use allocated hours efficiently and avoid the common practice of bringing in staff based on assumptions about business volume. I teach restaurant owners how to do this with a systems I call the Restaurant Payroll Guardian. It helps them break away from this outdated approach (available to my coaching members).

Step 4: Hold managers accountable

Restaurateurs must ensure that managers align their scheduling decisions with the established budget. The introduction of a labor discrepancy finder allows for real-time monitoring, holding managers accountable for any deviations from the budget.


Step 5: Track labor

Beyond tracking dollars spent on labor, it's crucial to monitor hours worked. This provides insights into whether sales were met with optimal staffing levels or if adjustments are needed to enhance efficiency.

Step 6: Understand labor efficiencies

The final step involves delving into labor efficiencies. Utilizing tools like the labor efficiency finder allows restaurateurs to calculate dollars per labor hour worked. This metric provides valuable insights into the productivity of staff, helping identify areas for improvement and cost savings.

Proactive adaptation for prosperity

Successfully navigating government and market-imposed wage increases requires a proactive approach. By embracing change, establishing a budget, adapting to dynamic labor costs, scheduling on budget, holding managers accountable, tracking labor, and understanding labor efficiencies, restaurateurs can not only survive but thrive in the evolving landscape of the restaurant industry. 

David Scott Peters is an author, speaker, restaurant expert and coach who coaches restaurant operators how to stop being prisoners of their businesses and to finally achieve financial freedom. His first book, Restaurant Prosperity Formula: What Successful Restaurateurs Do, teaches the systems and traits restaurant owners must develop to run a profitable restaurant. Thousands of restaurants have worked with Peters to transform their businesses. Get his free 30-minute training video www.davidscottpeters.com.

Monthly variations, seasonal fluctuations and unexpected factors can all impact labor expenses.

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National Restaurant Association on the introduction of the TIPS Act

Washington, D.C. - Sean Kennedy, executive vice president for Public Policy at the National Restaurant Association, released a statement on the introduction of the TIPS Act, which would end taxes on tips but also eliminate the tipped wage for servers and bartenders.

The Tipped Income Protection and Support (TIPS) Act seeks to eliminate taxes on tips but unnecessarily connects a tax issue with the elimination of the tip wage. The Association supports sensible, bipartisan legislation, like the No Tax on Tips Act, that would provide tipped workers an income tax credit for their tips. However, while both issues impact tipped servers and bartenders, one is a tax credit that would put money in their pockets, while the elimination of the tip wage would damage their earning potential and take money from them.

“Eliminating the tip credit is a misguided plan that has been rejected in 16 cities and states this year alone because servers and restaurant owners joined together to actively oppose it. They told their stories of how the tip credit enables their successes and demanded the proposals to be rejected.

“The elimination of the tip credit is a lose-lose-lose proposal for restaurant owners, tipped workers, and customers alike. It will limit the earning potential of servers; it will force operators to cut hours and jobs; and it will increase

menu prices for consumers. And every tipped worker in a restaurant is already making at least the minimum wage. In fact, the median hourly income of tipped servers is \$27.

“That’s the reason people choose tipped restaurant jobs – they know the economics are in their favor. Suggesting that eliminating the tip credit is better for all servers and bartenders, isn’t listening to servers and bartenders.”



The tipped income system often comes under fire due to a widespread misunderstanding about how it works.

Every tipped restaurant employee already earns at least their state’s minimum wage.


This amount is paid partly by the operator and partly by tips. Any time a server does not earn enough tips to equal at least the minimum hourly wage, by law the restaurant operator must pay the balance. [National Restaurant Association research](#) found that full-service restaurant worker incomes average between \$19.00 – \$41.50 per hour with a median of \$27.00 per hour, far

surpassing the state minimum wages across the country.

The [Employment Policies Institute](#) (EPI) recently released a [study](#) conducted by University of California-Irvine economists, that finds eliminating the tip wage doesn’t have any discernible impact on eliminating earnings gaps between minority, female, and white male employees.

The tip wage provides operators with the financial flexibility to hire more workers and control menu prices in a challenging economic environment while simultaneously increasing servers’ earning potential. Operators and tipped employees have worked to preserve this system of tipping because it is mutually beneficial.

Restaurant operators should have the option to pick the compensation model that works best for their small business, including the federal tip wage. On average, small business restaurants across the country run on a thin 3%–5% pre-tax margin. The elimination of the tip wage shifts more labor costs to operators, in some cases \$10-\$13 per hour more, at a time when they are being impacted by increased food prices and higher labor costs induced by market demand. This has added to the inflation felt by every U.S. consumer and forced increases in menu prices or new surcharges.

The National Restaurant Association’s chief economist looked at broad-based cost increases in the current economic climate that are having significant impacts on most small business restaurants. Read the analysis [here](#). 

Appell *from page 2*

3. Budgeting based on goals

◆ **Growth and expansion goals:** For aggressive growth or expansion into new markets, allocate a higher percentage (10–20%) to advertising to capture attention and build a customer base.

◆ **Maintenance and retention goals:** For companies focused on retaining customers, about 5% on brand and customer engagement strategies is typically sufficient.

4. Digital-first vs. traditional advertising mix

Many companies are allocating 60–70% of their ad budget to digital channels, especially for online-first or e-commerce businesses. Others may focus more on traditional media or a mix of both based on target demographics.

For most businesses, a **range of 5–10% of revenue** is a good starting point, based on industry, goals, and stage. High-growth phases and highly competitive markets may justify up to 20%, while established brands with steady demand might maintain at a lower percentage.

Advertising during both good and slow times is important for sustaining growth and long-term success. **In good times, focus on amplifying and maximizing current success; in slow times, focus on maintaining presence, nurturing loyalty, and creating demand** that can carry over into busier periods. This balanced approach ensures you stay competitive and top-of-mind, regardless of market fluctuations. **TR**

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Mountain Mike's *from page 1*

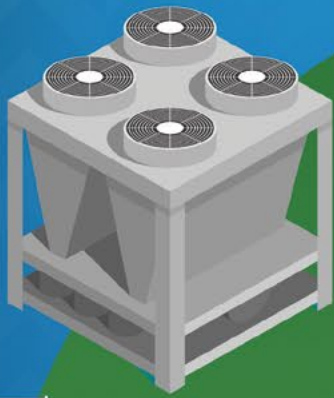
formidable national player, and it energizes our entire organization as we continue to expand in new and existing markets, introducing even more guests and franchisees to what has made Mountain Mike's so special for nearly a half century.”

With development agreements in motion in more than a dozen states – including recent deals in Arkansas and Oklahoma, and more on the horizon – it's a uniquely attractive time to join the Mountain Mike's Pizza franchise family in Florida or any other region where the legacy brand operates. Whether it's dine-in, catering, carryout or its own in-house delivery, guests can always rely on Mountain Mike's to deliver quality, freshness, flavor and value – and qualified franchisees can count on an array of advantages in pursuing a successful, resilient and sought-after pizza concept like Mountain Mike's Pizza. In addition to an impressive lineup of amazing specialty pizzas, the Mountain Mike's menu features an all-you-can-eat pizza and salad bar lunch buffet, bone-in and boneless chicken wings, Mountain Fries, signature Garlic Not-Knots™, a variety of desserts and a selection of beer and wine.

Mountain Mike's has earned impressive recognition and high rankings across a variety of industry-leading reports, including Franchise Times, Entrepreneur, Fast Casual, QSR Magazine and Restaurant Business, among many others. The brand earned a top-100 ranking on Entrepreneur's highly coveted 2024 Franchise 500® List, and was presented the 2024 TopScore Award for earning a FUND® Score of 915, which was the highest score in the Food Category among all evaluated franchise systems. Mountain Mike's also broke into the top 200 on Franchise Times' 2024 Top 400 Franchises list, landing at #182 and others.

To build upon the brand's success while satisfying consumer demand for higher-quality pizza and family-friendly dining options, Mountain Mike's is extending opportunities to new franchise partners looking to diversify their franchise brand portfolio with a popular family pizza concept. With many more Mountain Mike's Pizza restaurants expected to open in 2024, the nearly 300-unit franchised pizza brand is primed to continue expansion in highly attractive markets coast to coast. Visit MountainMikesPizza.com. **TR**

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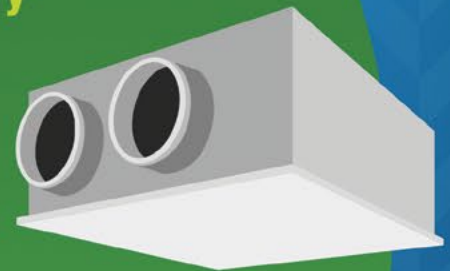
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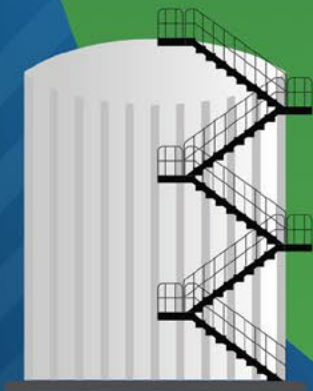
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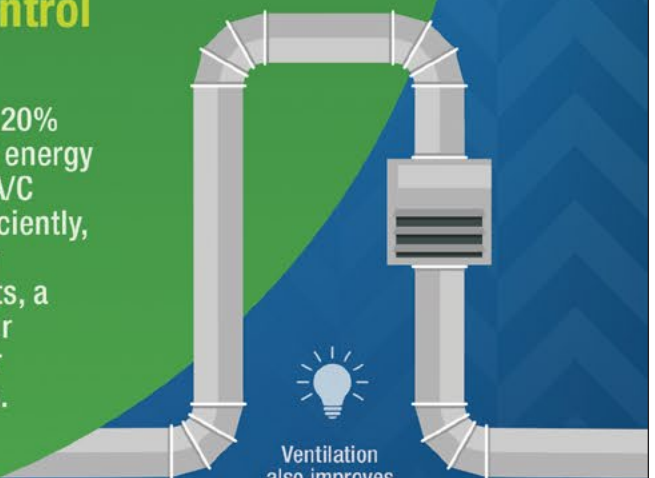
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What's Going On from page 6

locations, the launch of a new brand concept, and the acquisition of additional brands later this year.”



Ford's Garage, the burgers and craft beer restaurant inspired by the heritage of The Ford Motor Company, has named restaurant veteran and the first Ford's Garage franchisee as its new president. Billy "B.D." Downs will lead the company as it continues to expand with new franchise locations throughout the country. "It is an honor to be tapped to lead Ford's Garage after being part of the company for nearly a decade," said Downs. "The brand has come a long way in defining its unique space in the American dining experience, and we will keep strengthening our position for years to come." Downs began his career at age fourteen, working at restaurants throughout high school and college. He later cofounded B.D.'s Mongolian Grill, growing the company to 37 restaurants in 12 states and a franchise location in Mongolia.



Cruise Line shared a preview of the menu offerings across more than 30 food and beverage outlets for **Celebration Key** when it opens on Grand Bahama in July 2025. The offerings include four full-service restaurants, a food hall, nine food trucks, five snack shacks, two counter-service kiosks, and 12 bars, serving local Bahamian specialties, beachside favorites, seafood, barbeque, and a number of other cuisines. Some of the outlets will include complimentary lunch menu options as part of the destination's "Island Eats" offering. "Great food and beverage options are essential to the Carnival experience, and we've designed Celebration Key with an array of dining opportunities, whether our guests want a casual snack, a quick meal or a full dining experience," said Christine Duffy, president of Carnival Cruise Line.



Today's Restaurant invites you to submit information for the What's Going On column. E-mail your company, product, service or event information to terri@trnusa.com. **TR**



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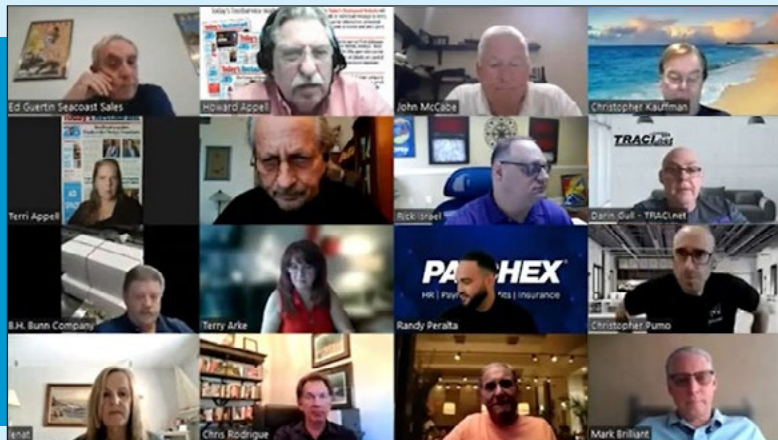
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MEDICARE AND HEALTH INSURANCE

ARCHI Agency Rick Israel
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MANAGEMENT RECRUITER

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