

# Today's Restaurant

THE FOODSERVICE INDUSTRY AUTHORITY

VOLUME 29

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# Wonder GRUBHUB

## Wonder announces acquisition of Grubhub

New York and Chicago, IL - [Wonder](#), a new kind of food hall that is revolutionizing the food industry by creating the super app for mealtime, announced that it is acquiring [Grubhub](#), a leading food ordering and delivery platform with more than 375,000 merchants and 200,000 delivery partners across the United States.

Integrating Grubhub with Wonder is the next step in Wonder's mission to make great food more accessible, bringing together the convenience, speed and selection of first-party and third-party restaurants, groceries and meal kits in a single app order. Additionally, all Wonder locations will be available on Grubhub for third-party delivery.

Wonder will acquire Grubhub from Just Eat Takeaway.com for an enterprise value of \$650 million, including \$500 million of senior notes and \$150 million cash. Completion is expected during Q1 2025, subject to customary

closing conditions including regulatory approvals. Jefferies served as Wonder's exclusive financial advisor on the transaction.

*Wonder currently has 28 locations in the Northeastern U.S., with seven additional locations slated to open by the end of the year.*

Wonder has also announced an additional \$250 million in capital raised exclusively from new investors to further its mission and growth.

Founded by serial entrepreneur Marc Lore, Wonder is making great food more accessible while pioneering

a new category of "Fast Fine" dining. Wonder offers Multi-Restaurant Ordering, a first in the industry where customers can order from upwards of 30 restaurants in a single order, with each item being made-to-order in a sequenced fashion so that they finish simultaneously and can be delivered to the customer together.

The platform features exclusive offerings from the world's best chefs—including Bobby Flay, Marcus Samuelsson and José Andrés—and the country's best restaurants—including Maydan, Tejas Barbecue, Di Fara Pizza and Fred's Meat and Bread. Wonder currently has 28 locations in the Northeastern U.S., with seven additional locations slated to open by the end of the year. Leveraging its proprietary technology, Wonder is able to differentiate itself from every other restaurant or food delivery concept by offering exceptionally high-quality

See [WONDER GRUBHUB](#) page 14

# Jersey Mike's to partner with Blackstone

Manasquan, N.J. and New York, – Jersey Mike's Subs, a leading franchisor of fast-casual submarine sandwich stores known for its fresh sliced and fresh grilled subs, has announced it has reached an agreement whereby private equity funds managed by Blackstone – led by Blackstone's most recent flagship private equity vehicle – will acquire a majority ownership position in Jersey Mike's.

Jersey Mike's Founder and CEO Peter Cancro will maintain a significant equity stake and continue to lead the business. The partnership with Blackstone is intended to help enable Jersey Mike's to accelerate its expansion across and beyond the U.S. market, as well as its continued investment in technology and digital transformation. Blackstone has a long history of successfully propelling the growth of leading franchisors, including in its previous acquisitions of [Hilton Hotels](#) and [SERVPRO](#) – and has also recently invested in [Tropical Smoothie Cafe](#) and [7Brew](#).

Cancro began working at the company's original Point Pleasant, New



Jersey location at the age of 14, which was founded in 1956 as Mike's Subs. He acquired the location in 1975 at age 17 and began franchising units in 1987. Today, Jersey Mike's is a premier national franchisor with more than 3,000 locations nationwide open and in development, and continues to be recognized for its high-quality and freshly prepared submarine sandwiches, and passion for its authentic products and customers. The company has been recognized as one of the fastest-growing fast-casual

restaurant chains in America and ranked #2 on Entrepreneur's 2024 Franchise 500.

Peter Cancro, Jersey Mike's Founder and CEO, said: "We believe we are still in the early innings of Jersey Mike's growth story and that Blackstone is the right partner to help us reach even greater heights. Blackstone has helped drive the success of some of the most iconic franchise businesses globally and we look forward to working with them to help make significant new investments going forward."

Peter Wallace, a Senior Managing Director at Blackstone, said: "Jersey Mike's has grown for more than half a century by maintaining an unrelenting focus on quality (and delicious sandwiches) – consistently building on its loyal customer base as it has scaled nationwide. Blackstone has deep experience helping accelerate the expansion of high-growth franchise businesses and this area is one of our highest-conviction investment themes. We are excited to partner with an entrepreneur of Peter's caliber and the talented Jersey Mike's team. Our capital and resources will help support key investments in growth and technology for the benefit of Jersey Mike's customers and exceptional franchisees. I highly recommend the #13 Original Italian, Mike's Way."

Giving back is also core to Jersey Mike's mission. The company recently completed its 14th Annual Month of Giving, surpassing over \$113 million raised for local charities since 2011. It has also launched the Coach Rod Smith Ownership program, which

See [JERSEY MIKE'S](#) page 14



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# Today's Restaurant Featured City Centerfold

These will be our featured cities in 2025:

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## Appell Pie

### Looking forward to a wonderful 2025

Howard Appell ♦ Today's Restaurant Publisher

We would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and a happy and prosperous New Year. In order to start 2025 off with maximum profit here is a guide to promotion ideas.

#### 1. Themed events and experiences

Christmas dinners & New Year's Eve parties: Host special holiday-themed meals or parties with prix fixe menus that offer seasonal dishes and drinks.

Live entertainment: Offer live music, DJs, or festive performances to enhance the dining experience, especially on New Year's Eve.

Family-friendly events: Organize brunches with activities like visits from Santa or ornament decorating to attract families.

#### 2. Special menus and offers

Holiday-themed menus: Create limited-time dishes and drinks inspired by holiday flavors, such as eggnog cocktails, roasted turkey, or peppermint desserts.

Bundle discounts: Offer meal bundles for groups or families to encourage group bookings.

Early Bird discounts: Promote special pricing for reservations made for off-peak dining hours or early in the season.

#### 3. Gift card promotions

Bonus offers: For example, "Buy a \$50 gift card and get a \$10 bonus card." These deals are popular during the holidays as customers look for convenient gift options.

Holiday packaging: Offer attractively packaged gift cards to make them feel festive and appealing.

#### 4. Social media and online campaigns

Countdowns and contests: Run holiday-themed contests (e.g., "Ugly Sweater Contest" or "Best Holiday Photo") to engage your audience.

Holiday hashtags: Use specific hashtags like #HolidayEats or #NYEDining to attract customers looking for seasonal options.

Exclusive offers: Promote limited-time deals available only to your social media followers.

#### 5. Partnerships and community engagement

Charity tie-ins: Partner with local charities by donating a portion of proceeds from specific menu items to create goodwill and attract socially conscious diners.

Collaborations: Work with local breweries, wineries, or bakeries to feature exclusive products.

#### 6. Catering and takeout specials

Holiday catering packages: Offer customizable catering options for office parties or family gatherings.

Seasonal takeout: Promote ready-to-serve holiday meals or dessert boxes for those celebrating at home.

#### 7. Loyalty and VIP perks

Holiday rewards: Double loyalty points on visits during the holiday period to incentivize repeat business.

Exclusive invitations: Host a VIP night for loyal customers with complimentary appetizers or drinks.

#### 8. Décor and ambiance

Create a festive atmosphere with lights, decorations, and holiday music to draw in customers and make your restaurant a cozy spot for celebrations.

#### 9. Advertising and booking incentives

Reserve early campaigns: Encourage early reservations by offering discounts or perks for pre-booking tables for Christmas or New Year's Eve.

Collaborate with local influencers: Partner with influencers to showcase your holiday offerings on social media.

Continue normal advertising with a holiday vibe: Thank your customers and welcome them back in 2025.

#### 10. Unique New Year's Eve countdown features

Offer a champagne toast, balloon drops, or a raffle for diners attending New Year's celebrations at your venue.

These strategies, combined with effective marketing and excellent customer service, help restaurants maximize profitability and attract new and returning customers during the festive season.

The upcoming year will also bring many new opportunities to increase your bottom line. No tax on tips and overtime will impact the restaurant industry in many ways:

Increased take home pay for employees

Potentially less staff turnover

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Price flexibility

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The Foodservice Industry Authority  
P.O. Box 273264, Boca Raton, FL 33427-3264  
(561) 620-8888 ♦ Fax (561) 620-8821  
howard@trnusa.com ♦ www.trnusa.com

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PUBLISHER.....	Howard Appell
ASSOCIATE EDITOR.....	Wesley Paul
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR.....	John Tschohl
CIRCULATION MANAGER.....	Eric Spencer
ADVERTISING MANAGER.....	Howard Mckinney
ART DIRECTOR.....	Jim Pollard
SALES MANAGERS.....	Terri Mckinney William Lagusker





# What's Going On

## Important new products, corporate news and industry events

### Happy Holidays!

#### We are Closed!

**Mr. Potato Spread** has closed. It was a specialty baked potato restaurant has closed its last restaurant location at River City Marketplace in Jacksonville.

After almost 10 years of serving raw oysters in downtown St. Petersburg, seafood restaurant **Sea Salt** will close **Dec 31st**. The restaurant's parent company, Aielli Group's Ingrid Aielli is a co-owner of this restaurant located on the second floor of The Sundial.

**The Toasted Restaurant** has closed in Windermere.

**Denny's**: announced they would close up to 150 locations in **2024 and 2025** in an effort to revive their business.

**Hooters**: suddenly shut down nearly 40 locations across the U.S. this year.

◆◆◆◆◆  
**Legacy Food Group** has announced that CEO Steve Push has also been appointed Executive Chairman of the Board, a newly created position that continues his leadership role within the company. This move allows Push greater strategic focus on the firm's mission to acquire regional independent



Steve Push

distributors. "The new Chairman role provides me the opportunity to place greater emphasis on long-term growth, acquisitions, and strategic partnerships," said Push. "My role as CEO has been involved with helping create a strong team, cultivating a strong culture, as

well as bringing new companies into the LFG Family. I am incredibly proud of the world class team we are building, which will fuel our future successes. This transition will allow me to dedicate more of my time to expanding our acquisitions efforts, and focus on strategic growth. This will help us continue to build



**Huddle House**, serving home-style food since 1964, has inked its largest franchise deal in its history, securing 20 units across Texas. The record-breaking agreement, led by WE Food Enterprises Hospitality Group LLC (WE Foods), demonstrates Huddle House's appeal and high-growth, scalable franchise opportunities as new and multi-unit franchisees invest in the brand. Known for accelerating the success of businesses with innovative people-centric processes and technology, WE Foods is eager to expand Huddle

House across the Lone Star state. The first location is targeted to open by June 2025 in Spring, TX, with three additional openings planned in surrounding areas that month. "This franchise agreement marks a significant milestone for Huddle House and showcases the success of our development team," said Peter Ortiz, Chief Development Officer at Ascent Development. "WE Foods represents the ideal franchise partner, who is dedicated to operational excellence and committed to creating positive guest experiences. This achievement continues to demonstrate the growing interest from prospective franchisees, and we look forward to more wins ahead."

Legacy Food Group into a recognized force in the foodservice distribution industry." LFG has experienced tremendous growth since its inception last September, bringing together five independent foodservice distributors spanning different markets who now operate as local Operating Divisions of LFG: Keck's Food Service ("Keck's"), M&V Provisions ("M&V Provisions"), Thomsen Foodservice ("Thomsen"), Best Mexican Foods ("Best Mexican"), and Halsey Foodservice ("Halsey").



◆◆◆◆◆  
**Bagels & Co.** is expanding, opening its first location in a Florida college town when the doors open in **January 2025 in Stadium Centre at 799 West Gaines Street in Tallahassee.**



The 2,200-square-foot neighborhood café Bagels & Co. bakes more than a dozen varieties of Brooklyn-style bagels including French toast, cheddar habanero, everything, blueberry, asiago, cinnamon raison and

whole wheat, plus egg everything, which is rare in Florida. "We are very excited to open up at Florida State as our

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

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# Potbelly plans to enter GA with 15-unit agreement

Partner Royal Restaurant Group expects to bring more than a dozen Potbelly shops to Atlanta area in the next five years

Chicago, IL - Potbelly Corporation, the iconic neighborhood sandwich shop, has just announced plans to open its first shops in Georgia after finalizing a multi-unit development agreement with franchise partner Royal Restaurant Group. Through the agreement, Royal Restaurant Group, a national franchise group that successfully operates restaurant locations for global brands, will bring 15 Potbelly shops to Georgia, all in the greater Atlanta region. This is Potbelly's first development agreement in Georgia and its second with Royal Restaurant Group.

"The signing of this development agreement marks a significant step forward in the execution against our long-term plans for growth and expansion, as it marks our entrance into the Atlanta market and the great state of Georgia," said Bob Wright, President and CEO of Potbelly. "We are so appreciative of the team at Royal Restaurant Group for their ongoing support and partnership in bringing our warm, toasty sandwiches, signature salads, hand-dipped shakes and other fresh menu items to markets in the Midwest and southern U.S."

The commitment covers regions primarily in central and northern areas of the Atlanta market. Development is expected to begin in January 2026, with three shop openings anticipated for each year following.

This announcement builds on a separate, [40-shop agreement](#) that Potbelly signed with Royal Restaurant Group in October 2023. The franchisee currently has four Potbelly shops in operation and a strong pipeline of sites currently in development across markets in Ohio and Florida. The co-founders of Royal Restaurant Group collectively have more than 60 years of combined experience in the restaurant, hospitality and multi-unit

"Our deep industry experience and focus on customer service align perfectly with Potbelly's vision of delivering guests great food, good vibes, and an overall exceptional experience," said Randy Pianin, Co-founder and CEO of Royal Restaurant Group. "We've seen successful returns with the four shops we currently operate, and we look forward to introducing Potbelly's one-of-a-kind offerings to hungry diners in Georgia in the years ahead."

Potbelly has a long-term goal of reaching 2,000 shops over the next several years, with at least 85% of those locations being franchised, as part of the company's Franchise Growth Acceleration Initiative.



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Potbelly has a long-term goal of reaching 2,000 shops over the next several years...

Potbelly is seeking additional qualified candidates for development opportunities in other areas of the Atlanta market. Franchising opportunities are also available in markets across the U.S. including parts of Florida and Tennessee, Dallas, Houston and other Texas markets, and markets in OH, VA, and PA. 

**About Potbelly:** Potbelly Corporation - [www.potbelly.com](http://www.potbelly.com) - is a neighborhood sandwich concept that has been feeding customers' smiles with warm, toasty sandwiches, signature salads, hand-dipped shakes and other fresh menu items, customized just the way customers want them, for more than 40 years. Potbelly promises Fresh, Fast & Friendly service in an environment that reflects the local neighborhood. Since opening its first shop in Chicago in 1977, Potbelly has expanded to neighborhoods across the country - with more than 425 shops in the United States including more than 80 franchised shops in the United States.

franchise industries. Previously the co-founders served as the CEO and Chief Operating Officer, respectively, of one of Wendy's largest franchise organizations with more than 230 units throughout the United States.






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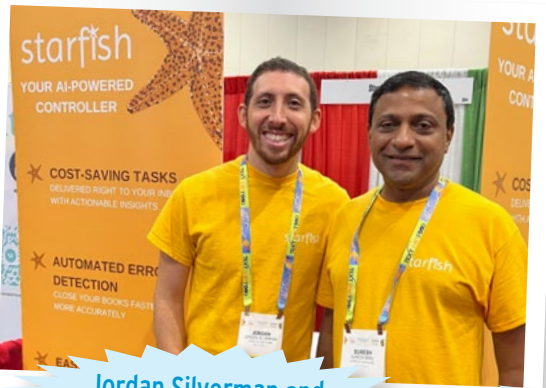
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# Photo Bites

People, places and happenings in the foodservice industry.



Jordan Silverman and Suresh Babu, Starfish



David Kiser, Kiser Commercial Kitchen & Howard Appell, Today's Restaurant



The Chef Mod crew – Eduard Spivak, Erica Ruiz, Tess Young, John Oldweiler & Steven Spivak



Kyle Ewing, Washable Menus

## Florida Restaurant Show & Pizza Tomorrow Summit

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Glenn Geiringer, Worksite



Terry Lena, Workwear Outfitters



Steve Geller, Leasing Solutions



John & Adam Bunn, Bunn Tying Machines



Haji Bakari Sillah, TCH Restaurant Review Smart AI & Howard Appell



Steve Whitehill, Anchor Business Brokers



Kevin Anderson, Strategic Supply Chain Partners



Sal Ioazzio, Ser.Vi



Ken Colvert, Krispy Mixes



Neil Fleming, Nextera



Terri McKinney Appell, Today's Restaurant



Terry Arke, Creative Business Impressions



Howard Appell with Bill Stenger, Commercial Restaurant Stop



Angus Smith, Angus Smith Gelato



Darin Gull & Marc Kratenstein, C3-Complete



# What's Going On from page 3

first Florida location at a major university," said Mike Marsh, Managing Partner. "We can't wait to be part of the 'Noles community and look forward to providing our capital city with delicious bagels and great coffee." This marks the second Bagels & Co. location to open in a college town. There is one at Temple University in Philadelphia, and plans are to open at Penn State University, University of Florida and Nova Southeastern University in Spring 2025. Two Bagels & Co. locations have opened in South Florida, one in Ft Lauderdale and one in Wilton Manors. Since making their Florida debut in Fall 2023, Bagels & Co. quickly made a name for itself in the area's competitive bagel market. Bagels & Co. plans to continue expanding throughout Florida and Pennsylvania before they enter new states.

◆ **Ace Mart Restaurant Supply has recently acquired Curtis Restaurant Supply.** Terms of the deal were not disclosed. Founded in 1946, Curtis is an Oklahoma-based foodservice equipment and supplies dealer whose client base includes national chain restaurants, hospitals, casinos, churches, schools, non-profit organizations, military and healthcare facilities. Jonathan



Gustafson is the president of Ace Mart, which is based in Texas. 12th location for the chain, which is more than 30 years old, and has stores in PA, DE, MD and New Jersey.

◆ **Restaurant Depot** has had their Grand Opening on November 20 in Ocala. The new facility takes over part of the old Sears location at the mall. This new 'still under construction Paddock Mall' is in the former Sears spot. Based in NY, Restaurant Depot sells supplies and equipment to businesses of all sizes in the food service industry. Restaurant Depot is now at 3100 SW College Rd., adding yet another location to their portfolio. Restaurant Depot says "It's where the Restaurants Shop." **They are also opening another location in Tulsa, OK in February 2025,** located at 4538 S Sheridan Rd. Visit the company online at restaurantdepot.com.



◆ **After establishing the Austin-based concept Honest Mary's** in 2017 and expanding to four locations, restaurateur Nelson Monteith announced he is bringing his brand's signature healthy grain bowls to his hometown of

Houston. **The first Houston location, set to debut in Fall 2025,** will open in River Oaks at 2047-A West Gray St., at the South Shepherd Drive intersection. Ideally located to serve busy families and professionals, Honest Mary's will offer both dine-in and grab-and-go options. "It's a joy and honor to bring a brand we've worked hard to create in Austin and finally be able to share that concept with friends and family in Houston," says Monteith, born and raised in Houston.

◆ **Walk-On's Sports Bistreaux announced it has signed a 20-restaurant development deal with Port Royal Brands to bring its family-friendly sports bar to fans throughout Georgia and Tennessee.** The first of Port Royal's

Walk-On's locations is set to open in 2025. This agreement marks the first since the company announced its new restaurant format featuring a smaller footprint, upgraded technology and enhanced guest experience. The restaurants developed will feature the new, modern restaurant prototype, with an elevated exterior design, immersive sports experience, and state-of-the-art kitchens. Port Royal Brands' Chief Executive Officer, Jef Wallace is a proven leader with expertise in strategy creation and transformation execution for several global restaurant brands. He brings a holistic view of franchising with deep backgrounds in real estate, supply chain, operations and finance. Walk-On's Chief Executive Officer Chris Porcelli sees this partnership as a win-win that will strengthen the brand's portfolio. "Walk-On's knows partnering with the right people that share our game day mentality will help us achieve our long-term growth goals," said Porcelli. "We are thrilled to have Phil and Jef join our roster of exceptional franchisees. The Port Royal team will help us expand our footprint throughout the Georgia and Tennessee markets to continue to make Walk-On's the top choice of savvy sports fans everywhere." Jennifer Striepling is their Chief Development Officer. Visit walk-ons.com. The photo shows the new prototype restaurant.



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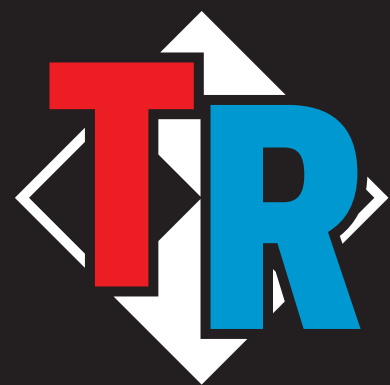
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# Italy becomes partner country for both 2025 Fancy Food Shows

New York, NY - The Specialty Food Association announced an exciting year-long partnership with Italy for 2025 making Italy the partner country for both the 49th Winter Fancy Food Show (January 19-21, 2025, Las Vegas Convention Center) and the 69th Summer Fancy Food Show (June 29-July 1, 2025, Javits Center, New York City).

Owned and operated by the [Specialty Food Association](https://www.specialtyfood.com) (SFA), the bi-annual Fancy Food Shows are known for showcasing the newest and best in specialty food and beverage from all corners of the world. Italy has been an integral part of the events' success for more than three decades.

This expansive new partnership will both celebrate that legacy and establish never-before-seen opportunities for Fancy Food Show participants to experience Italian food, culture, and entertainment. Italy's Pavilion at the 2025 Winter Fancy Food Show, will feature more than 90 exhibitors, a "new product zone" with guided tasting sessions and an array of chef showcases, a Celebrating Italy event on Monday afternoon, and more. These interactive experiences underpin the refreshed ambitions of the annual Winter Show, which include bringing to life emerging consumer trends like Girl Dinner 2.0 and Yes, Chef and cultivating



opportunities for community, connection, and shared inspiration among attendees and exhibitors.

"30 years ago, we accepted an amazing challenge to create the Italy

*"The entire SFA team is buzzing about working with Italy on both of the 2025 Fancy Food Shows."*

pavilion within the Fancy Food Shows, and for 2025, we are very proud to contribute to making Italy, for the third time, Country Partner of the Fancy Food Shows," stated Donato Cinelli, president of Universal Marketing, exclusive agent for Italy of the Specialty Food Association. "Step by step, we've seen the growth of Italian business owners, districts and consortiums, which over time have understood the importance of telling their product's story; today more than ever, consumers in the United States are fascinated by stories of Made in Italy: Quality, Passion and Success."

"The entire SFA team is buzzing about working with Italy on both of the 2025 Fancy Food Shows," said Bill

Lynch, SFA president. "Our friends at Universal Marketing have developed some new ideas and activations for their Pavilions and elsewhere on the Show Floor that will put the quality and sensory appeal of Italian cuisine front and center for our attendees, from live chef demonstrations to new product spotlights and more. We're grateful to have Italy as our partner in planning unforgettable experiences at the next two Fancy Food Shows."

The Fancy Food Shows are open to qualified members of the specialty food trade, industry affiliates, and media. For more detailed information, visit <https://www.specialtyfood.com/fancy-food-shows>.

**About the Specialty Food Association:** The Specialty Food Association (SFA) was founded in 1952 and is the not-for-profit trade association of the \$207-billion specialty food industry. Representing more than 3,600 businesses worldwide, SFA champions industry participation and success for a diverse community of makers, buyers, importers, distributors, and service providers by developing resources, information, education, and events that celebrate innovation and inclusivity. SFA owns and operates the *Fancy Food Shows* as well as the *soft™ Awards*, which have honored excellence in specialty food and beverage annually since 1972. SFA also produces the e-newsletter *Specialty Food SmartBrief*, the *Trendspotter Panel* annual predictions and Fancy Food Show reports, the *State of the Specialty Food Industry Report*, and *Today's Specialty Food Consumer* research. Find out more at [Specialtyfood.com](https://www.Specialtyfood.com).

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## Featured City New York!

The upcoming New York Restaurant Show 2025 is organized once a year and it is the most important event in the Northeast focusing on the food service industry. The top items being sourced at New York Restaurant event include food products, beverages, non-alcoholic, equipment, technology and business services. The New York restaurant show dates are March 23-25, 2025 and will be held once again at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, 655 W 34th St, New York, NY. The New York Restaurant trade show will offer the opportunity to find new products in restaurants and the food service sector.



Midtown Manhattan will soon welcome the Xadia Hotel, a new property comprising the entire under-construction Bryant Park Crown high-rise. [Marin Architects](#), the project's designer and architect of record, envisioned the 42-story tower, which features a cantilever façade and overlooks New York's Bryant Park. Xadia Hotel will boast 173 luxury guestrooms, a rooftop bar and restaurant, plaza, and arcade upon completion in mid-2025. Rendering courtesy of DHT Design (interior).

◆◆◆◆  
 Chef Daniel Humm has signed a lease for a 5,000-sq-ft restaurant in the West Village, at 435 Hudson St. As of today, the name of the place is unknown. The property, built in 1931, is a nine-story office with storefronts. The restaurant will open on the ground floor of the building next year, per a spokesperson for Humm. Daniel Humm is a chef, author, speaker, and owner of [Daniel Humm Hospitality](#), the New York-based hospitality group behind [Eleven Madison Park](#), [Clemente Bar](#), and direct-to-consumer



Chef Daniel Humm

◆◆◆◆  
 An opening in Chinatown is [Bar Oliver](#). This is a new tapas bar specializing in pintxos and vermouth. The owners / partners include the owner of the wine bar Casetta, and the restaurant [Casino](#), alongside Daniel and Evan Bennett of Babs and Mimi, and Jonas Laforteza. Bar Oliver is located at 1 Oliver St. New York, NY.



# TRN FEATURED RESTAURANT NEW YORK

◆ Today's Restaurant Feature

## Rolf's German Restaurant

Located near Gramercy Park at 231 3rd Avenue, in New York Rolf's German Restaurant offers a truly unique holiday dining experience all year long. "From the moment you step inside, you'll be enveloped in the festive atmosphere. Think hundreds of thousands of Christmas Lights and thousands of ornaments and icicles all strung and lined throughout the restaurant. In addition to these, there are hundreds of porcelain dolls and wreaths, artificial fir trees, garlands, ribbons, and other festive bits and pieces."

Rolf's has been voted year after year, the most Festive and 'Christmassy' Restaurant in NYC! Diners come from all over the world to dine at Rolf's. Lines form around the building during the holidays.

The original owner of Rolf's, Rolf



Hoffman, bought the wooden bar from Irreplaceable Artifacts and had it installed at the restaurant. In 1981, Bob Maisano took it over, and he has kept the menu the same and use the same recipes that Rolf, who was originally from Munich, had gotten from his mother.

"In order to achieve a feeling of warmth and coziness, our Christmas decorations are carefully designed by five artists. The workmanship is all hand done and takes approximately three months of labor. There are over 200,000 lights

*Rolf's German Restaurant features a wide selection of imported German Beers on tap...*



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strung throughout the entire restaurant. Many of the ornaments are vintage antiques. We try to create a Victorian feel turn of the century ambiance. An atmosphere to bring happy moments to treasure forever."

Specializing in Southern German or Bavarian cuisine, their specialties consist of Wiener Schnitzel, Sauerbraten, Potato, Pancakes, apple strudel and more.

Rolf's German Restaurant features a wide selection of imported German Beers on tap such as Hofbrau

lager, Radeberger, Weihenstephaner Weissbeer and Dunkel Dark. The full bar features a wide variety of high-end bourbons, whiskey and scotches. Additionally, the bar also offers holiday drinks. The Christmas Smoothie cocktail, made with Merry's vanilla cinnamon and a splash of Goldschlager, or the Rolf's Holiday Martini, made with Merry's Irish Cream Liqueur, vodka and Meletti Choccolato Liqueur are favorites among the diners.

Visit RolfsNYC.com.



lifestyle brand [Eleven Madison Home](#). A native of Switzerland, Chef Humm earned his first Michelin star at the age of 24. He is consistently listed as one of the world's best chefs, with both he and Eleven Madison Park receiving numerous accolades: four stars from The New York Times, seven James Beard Foundation Awards



(including Outstanding Chef and Outstanding Restaurant in America), a number one spot on the world's 50 Best Restaurants list. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chef Humm transformed Eleven Madison Park's Michelin-starred restaurant and its back-of-house into a commissary kitchen in partnership with [Rethink Food](#), a not-for-profit organization co-founded by Chef Humm. He and his team prepared over 1,000,000 meals over the course of the pandemic for frontline workers and underserved communities and distributed them to churches, shelters, and food banks.



[Smithereens](#), another new restaurant by chef Nick Tamburo offers a

modern taste of New England. It is inspired by the flavors, ingredients, and food traditions of New England. "We work to source the best products we can from the Northeast and further afield." The wine list is a tightly curated selection - issued daily and constantly changing- woven together like a collection of short stories. The opening list focuses

on white wines from Germany and coastal selections with high acidity. Co-owner Nikita Malhotra, a star sommelier, has developed a wine list that will rotate. Smithereens is located at 414 E. 9th St, New York, NY.

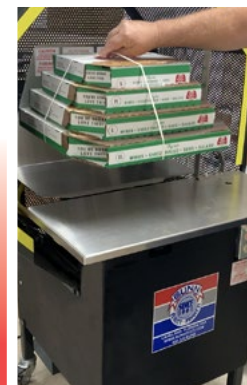
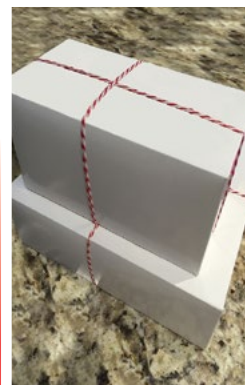
A new Italian American restaurant has opened in Rotterdam. The Palazzo Ristorante, owned by Joe Citone, is located at the former Joe's Pizza Place at 2780 Hamburg St in Rotterdam.

**Today's Restaurant** invites you to submit your info for the What's Going On column. E-mail your company or product info to [terri@trnusa.com](mailto:terri@trnusa.com) and try to keep the word count between 50-75 words. Get free publicity for your company, product, service or event!



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# The new “fun guys” — ‘shrooms, hot honey & Southeast Asian flavors to spice up menus in ’25

2025 What's Hot Culinary Forecast from the National Restaurant Association predicts top menu trends for next year

Washington, DC - The National Restaurant Association's [2025 What's Hot Culinary Forecast](#) is here, revealing top trends set to shape the nation's

menus with a fresh focus on flavor, wellness, and sustainability. This year, consumers can expect restaurant menus to buzz with wellness-enhancing mushrooms, honey-infused creations with a spicy twist, and the vibrant tastes of Southeast Asia. Today's diners are not only craving bold flavors but are also prioritizing environmental consciousness, value, and well-being in every bite.

The report, based on the insights of thought leaders in the culinary world, highlights the top trends that will shape the culinary landscape in the coming year. Among the hottest trends identified, sustainability and local sourcing emerged as the top overall trend on the list, with industry experts noting that customers increasingly seek out restaurants that offer locally sourced, environmentally friendly options.

In the “top ingredients” category, diners are expected to be ‘shrooming in

2025. Well, not exactly, but functional mushrooms are expected to become a real hit in wellness-centric dishes. Earthy fungi are now being explored by chefs

our planet,” said Dr. Chad Moutray, Vice President of Research and Knowledge for the National Restaurant Association.

“As customers seek sustainable choices and exciting new flavor experiences, restaurants are responding with options that emphasize locally sourced ingredients and innovative menu offerings. The popularity of Southeast Asian flavors also speaks to a more adventurous consumer palate, with many diners interested in global cuisine that brings added depth to their dining experiences.”

cuisine is sizzling in popularity, satisfying diners' thirst for adventurous and bold meals.

**4. Hot Honey:** Sweet with a kick! This honey variation is heating up dishes, adding a spicy buzz to everything from fried chicken to ice cream.

**5. Vietnamese Cuisine:** Light, herbaceous and packed with fresh flavors, Vietnamese food is ideal for health-conscious diners who love a balanced, flavorful meal.

**6. Hyper-Local Beer & Wine:** These drinks put the “cheers” in local flavors, connecting customers to regional brews and supporting nearby craft producers.

**7. Fermented / Pickled Foods:** From kimchi to pickled veggies, these zesty, tangy flavors are in a pickle to please diners who love a unique flavor punch.

**8. Wellness Drinks:** Functional beverages packed with ingredients like vitamins and probiotics are taking center stage, offering a sip of wellness in every glass.

**9. Creative Spritzes:** Refreshing, light and often low-alcohol, spritzes are sparking up the beverage scene, delivering a bubbly experience without the buzz.



everywhere as mushrooms offer a variety of perceived health benefits and can be used in everything from pasta dishes to coffee to delish desserts. Meanwhile hot honey—a sweet-and-spicy sensation—is heating up everything from pizza to ice cream. Leading customer cravings in cuisines, Southeast Asian flavors take the top three spots for “top dishes”. Korean, Vietnamese, and Filipino cooking are capturing Americans' attention for their unique, bold profiles that balance flavor and wellness.

“This year's forecast highlights a powerful shift toward enhancing both individual wellness and the health of

## Top 10 Overall Trends in 2025:

**1. Sustainability and Local Sourcing:** Eco-friendly practices are on the menu as diners increasingly prefer locally sourced ingredients and waste-reducing efforts that support the planet and local farms.

**2. Cold Brew:** Cold brew beverages are cooler than ever, satisfying those seeking energizing, smooth, and refreshing drinks without the bitterness.

**3. Korean Cuisine:** With its spicy, tangy, and umami-rich flavors, Korean

See **TOP 10** page 12

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# Circana reveals value-based deals shift market

Chicago, IL – The foodservice industry is experiencing a fundamental shift in consumer behavior, with value emerging as the primary driver behind purchasing decisions worldwide, accounting for 54 billion visits annually, according to the latest [Circana™](#) research. As inflation continues to challenge household budgets, consumers are looking beyond the lowest price point, prioritizing value, quality, and flexibility.

Across different regions, Circana is seeing distinct strategies and consumer responses to value in the foodservice sector:

**Asia Pacific:** While inflation has impacted the region, consumers are increasingly seeking value through promotions like snacking deals and combo offers. In China, where 53% of traffic is driven by deals, operators such as KFC, McDonald's, and local chains like Dicos

strategies, adding value, and implementing smart promotions have become critical for operators to retain customers and prevent them from trading out of the foodservice market altogether.

**United States:** Operators are focusing on deal strategies that help consumers manage tight budgets without pushing them to trade down from premium occasions. The key differentiator in the foodservice sector is not offering the lowest price, but rather providing value through creative offerings and strong customer engagement.

“As the foodservice industry continues to navigate these changes in consumer behavior, value has taken on new meaning,” said Tim Fires, president, Global Foodservice, Circana. “It’s no longer just about offering the lowest price, but about creating innovative combinations of pricing, promotion, and experiences that resonate across different dining occasions. By understanding both at-home and away-from-home dining decisions, businesses can better position themselves to meet consumer needs and succeed in today’s market.”

*About Circana: Circana is a leading advisor on consumer behavior. Through technology, advanced analytics, cross-industry data, and deep expertise, we provide clarity that helps the world's leading brands and retailers take action and unlock business growth. We understand the complete consumer, complete store, and complete wallet so clients can go beyond data to apply insights, ignite innovation, meet consumer demand.*



“As the foodservice industry continues to navigate these changes in consumer behavior, value has taken on new meaning,”

The emphasis on value is reshaping how foodservice operators approach their deal strategies. Visits driven by deal-based occasions grew faster than non-deal occasions in the past year, and while global eater checks have risen between 1% and 30% year over year, consumers are increasingly seeking promotions, loyalty programs, and creative offerings that deliver more than just low prices.

are engaging in price wars. However, it’s not just about slashing prices—combo deals and loyalty promotions are gaining traction as operators focus on adding value, with 9.9-yuan meal deals proving particularly popular.

**Europe:** Despite challenging economic conditions, including high inflation and rising value-added tax (VAT), consumers are increasingly focused on finding value. Managing pricing

## Top 10 from pg. 10

**10. Value Deals** – With inflation still on consumers’ minds, value-focused deals are keeping dining out accessible for budget-conscious patrons.

“Macro trends reflect the bigger-picture priorities of today’s consumers, extending beyond just what’s on the plate to convenience, creativity, and efficiency,” Moutray added. “As the restaurant industry tackles challenges like labor shortages and changing consumer values, operators are innovating with streamlined menus, pre-prepped ingredients, and inventive flavors that balance efficiency with excitement. This year’s forecast celebrates both novelty and nostalgia, offering modern twists on familiar favorites and globally inspired flavors that make dining out a memorable experience.”

The National Restaurant Association surveyed nearly 300 culinary and industry professionals in the U.S. in October 2024. **TR**

*About the National Restaurant Association: Founded in 1919, the National Restaurant Association is the leading business association for the restaurant industry, which comprises more than 1 million restaurant and foodservice outlets and a workforce of 15.5 million employees. Together with 52 State Associations, we are a network of professional organizations dedicated to serving every restaurant through advocacy, education, and food safety.*

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# Wonder Grubhub from page 1

food, with order-to-delivery times below 30 minutes.

For 20 years, Grubhub has connected merchants with nearby customers looking for takeout and delivery. Its logistics network covers the vast majority of the U.S. population with on-demand delivery from independent restaurants, leading national restaurant brands, and convenience, grocery, pet and office supply retailers. The company's loyalty program, [Grubhub+](#), provides members with \$0 delivery fees, lower service fees and 5 percent back on pickup orders. Beyond its consumer delivery marketplace, Grubhub has a [Campus Dining](#) business that powers online ordering at more than 360 universities and a [Corporate Accounts](#) business that provides flexible meal perks platforms for more than 10,000 companies.

"Wonder's acquisition of Grubhub continues our mission to make great food more accessible. As we enhance our customer experience with selection, speed, and variety, we're excited to soon offer a curated selection of Grubhub's restaurant partners directly in the Wonder app, alongside our owned and operated restaurants and meal kits," said Marc Lore, Founder and CEO of Wonder. "Bringing Wonder and Grubhub together is the next step in our vision to create the super

app for meal time, re-envisioning the future of food delivery."

"I am incredibly excited for Grubhub to join forces with Wonder and bring more value to our diners, merchants and delivery partners," said Howard Migdal, Grubhub CEO. "Since our earliest days, Grubhub has helped restaurants open their doors to new customers, while introducing diners to new cuisines. That's why I'm confident that Grubhub will complement Wonder's mission to make great food more accessible and that together we will create remarkable dining experiences for more customers across the country." **TR**

**About Wonder:** Wonder is a new kind of food hall that is revolutionizing the food industry by creating the super app for mealtime, operating a collection of delivery-first restaurants and pioneering a new category of "Fast Fine" dining.

Featuring some of the world's best chefs including Bobby Flay, Jose Andres, Nancy Silverton and Marcus Samuelsson, along with award-winning restaurants from across the country including Tejas Barbeque and Di Fara Pizza, customers can experience any combination of these chefs and restaurants all together in one order for the first time. In 2023, Wonder acquired meal kit pioneer Blue Apron.

**About Grubhub:** Grubhub is a leading U.S. food ordering and delivery marketplace. Dedicated to connecting diners with the food they love from their favorite local restaurants, Grubhub elevates food ordering through innovative restaurant technology, easy-to-use platforms, and an improved delivery experience. Grubhub features 375,000 merchants in over 4,000 U.S. cities.

Source: Grubhub.

# Jersey Mike's from page 1

helps provide store-level managers greater opportunities to become Jersey Mike's franchise owners.

The transaction is expected to be completed in early 2025 subject to the satisfaction of certain closing conditions, including applicable regulatory approvals. Blackstone's private equity strategy for individual investors is also expected to invest as part of the transaction.

Guggenheim Securities and Morgan Stanley & Co. LLC are acting as financial advisors and White & Case LLP served as legal counsel to Jersey Mike's. Barclays and Bank of America are acting as financial advisors and Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP served as legal

counsel to Blackstone. **TR**

**About Jersey Mike's:** Jersey Mike's Subs, with more than 3,000 locations open and in development, serves authentic fresh sliced/fresh grilled subs on in-store freshly baked bread — the same recipe it started with in 1956. Passion for giving in Jersey Mike's local communities is reflected in its mission statement "Giving...making a difference in someone's life." [jerseymikes.com](#).

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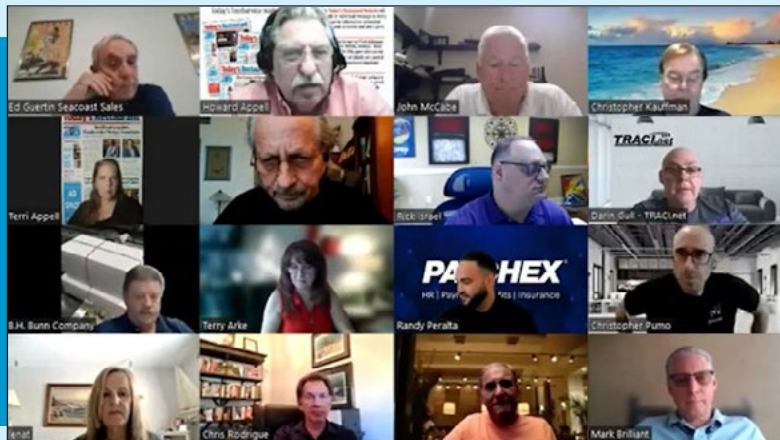
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