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# Improved 2024 outlook with remaining labor challenges, and other risks

By Stefan Burkey

The U.S. restaurant industry will continue to work through the effects of the pandemic in 2024, but that doesn't mean the challenges that remain are easily dispelled.

Even though cooling inflation is a positive, it's still [running](#) ahead of the Federal Reserve's 2% target and has not yet created cost relief. Stubbornly high interest rates also keep operators squeezed by long-term debt and revolving credit lines.

But the leading drag on the industry are its labor woes. The persistent shortage of people is aggravated by inflationary pressures on wages as well as new minimum pay requirements. Another growing risk: nuclear verdicts driving up the costs of liquor liability insurance.

Those restaurant organizations that closely monitor and manage such risks will be best positioned to ride out the turbulence. Here's an overview.

### Dealing better with labor pains

The industry needs more people. Full-service cafeterias and grill buffets are the segments experiencing the biggest struggle. Quick service, fast casual and bars and taverns have exceeded



Stefan Burkey

where they were in February 2020. By the end of 2023, the industry was still [14,000 jobs behind](#) pre-pandemic levels.

Nearly 75% of the industry executives surveyed in the HUB International 2024 Outlook Executive Survey said this has affected their business' vitality, leading over half to sharpen their employee recruiting practices.

In addition, many employers are responding to the tight labor market by sharpening their focus on employee experience to provide personalized benefits that speak to the individual's needs and wants. Older workers, for example, might prioritize prescription drug benefits and a robust retirement plan. Younger employees might be less interested in a comprehensive health plan, but more interested in telehealth and mental health counseling services.

In fact, offering wellness benefits that cover mental health services would solve a lot of the industry's ills. The environment, marked by ongoing disruption and uncertainty, has created a huge burnout problem. With their mental health affected, [42% of foodservice frontline workers](#) currently want to leave their jobs.

Many are realizing that [well-being benefits do make a difference](#), reducing recruiting costs and sick days taken as well as promoting employee satisfaction.

### Liquor liability, wage and hour risks grow

Nuclear verdicts over violations are increasingly common. One Miami bar,

See [BURKEY](#) page 14



## US Foods plans five new CHEF'SSTORES

New locations in North Carolina, Oregon, Virginia & first Georgia to open late 2024

Rosemont, IL - US Foods Holding Corp. (NYSE: USFD) - one of America's leading foodservice distributors - announced its plan to open five new CHEF'SSTORE® locations in 2024. The new stores will be in Beaverton, Ore.; Hampton, Va.; Hickory, N.C.; Sandy Springs, Ga.; and Virginia Beach, Va. The new locations are expected to open in the second half of 2024.

CHEF'SSTORE offers a one-stop-shop for restaurant operators, food industry professionals, community groups and at-home chefs to quickly

stock up or replenish ingredients and supplies by the case and in individual quantities. The new warehouse format stores will offer a wide assortment of products from fresh produce, meat, dairy, and beverages to restaurant equipment, catering essentials, janitorial supplies and other restaurant essentials. CHEF'SSTORE is open to the public seven days a week and no membership is required.

"We are thrilled to enhance our store footprint into new areas of the country where we can serve existing and new customers with exceptional value and

service, and a vast selection of competitively priced restaurant-quality products and supplies," said Irfan Badibanga, president of CHEF'SSTORE. "Our continued growth plans support our commitment to serving independent restaurant owners, foodservice operators, and community members with the products they need, exactly when they need them."

The Beaverton store will be located at 16305 NW Cornell Road and will be the 22nd location in Oregon. The new Virginia locations

See [CHEF'SSTORES](#) page 6

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## Appell Pie New feature & more

**Howard Appell** ♦ Today's Restaurant Publisher

Today's Restaurant News has been publishing since 1996 and the years have held some interesting and serious challenges for newspapers and printers throughout the years. As you now know in 2018 we became an all-digital newspaper and added several new services to our already popular publication.

Email marketing for vendors to reach our readers with their information was a natural expansion in the age of electronic correspondence,

The information we gather about restaurants coming and going led us to provide our monthly Restaurant Leads Report for the Florida and Georgia market. We also have added Alabama to our Georgia report.

Prior to the COVID lockdown we were hosting in person Networking Meetings locally in Boca Raton and vendors from Palm Beach, Broward and Dade County were getting together to help each other grow their businesses.

When the lockdown started we began utilizing the technology that came with Zoom and continued our meetings. An unintended benefit of using Zoom was that we were able to expand our reach and allow members from Texas, Louisiana, New York, Tennessee, the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama and even Canada. The members are committed to each other and are willing to help restaurant or bar owners, managers and chefs with any problems they may be dealing with when opening a new location or running an existing business. Are you looking for advice at no charge? Go to our website and sign up to attend one of the meetings [www.trnusa.com/network-group](http://www.trnusa.com/network-group)

In today's short attention span society, we find ourselves always looking to add new and exciting features to our mix. Beginning in the March edition of Today's Restaurant News we will endeavor to do just that. Each month we

will be featuring a City in the United States and taking an in depth look at the culinary scene and the expansion of the restaurant scene in each. Our first city in the spotlight will be Nashville Tennessee which is benefiting from the shift in population from the western portion of the country.

*In the months to follow we will be selecting cities large and small to showcase the cuisine of the country...*

Nashville is the center of Country Music and Southern Charm with big corporations from all over the country and abroad moving to downtown and growing the suburbs. Along with population growth comes the need for more restaurants that will cater to all types of cuisines. Executives on expense accounts, music industry stars and hopefuls from around the world are looking for a taste of home and Nashville is providing it.

Next month, April, our feature city will be Dallas and its huge metro-plex serving cuisine from all over the world and serving its rapidly expanding population. In the months to follow we will be selecting cities large and small to showcase the cuisine of the country which is really the cuisine of almost all countries.

Want to have your city featured? Drop us a line and tell us about what's going on. Send information to Terri McKinney [terri@trnusa.com](mailto:terri@trnusa.com) we would love to hear from you.

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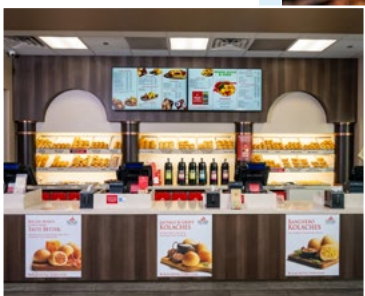


# What's Going On

Important new products, corporate news and industry events

Rocket Farms is constructing a casual Mexican restaurant concept called Little Rey with construction on locations in Houston TX, Atlanta GA and Nashville TN with more locations in the works.

The Houston location is expected to be the first location opening followed by Atlanta GA, then Nashville TN. "Ed Guertin, President of Seacoast Sales, Orange Park FL, says "We are happy to say we are supplying Carpigiani UC 191 Soft Serve Ice Cream machines to these locations. These machines have heat treatment which allows the user to clean the machines in intervals of up to 42 days as opposed to every 3-4 days with a convention machine."



**Taste! Central Florida**, the annual fundraiser to fight childhood hunger, will be Saturday, August 24, at Orlando World Center Marriott. The funds raised by Taste! Central Florida help **Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida** provide more than 244,000 nutritious meals each year to those in need. **Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida** directs the funds raised from Taste! Central Florida to childhood hunger relief programs at their agency to assist the 1 in 5 kids who are facing hunger. Follow ticket announcements and sponsorship opportunities on their website at [tastecfl.org](http://tastecfl.org).

Palmetto Park Rd and can be reached at 561.462.3000.

Expanding its national reach, **Kolache Factory**, a quick-service

bakery-café franchise known for its unique Czech pastry, the kolache, and other breakfast and lunch offerings, announced its arrival in the state of Alabama. The Katy,

Texas-based brand recently signed a deal to add a store in Huntsville. This marks the 61st store for Kolache Factory in its 9th state. The new bakery-café will be located at The Foundry – Building I, 3806 Governors Drive, Suite 102. The grand opening is scheduled for late summer to early fall. Local entrepreneur and retired U.S. Army major, Aaron Hall, is proud to open this café in his hometown. Hall and his team, share a vision of creating a welcoming, family-like atmosphere at their Kolache Factory Cafe. With plans for further expansion, they hope to open a second location once the Huntsville store is firmly established.



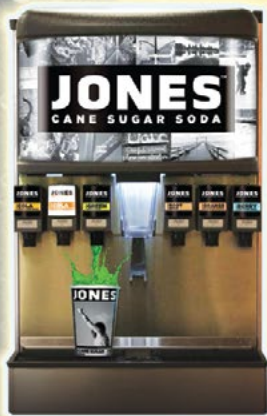
Brian Smetana

Carpigiani North America, an Ali Group company, has appointed Brian Smetana as Vice President Sales, Strategic Accounts for Carpigiani North America. Smetana brings more than 25 years of experience in the retail and commercial food-service industry to this role. He started his career at Ace Hardware in a business-facing IT role and then progressed to McDonald's Corporation to implement its first Global Data Warehousing. Since

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

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# Foodworks launches celebrity chef ALIST program

In partnership with HUNGRY, FOODWORKS ALIST Program provides organizations access to top-tier culinary professionals for events, cooking demonstrations, catering and more

Chicago, IL – [FOODWORKS](#), a national restaurant incubator under Compass Group USA that’s committed to shaping the future of dining through a local lens, announced the official launch of its celebrity chef program, ALIST, in partnership with notable food-tech marketplace [HUNGRY](#). Through this partnership, FOODWORKS and HUNGRY will connect businesses and organizations to top-tier culinary professionals for various catered events, dinners, cooking demonstrations and more.

*FOODWORKS offers multiple tiers and options for the ALIST program*

The ALIST program, coined as a “personal concierge to the country’s best chefs” by FOODWORKS President John Coker, brings America’s current and up-and-coming culinary talents to hosted parties or events across the country. The program offers cooking demos, catering, and unique culinary experiences curated to meet the diverse needs of events such as sporting occasions, large-scale gatherings, and workplace engagements.

With an all-star chef roster, including Chef Kai Chase, Chef Aaron McCargo Jr. and Chef Stephan Baity, FOODWORKS and HUNGRY have collaborated to create an exclusive and personalized experience for every business. Chef Kai Chase, a celebrity chef in California’s Bay Area, is known for her modern approach to New American cuisine and has served A-list celebrities and political figures, including President Barack Obama, Kevin Hart and Michael Jackson.

On the East Coast, both Chef Aaron McCargo Jr and Chef Stephan Baity have notable culinary backgrounds, receiving some of the industry’s highest awards and accolades as well as becoming



Chef Kai Chase



Chef Aaron McCargo Jr.



Chef Stephan Baity

recognized TV personalities. Chef Aaron is the host of Food Network’s Big Daddy’s House, where he shares his inspiration from many years in the industry and his fun-loving family while bringing a down-to-earth vibe and warm smile to

the kitchen. With over 20 years of experience, Chef Stephan is renowned for his expertise in sculpting fruits and vegetables into intricate creations such as flowers, custom logos, and centerpieces, he has also launched his artisan spice line,

Pop’s Secret Seasoning, dedicated to his late father.

FOODWORKS offers multiple tiers and options for the ALIST program, providing every party and organization the opportunity to find the right chef and culinary expert for them. Options include:

- ◆ Notable celebrity chefs to cook signature meals at various events, company meetings, celebrations and more
- ◆ Hire a favorite celebrity’s personal chef for a unique tasting and intimate behind-the-scenes experience
- ◆ Meeting with renowned health and nutrition specialists for tips and tricks to health and plant-forward dining
- ◆ Access to a roster of top specialist chefs that cater to a specific region, offering a hands-on cooking approach using local produce and ingredients

Those interested in booking the star-studded ALIST program for their next event can visit the [FOODWORKS website](#), [foodworkslocal.com](#) to get in touch with a team member for more information. 

**About FOODWORKS:** FOODWORKS partners with unique local restaurants and provides them with operating space in office buildings, retail developments, universities and other dining venues. FOODWORKS restaurant partners are neighborhood restaurants and women- and minority-owned businesses that share the same commitment to quality, sustainability and community involvement as FOODWORKS and its parent companies. <https://foodworkslocal.com>.

**About HUNGRY:** HUNGRY, the innovative food-tech marketplace that connects businesses with top local chefs and restaurants, was founded in 2017 by entrepreneurs Eman Pahlavani, Shy Pahlavani, and Jeff Grass. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., with a growing national footprint, HUNGRY has rapidly disrupted the \$60-billion corporate food and events market with its curated solutions as well as live and virtual experiences. HUNGRY is laser-focused on improving the lives of the chefs, clients, and communities it serves, donating over 1 million meals to people in need through its Fighting Hunger program and actively promoting waste reduction through its Food Solutions initiative. HUNGRY’s notable investors include Jay-Z’s Marcy Venture Partners, Kevin Hart, Usher, Ndamukong Suh, and celebrity chefs Tom Colicchio and Ming Tsai. In addition to Washington, HUNGRY has operations in Philadelphia, Atlanta, Boston, New York, Austin, Dallas, Los Angeles, San Jose, San Francisco, Chicago, Nashville, and Salt Lake City. Visit them online at [tryhungry.com](#).





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# Crave Hot Dogs & BBQ rapidly expands food trucks across United States




Crave Hot Dogs & BBQ, the beloved fast-casual franchise, is celebrating the success of its food truck venture, which has been rolling out across the US to include New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, Arizona and Florida.

With flavors and convenience, Crave's food trucks have become a hit at events and gatherings, captivating food enthusiasts and franchisees alike. Since the launch of their food truck model in 2020, Crave Hot Dogs & BBQ has been capturing the hearts and taste buds of communities nationwide. From the bustling streets of New Jersey to the vibrant neighborhoods of Georgia, Crave's food trucks have become synonymous with

delights and unique dining experiences.

"Our food trucks have been a game-changer for Crave Hot Dogs & BBQ, allowing us to bring our delicious offerings directly to our customers," said Samantha Rincione, CEO and Co-Founder at Crave Hot Dogs & BBQ. "The popularity of our food trucks speaks to the strength of our brand and the quality of our products, and we're thrilled to see them making waves across many states. We expect to add 10-15 trucks to the fleet this year"

The secret to Crave's food trucks lies in its combination of convenience, quality, and variety. Whether serving up specialty hot dogs, pulled chicken, pulled pork, or brisket sandwiches, each Crave food truck offers a diverse menu that caters to every taste preference. The famous Mac N Brisket Sandwich, a tantalizing fusion of tender brisket and creamy macaroni and cheese, has become a fan favorite, alongside classics like the New Yorker Hot Dog and Pulled Chicken Nachos.

In addition to delighting taste buds, Crave's food trucks offer a franchising opportunity for entrepreneurs looking to tap into the fast-casual food market. With a proven business model and a strong brand presence, Crave Hot Dogs & BBQ provides franchisees with the tools and support needed in the competitive food industry. 

## CHEF'SSTORES from page 1


in Hampton Town Centre at 1 Towne Centre Way and 4001 Virginia Beach Blvd. in Collins Square Shopping Center will be the third and fourth CHEF'SSTORE locations in Virginia. The Hickory store, located at 521 U.S. Highway 70 SW., will be the fifth CHEF'SSTORE in North Carolina. The Sandy Springs store, located at 6337 Roswell Road NE., will be the first CHEF'SSTORE in Georgia.

With the five new locations, US

Foods will now have a network of more than 95 CHEF'SSTORE locations across 14 states by year-end.

**About CHEF'SSTORE:** CHEF'SSTORE, "Built for chefs, open to everyone," offers a customer-centric, warehouse-format shopping experience for wholesale food and restaurant supplies at competitive prices. Designed as a one-stop-shop for restaurant operators and foodservice professionals, CHEF'SSTORE is also an option for non-profit organizations and the public, and no membership is required. CHEF'SSTORE locations feature an assortment of thousands of food products including fresh meat, produce, dairy, and deli items.

Customers will also be able to shop for grocery products, beverages, catering essentials, janitorial supplies, and other restaurant essentials. CHEF'SSTORE – CHEFSTORE.com - is owned by US Foods and offers more than 90 locations nationwide across 13 states.

**About US Foods:** US Foods is a leading foodservice distributor, partnering with approximately 250,000 restaurants and foodservice operators. With 70 broadline locations and more than 90 cash and carry stores, US Foods and its 30,000 associates provides its customers with a broad and innovative food offering and a comprehensive suite of e-commerce, technology and business solutions. Online at usfoods.com. 

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# National Restaurant Association show celebrates 25 new recipients of KI Awards

KI Awards recognize cutting-edge equipment & tech advancements that address efficiency, savings & sustainability

Chicago, IL - The [National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show®](#), the epicenter of foodservice innovation and a showcase of emerging industry trends, announced the 25 recipients of the 2024 Kitchen Innovations (KI) Awards. Since 2005, the KI Awards program has been renowned for its role in defining the gold standard of foodservice equipment innovations. These 25 KI Awards recipients reflect the current priorities of foodservice operators, showcasing advancements in automation, efficiency, safety enhancements and sustainability. This year's recipients will be showcased at the 2024 National Restaurant Association Show, taking place May 18–21, 2024, at McCormick Place in Chicago.

*The KI Award recipients were selected by an independent panel of judges comprised of industry leaders...*



Tom Cindric, President of the National Restaurant Association Show, remarked, “The KI Awards have been instrumental in defining excellence and driving innovation within the foodservice industry for two decades. The evolving landscape of technology—including developments in AI, robotic solutions, autonomous ordering and customer service—has elevated the KI Awards to expand beyond back-of-house operations to also recognize innovations that offer labor, waste, and energy savings. As we celebrate this milestone, we are proud to honor the impact of the KI Awards in recognizing groundbreaking solutions that address the ever-evolving needs of foodservice operators.”

The KI Award recipients were selected by an [independent panel of](#)


[judges](#) comprised of industry leaders representing international brands across foodservice, including Aramark, Cracker Barrel, Walt Disney World Resort and the U.S. Air Force. The esteemed panel carefully reviews each nominee and has chosen to recognize these 25 recipients as the year's most forward-thinking and cutting-edge kitchen and product innovations, which not only elevate foodservice operations but also significantly contribute to industry progress.

Jim Thorpe, Senior Food Service Designer at Aramark and a long-standing KI judge, highlighted the significant role of the KI Awards in shaping industry trends: “The KI Awards have played a pivotal role in shaping the future of our industry. We've adapted our own go-to-market strategies due

to the significant impact and influence of these special innovations. Year after year, KI awardees bring forth fresh ideas and new approaches that elevate the foodservice experience.”

Foster F. Frable, Jr., President of Clevenger Frable LaVallee, echoed this sentiment and emphasized the evolving landscape of kitchens: “There's no such thing as a ‘basic’ kitchen anymore. Menus and cuisine now incorporate ingredients, cooking, and preparation methods that were unimaginable a decade ago. The KI Awards serve as a gateway to explore new products evaluated by unbiased industry experts, not just for novelty, but for genuine innovation and practicality.”

The 2024 KI Award recipients will be featured in a dedicated Kitchen Innovations Showroom in the South Hall and highlighted in a special session, titled “[The Kitchen of the Future: Kitchen Innovations Awardees Paving the Way for What's Next](#)” on Saturday, May 18 at 3:30 p.m.

For more information about the National Restaurant Association Show and to register, visit [nationalrestaurantshow.com](#). Connect with the Show online on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#). To See the Award Companies and Products visit the website. 

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## Eggs Up Grill opens first location in Tennessee

Eggs Up Grill, a rapidly expanding breakfast, brunch and lunch concept has recently opened its first restaurant in the Nashville metropolitan area in Hermitage, Tennessee. Located at 4606 Lebanon Parkway in Oakwood Commons, the restaurant is the first of 10 Eggs Up Grills for Franchise Partners Dr. Ron and Amy Fausnaught.

The Fausnaught family owns two successful Crumbl Cookies franchises in Hendersonville and Murfreesboro, Tenn. Dr. Fausnaught, a chiropractor of 31 years, recently retired from private practice to devote his energy to Eggs Up Grill, his other businesses and real estate ventures. Amy, who worked alongside Dr. Fausnaught as office manager, previously worked in the travel and hospitality industry for 10 years.

"We fell in love with Eggs Up Grill because of the bright and friendly atmosphere and the great food that is priced well for families and offers something for everyone," said Amy Fausnaught.

With indoor seating for 125 and outdoor seating for 36, the 3,618 square-foot restaurant is designed to make guests feel at home in a light, bright and cheery atmosphere.

They have locations across the Carolinas, Georgia, Florida, Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, Texas, Mississippi, and soon entering Ohio. 

*About Eggs Up Grill: Eggs Up Grill is home to the whole neighborhood and has been serving smiles for more than 25 years. The aromas of freshly brewed coffee, savory bacon and hand-cracked, farm-fresh eggs and juicy b*

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Headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee, Workwear Outfitters manufactures purpose-built uniforms. Built on the values of great service, innovation, comfort, and durability, the company's brands outfit more than 16 million workers in various industries worldwide. Each brand provides specialized attire and footwear tailored to the unique demands of different sectors and occupations, ensuring comfort, durability, and safety in the workplace.



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*Purpose-built workwear: Meeting demands of the kitchen environment*

"The Red Kap team has spent countless hours in restaurants and kitchens across the country to immerse ourselves in the needs and wants of chefs, cooks, butchers, bakers, managers, dishwashers, servers, etc.", Workwear Outfitters uniform solutions consultant Terry Lena explained. "We watch them work, work alongside them, ask questions, and observe. Every experience informs our garment designs, ensuring they meet the industry's unique requirements."

Understanding the rigorous kitchen environment, Red Kap workwear experts set out to create attire that met and exceeded the expectations of chefs and kitchen staff. Today, Red Kap's Culinary Collection boasts





# RESTAURANT CITY VILLE



## WORKWEAR COMPANY empowers Red Kap Brand



demands of the profession while reflecting the professionalism and personality of their establishments. "We've made it our mission to create workwear that empowers them to focus on their craft without being hindered by their attire," Lena noted.

As culinary trends evolve and challenges arise, one thing is sure: Workwear Outfitters and Red Kap will be there at every step, empowering chefs and kitchen staff to perform at their best while looking and feeling their finest.

Workwear Outfitters is the world's workwear authority and leading manufacturer of innovative work apparel and footwear for workers who dedicate their lives to making our world work better. The company employs more than 5,800 people in facilities spanning the globe. Brands under the Workwear Outfitters umbrella include Red Kap®, Bulwark®, Workrite® Fire Service, Horace Small®, Kodiak®, Terra®, and Liberty®, and Chef Designs®. Workwear Outfitters is also the exclusive licensee for Dickies® apparel in the B2B channel.

To learn more about Workwear Outfitters, visit [wwof.com](http://wwof.com). Interested in the Red Kap Culinary Collection? [Click here.](#)

an array of features tailored to the demands of the kitchen environment. From moisture-wicking fabrics and temperature-regulating designs to OilBlok technology and flex panels for maximum movement, each garment is crafted to meet the unique



Salento Italia has recently opened at 329 Donelson Pike in Nashville. The concept is that of Sam and Bill Darsinos. It is a cozy neighborhood Italian restaurant located on the backside of Emery Commons Plaza in the heart of Nashville's Donelson community. "Our beautiful two-floor dining room is awash in white oak woodwork, featuring soaring 25-foot ceilings, inviting leather-wrapped banquettes, a dramatic white oak & wrought-iron staircase & tons of natural light." The restaurant marks a long-imagined collaboration between brothers Bill Darsinos (GReKo, Southside Grill, SweetMilk) & Sam Darsinos (Darfons, GReKo), whose vision is to create a relaxed, welcoming gathering place where guests enjoy thoughtfully-prepared versions of comforting Italian dishes with subtle nods to their family's Greek roots.



Mr Brews Taphouse, the award-winning, full-service craft brew pub and restaurant debuted an expansion for the brand with the launch of its new Signature series, specially curated for prominent locations like downtown major cities. This new prototype aims to introduce the unique Mr Brews pub experience to a new urban landscape, further positioning the evolving brand as a leader within the craft brew and restaurant space. The growth doesn't stop with the new concept, as illustrated by the brand's two location openings in January – one in Kansas and another in Murfreesboro, Tennessee at 5525 Franklin Road. The Chief Operating Officer is Ken Leetch.

James Beard-nominated Chef Victor Albisu's new restaurant, Taco Bamba is currently under construction at 4017 Hillsboro Pike in Nashville, TN. The restaurant started in Virginia 2013. Taco Bamba adds Nashville to a dozen locations from Maryland to North Carolina. Taco Bamba is a chef-driven taqueria concept.



by Chef Victor Albisu

Limo Peruvian Eatery launched recently at 1008 Fatherland St. in East Nashville. Located in the former Far East space, Limo comes to the neighborhood courtesy of chef Marcio Florez (the Inka Trailer) and Mauricio Sulay. While the duo is still working on obtaining a liquor license for the restaurant's soon-to-be full bar, they're currently offering a full menu that includes several traditional Peruvian dishes.



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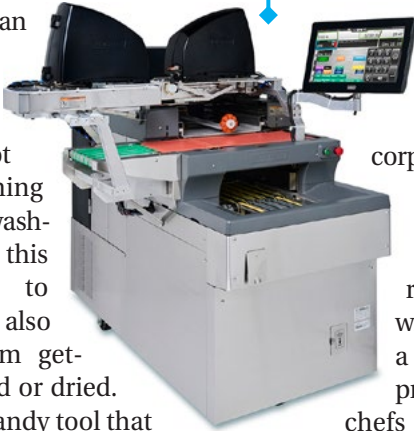
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# What's Going On from page 3

then, he has held various Sales and Account Management positions with Marmon Foodservice Technologies, Carter-Hoffmann Doyon, and LG Electronics, where he partnered with his customers to bring the best solutions and strategies to market. Brian brings a wealth of knowledge in developing QSR and Retail sales channels from his experience with McDonald's and various other companies.

Working in the food and beverage industry often requires you to wear an apron to keep your clothes clean, and to have pockets to carry tools, pens, and paper. Many employees are required to wash these aprons at home, which can create a mess. Aprons strings tend to twist through and knot around everything else that you're washing. Not only is this knot annoying to unwind it can also keep items from getting fully washed or dried. **Wad-Free** is a handy tool that attaches to apron strings and help prevent them from tangling and twisting with other items in the load, so everything comes out cleaner and dries faster.



**Hobart has introduced the latest feature enhancement to the NGW Automatic Wrapper** – dual labeling capability with a secondary automatic label applicator allowing grocers to mark product with two independent labels. The Hobart NGW2P has all the same features and functionality of the Next Generation Wrapper (NGW) automatic wrapper, with the addition of a secondary label printer. The NGW is designed to increase efficiency by reducing downtime and minimizing service calls to deliver the best total cost of ownership. This highly connected product is the solution to working most effectively in fast-paced, high volume meat rooms in retail grocery stores. Visit [hobart-corp.com](http://hobart-corp.com). thank you.

Launching a successful restaurant and having to deal with overhead costs can be a challenge. A pair of entrepreneurs want to help local chefs overcome. **Jim Pachence and Kristin McKinney Zelinsky, who is the owner of the Pro Kitchen Hub in Tampa, have joined forces to open Foodie Labs.** "We sponsor special culinary events, as well as offering our space for your own special event."

"For the foodie entrepreneur, we have six ghost kitchens, two bake stations, a professional demonstration kitchen, event space, and two shared kitchen spaces." The Foodie Labs also provides a three-tier mentoring and marketing program for aspiring chefs, food trucks, caterers or any entrepreneur getting started in the food business. This will include necessary certifications, licensing, classes and networking. Foodie Labs is located at 515 22nd Street S in St Pete. 888.417.8227 or [thefoodielabs.com](http://thefoodielabs.com).

**Nando's PERi-PERi South African restaurant** known for spicy flame-grilled chicken, will open two Atlanta locations this year. One will be their flagship store at High Street and a second restaurant will be located at The Forum in Peachtree Corners.

**Jones Soda Co.** the original craft soda known for its unconventional flavors, and user-submitted photo labels, announced a new food service division that expands the iconic brand beyond retail grocery to bars, restaurants, and other full service, quick service, eating and drinking organizations. The new division is led by industry veteran Victor Petrone, Managing Director of Food Service/Hospitality at Jones, with top

redistributor Dot Foods, notoriously selective of suppliers, broker Green Nature Marketing, and small format retail broker Ignite Brand Advisors as partners. The One Group, STK Steakhouse, and Kona Grill restaurants nationwide are the first to add Jones to their menus, with more food service operators to come. **The new food service division at Jones Soda is the first time the company has expanded into food service.** Previously, Jones was solely available at retail grocery and convenience stores, or online, including major retailers like Walmart, Kroger, Albertson's, Circle K Divisions, Kum & Go and many others, as well as the Jones Soda ecommerce store. The brand has recently expanded into the pet category with Jones Dog Soda. For more information visit, [www.jonessoda.com](http://www.jonessoda.com).

**1Concier, an industry-leading solution provider of high-quality linen products,** has launched its eCommerce platform, a modern and user-friendly online ordering experience. 1Concier eCommerce aims to streamline the ordering process, enhance customer convenience, and provide personalized solutions tailored to individual needs. "We are thrilled to introduce our eCommerce platform, which represents our commitment to providing exceptional



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

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# Data: Franchising exceeds growth expectations

The International Franchise Association (IFA) just released its annual [Franchising Economic Outlook](#) showing that franchise growth exceeded projections for 2023, even in the face of ongoing economic uncertainty. On top of the 2.2 percent growth experienced in 2023, the report forecasts that franchises will grow an additional 1.9 percent in 2024, adding 15,000 units and 221,000 jobs in the United States. IFA also released the findings from its [2024 Franchisor Survey](#) detailing the challenges posed by the labor market, rising prices, and policy trends.

“More than anything, these reports demonstrate the resilience of the franchise business model,” said Matthew Haller, IFA President and CEO. “Even in the face of macroeconomic factors like high inflation, labor availability and the cost of capital, franchised businesses continue to outpace the growth of the broader economy. For those considering a franchise investment or IFA members growing their brands, franchising continues to be a major driver of economic growth and small business creation.”

“The data shows franchising continues to exceed economic expectations,” said Darrell Johnson, CEO of FRANData. “Even amid rising interest rates, franchising grew ahead of our projections. With continuing inflation and labor challenges, a U.S. presidential election, geopolitical tensions, and technological advances in artificial intelligence, 2024 should be a transition

year for the U.S. economy, but franchising continues to stand out.”

### Key findings from the 2024 Franchising Economic Outlook:

- ◆ The number of franchise establishments will increase by more than 15,000 units, or 1.9%, to 821,000 units. Franchising exceeded FRANData’s projections for 2023, with establishments estimated to have grown by 2.2% com-

pared to the 1.9% previously forecasted and an increase compared to the 1.8% growth rate recorded for 2021 to 2022.

◆ Franchising is expected to add approximately 221,000 jobs in 2024 and bring the total employees to 8.9 million in the United States.

◆ Total franchise output will increase by 4.1%, from \$858.5 billion in 2023 to \$893.9 billion in 2024.

◆ Personal services and quick service restaurants (QSRs) will experience the strongest growth of any industry.

◆ Growth in the Southeast and Southwest will outpace the rest of the U.S. franchise market in 2024. The top

ten states for franchise growth are: Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Maryland, Arizona, Colorado, and Virginia. California and Washington are forecast to be the slowest-growing states for franchising at -4.2% and -2.3%, respectively.

Conducted by FRANData, an industry-leading research and analytical firm, the Franchising Economic Outlook is IFA’s annual study detailing the franchise sector’s performance for the past year and projected economic outlook for the year ahead, as well as an in-depth state outlook for all 50 states and Washington, D.C.

In addition to the Economic Outlook, the 2024 Franchisor Survey highlighted the continued economic challenges facing franchising. Despite these economic headwinds, the forecasted growth reinforces the franchise sector’s enduring strength.

### The survey revealed:

- ◆ 80% of respondents reported their franchises have unfulfilled job vacancies.

- ◆ Inflation, the third leading business challenge, dropped in rank, with only 9% of respondents citing it as their primary concern, down from 20% the previous year.

- ◆ 34% of businesses cite the cost and quality of labor as the number one business challenge, but down from 47% in 2023.

- ◆ Franchisors are highly concerned that the relationship with franchisees will change due to the Biden Administration’s new joint employer standard, with 74% citing a high-level of concern.

- ◆ 81% of the respondents increased wages in the past six months, and only 61% are planning to increase in the next six months due to ongoing regulatory uncertainty.

- ◆ Rising prices, including higher wages, have led to margin compression. Emerging challenges for the year ahead include the cost of financing and weakening consumer demand.

**About the International Franchise Association:** Celebrating over 60 years of excellence, education, and advocacy, the International Franchise Association (IFA) is the world’s oldest and largest organization representing franchising worldwide. IFA works through its government relations and public policy, media relations, and educational programs to protect, enhance and promote franchising and the approximately 806,270 franchise establishments that support nearly 8.7 million direct jobs, \$858.5 billion of economic output for the U.S. economy, and almost 3 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). IFA members include franchise companies in over 300 different business format categories, individual franchisees, and companies that support the industry.

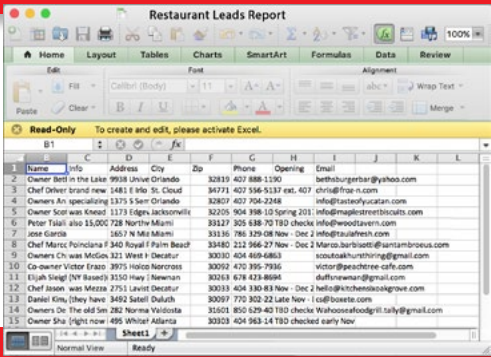


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**Tommy Gordo**  
Community Manager  
**Mitch Jaffe**  
Founder Chef Executive

Photos by  
**Brian Josselson,**  
**Rogue Financial**





# The real cost of losing your restaurant staff

David Scott Peters ♦ Today's Restaurant Contributor



Picture this: Sarah, a talented line cook in a popular downtown restaurant, decides to quit unexpectedly. The owner, John, thinks he can easily replace her but what he doesn't realize is that Sarah's departure sets off a chain reaction. There is lower morale among the staff, a decline in the food quality and, eventually, a drop in customer satisfaction. Let's explore the hidden costs of this kind of turnover and how you can turn this challenge into an opportunity.

## The hidden costs of restaurant staff turnover

There's one thing you can't teach in the restaurant business and that's experience, especially experience in your restaurant. There's the experience of what a rush is like, what to do when your burners go out during service, or how to handle a crazy holiday weekend. These are just a few examples of those things that can't be taught in a manual. Sure, you can systemize a lot of it and teach staff your system, your process, your way and make sure they're as prepared as possible but nothing truly replaces the institutional knowledge your experienced employees have.

There are also training costs involved and training for new hires is expensive. Twenty years ago, when I first started coaching restaurant owners and their managers, the estimate for turnover was about \$2,000 per employee. Today, studies like the one by the Society of Human Resource Management called the "Human Capital Benchmarking Report," showed the cost of turnover today is \$4,129 per new hire. That number includes costs like training wages for the employee and the trainer, uniforms, product errors, service errors and insurance. That's more than double what it was 20 years ago, so financially it's expensive when you lose somebody and have to bring somebody else in.

*It's important to support employees, make sure they feel engaged in your business, that they're part of something bigger.*

How about the decrease in productivity and even team morale when you lose a seasoned team member? It might take two people to fill in that role, such as that well-trained cook that literally can handle two or three stations at a time, so on a slower day you only need two cooks on the line, not four. Your seasoned people have done their job over and over for so long that the process of doing their job has become second nature. They're much faster and can juggle more. That's where experience comes in. You can teach somebody to cook a dish but to do it quickly, multitask, know where everything is and to know the little secrets like the hot

hot and the cold spaces on the grill, that only comes with experience.

When a good team member leaves abruptly, it can damage morale because all the other employees that are still working there, their jobs just got harder. They lost the key team member that supported their work and, often, they're losing a friend. There's a good chance there's a bigger issue, something underlying in your restaurant that's truly affecting how that employee felt that left you. They're likely not alone in their experience and their feelings.

## Reasons employees leave

Employees leave because of limited advancement opportunities. While I get that many of your restaurant employees don't want opportunities for advancement, like to become a manager, many of your employees still want to know that there's a future with your restaurant.

Employees leave a poor work environment. When a job becomes too stressful, and you have lack of support due to poor management, people look for new jobs. It's important to support employees, make sure they feel engaged in your business, that they're part of something bigger. They want to work for an employer of choice.


Sometimes employees leave because they get a better offer. A better offer may be making more money and getting benefits or maybe it's the two reasons above.

Remember how I started with the example about Sarah and John? What if John could have retained Sarah by addressing her concerns? What could John have done to keep Sarah? He could have:

- ♦ Established and maintained open communication channels.
- ♦ Conducted regular training and development programs for team members, especially those who want to grow.
- ♦ Made his team members feel appreciated.

## Building a resilient team

The true cost of turnover is a web of interconnected challenges. Reassess your hiring processes, your training processes, your management. Re-evaluate everything you do in your business to look truly at yourself and say am I making sure my employees feel engaged and a part of this business? Are we an employer of choice? Consider this an opportunity to rebuild a stronger, more resilient team.

The question isn't whether you can afford to keep your employees. It's whether you can afford not to make the right choice. Turn those hidden costs of turnover into visible gains for your restaurant. The choice is yours. 

**About the author:** David Scott Peters is an author, restaurant coach and speaker who coaches restaurant operators how to stop being prisoners of their businesses and to finally 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 three principles to restaurant success at <http://www.davidscottpeters.com>.

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There were several Covid relief programs enacted to help businesses operate throughout the pandemic (Paycheck Protection Program, Restaurant Revitalization Fund, Employee Retention Credit, etc.). Initially, PPP loans appeared easier to qualify for but the IRS only allowed businesses to pick either ERC or PPP for relief - not both. Now, the ERC program remains available even if you already got PPP Loans and businesses are also eligible even if they didn't suffer a drop in revenue.

Businesses that meet certain ERC requirements can get up to \$26,000 per employee in fully refundable tax credits. Even businesses that only experienced partial shutdowns or didn't experience a loss in revenue are qualified to receive the credit - which is something that many payroll processing companies are inadvertently giving incorrect advice about.

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Burkey from page 1

for example, was ordered to pay a whopping \$95 million for damages stemming from a drunk driving incident.

It's a continuing problem into 2024, making it critical to have adequate liquor liability insurance. But it can be hard to get and very costly. Managers need to tighten their practices with fine-tuning and documenting policies, and training to help avert over-serving. Conflict resolution training is also a must.

Another potential issue in 2024 is the risk of wage and hour violations as higher minimum wage requirements take effect. This can get complicated, raising concerns like maintaining a fair pay gap between more experienced staff and minimum wage employees, and compensating fairly for tipped versus non-tipped work.

One of the impacts will be on employment practices liability insurance in 2024. Insurers are adding wage and hour exclusions to policies and reducing limits in response to class-action litigation filed by servers and other front-of-house staff.

Preparing for whatever comes

By consulting a broker before renewal, owners show underwriters their commitment to risk reduction as well as their plans for mitigating

potential exposures. It's the best way to secure coverage at the best terms and prices. Some guidelines:

◆ Thoughtfully lean into risk. Factors such as high interest rates and nuclear verdicts make insurance more expensive. Alternative insurance vehicles like captives can provide access to insurance capacity. Look for guidance on insurance strategies aligned with your risk profile and budget.

◆ Increase workforce engagement through benefits. Hospitality companies with a benefits strategy based on personalization that foster a quality employee experience (QEX) will boost engagement, have an advantage in recruiting and retention and lower risk as well.

◆ No surprises. Share with your broker any changes to the business to avoid surprises at renewal. Exposures and insurance needs should be reviewed at least 90 days prior to policy renewal, so your broker can identify the best options. TR

About the author: Stefan Burkey is the hospitality practice leader for HUB International Florida. In this role, he oversees insurance placement solutions for owners, developers, and operators from limited-service hotels to full-scale resorts. Stefan and his team clearly understand the financial needs and exposures associated with the hospitality industry, and their singular focus has generated profound market knowledge and significant buying power for HUB clients throughout Florida and the U.S.

What's Going On from page 10

service and convenience to our valued customers," said Tony Smith, President and CEO of 1Concier. "Customers can expect 24/7 access to their accounts, effortless ordering experience, and enhanced product information—all at their fingertips. Our goal is to offer a one-stop solution that meets the evolving needs of our customers." The eCommerce platform boasts several key features designed to optimize the customer experience. These include simplified navigation for quick product selection, an intuitive interface for seamless ordering, and customized product recommendations based on individual preferences and order history. Additionally, customers can benefit from access to detailed product descriptions, specifications, and care instructions, empowering them to make informed purchasing decisions.

◆ The Florida Restaurant & Lodging Show alongside the Pizza Tomorrow Summit this year will be held in Orlando at the OCCC from November 8-9th. This year is like no other, as they will present a: "FOOD TRUCK & TRAILER MARKETPLACE & SHOWROOM. A proven resource, this forum takes food

purveyors outside the traditional booth space setup and presents a brand-new, cost-effective, and high-impact professional environment for food trucks to present their products. This is a unique opportunity for food truck manufacturers to gain exposure and come face-to-face with buyers attending the Pizza Tomorrow Summit and the co-located Florida Restaurant & Lodging Show. There will be access to the pizzeria and restaurant operators who are looking to grow their mobile foodservice business. Contact David Kellogg the Account Executive Direct at 203.788.3794 or David@pizzatomorrow.com.

◆◆◆◆ The team behind Elemental Spirits Co. and The Zero Co. in Poncey-Highland in Georgia, will open Sidetracked Wine Co. later this spring in downtown Chamblee. Located on Pierce Drive, Sidetracked Wine will sell vintages from small and family-owned wineries producing natural, low-intervention, and organic wines. Besides retail sales the owners Malory and Cory Atkinson will also offer wine tastings and more. This new venture is expected to open Summer 2024. TR



TR Today's Restaurant

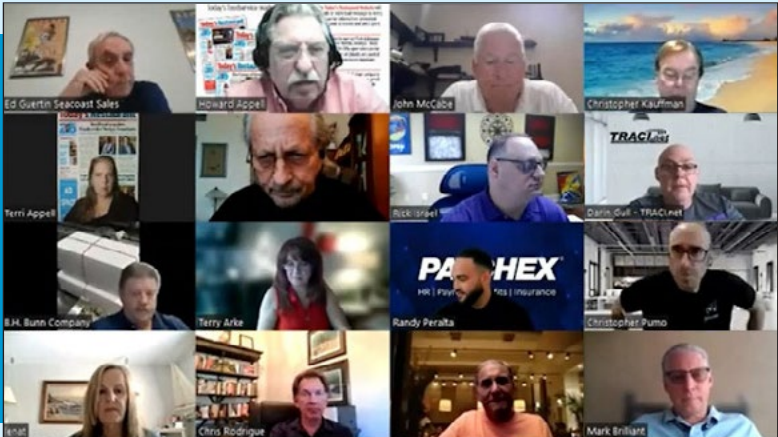
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[chris.rodrigue@ssc.partners](mailto:chris.rodrigue@ssc.partners) ♦ 985.778.1515 ♦ <https://ssc.partners>  
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#### PAYROLL AND CONSULTING

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