

2025

20 FAST CASUAL BRANDS TO WATCH

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NETWORLD
MEDIA
group

Tom Harper

Executive Chairman
tomh@networldmediagroup.com

Kathy Doyle

CEO
kathyd@networldmediagroup.com

Cherryh Cansler

VP of Events
Editor of FastCasual
cherryhc@networldmediagroup.com

Kimberly Wright

Digital Client Services Director
kimw@networldmediagroup.com

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The U.S. fast casual industry will [grow \\$65.2 billion to hit \\$149.96 billion by 2028](#). Trends driving that growth include the use of high-quality ingredients, locally sourced produce, fresh food, ethnic-inspired dishes, customization and the use of technology to enhance the customer experience.

These trends aren't new to most fast casual concepts, but there are many emerging brands embracing them with much success.

FastCasual's fifth annual report, "20 Brands to Watch," reveals some of those future leaders. To be considered, the brands, which nominated themselves, have at least one brick-and-mortar outlet and are under six years old.

A panel of judges narrowed down the applicants by reviewing their use of technology, menu innovation and future growth plans.

Also, after making the list, winners are not allowed to appear on the future editions. However, we expect to see at least a few of them on our future Fast Casual Top 100 Movers & Shakers report, which is published in May of each year.

We are honored to introduce the 2025 class of "20 Brands to Watch," and predict they will continue to help elevate the fast casual industry.

Congrats to all!

Cheers,
Cherryh Cansler
Editor, FastCasual



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See how



The Peach Cobbler Factory



Founded: 2021
Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Number of locations: 105
peachcobblerfactory.com

The Peach Cobbler Factory, which serves dessert as well as meat cobblers, has opened over 100 locations since launching four years ago and has more than 150 in the pipeline. Over 90% of its franchisees are African-American women, and locations are on college campuses, NFL stadiums and airports.



Tiki Taco

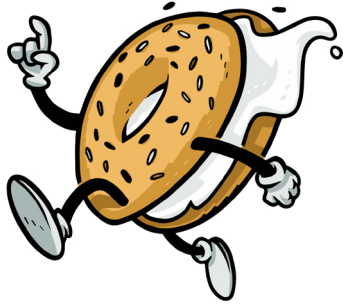


Founded: 2020
Kansas City
Number of locations: 3
TikiTaco.com

The scratch-made taco concept has a trendy vibe and specializes in a value proposition that starts at \$3. It's also a heavily tech-based, automated operation and will triple in size in 2025.



Jeff's Bagel Run



Founded: 2021
Orlando, Florida
Number of locations: 9
jeffsbagelrun.com

Since opening its first shop in 2021, Jeff's Bagel Run has experienced phenomenal growth, expanding to nine stores, with over 60 additional locations under development. Understanding the evolving needs of today's consumers, the chain has made significant investments in mobile ordering and real-time inventory management software to connect ordering to front-of-house and back-of-house.



Bosna Plus



Founded: 2021
Altenfelden Austria
Number of locations: 1
bosnaplus.at

Bosna Plus, a 75-year-old brand serving Bosna, a sausage stuffed in a bread roll with a ketchup-onion-spice mixture and curry powder, recently developed a prototype geared at Gen Z. It now offers online ordering and digital payment methods that are still unusual in Austria.



Harvest Clean Eats



Founded: 2022
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Number of locations: 9
harvestcleaneats.ca

Founded by a group of like-minded and passionate entrepreneurial individuals who saw a need for a healthy and affordable fast casual concept, Harvest offers chef-inspired menu using fresh ingredients in its proprietary recipes.



Fotia Mediterranean



Founded: 2023
New York, New York
Number of locations: 1
fotiamediterranean.com

Fotia is committed to providing guests with Mediterranean-inspired grain bowls, salad bowls, pita wraps and dessert using fresh, locally sourced ingredients and traditional cooking methods to create flavorful and nutritious meals.



20 FAST CASUAL BRANDS TO WATCH

Olga's Mediterranean Kitchen



Founded: 2021
Livonia, Michigan
Number of locations: 9
olgas.com

Olga's Mediterranean Kitchen, a new 'host kitchen' concept featuring Mediterranean-inspired breads, dips and small plates, launched in 2021. The original Olga's Kitchen, founded by entrepreneur Olga Loizon, the first woman to secure a loan from Bank of Detroit, joined the TEAM Schostak Family Restaurants portfolio in 2015. The portfolio also includes 61 Applebee's and 45 Wendy's restaurants.



World Famous Hotboys



Founded: 2020
Oakland, California
Number of locations: 7
worldfamoushotboys.com

The menu at World Famous Hotboys goes beyond typical fast food. The "Sando" and creative takes on loaded fries are generating buzz, and the "bonuts" (biscuit donuts) offer a sweet treat that's hard to resist. The restaurant has also cultivated a fun, engaging brand identity by being active on social media, interacting with customers and building a loyal following.



Breadless

Breadless®

Founded: 2024
Detroit, Michigan
Number of locations: 2
eatbreadless.com

Founded by Marc Howland, LaTresha Howland and Ryan Eli Salter, the restaurant concept focuses on serving low-carb, 100% gluten-free dishes. The trio hopes to provide a home for those struggling to find suitable menu options and change societal views on food choices by making nutritious Breadless meals accessible to everyone.



Saroki's Crispy Chicken and Pizza



SAROKI'S CRISPY CHICKEN & PIZZA

Founded: 2022
Southfield, Michigan
Number of locations: 20
sarokis.com

Saroki's experienced an impressive 100% increase in the number of locations opened from last year, thanks to its food and its strategy of being located within high-traffic gas stations. Known for its New York-style pizza and fried chicken tenders, the brand has become a local favorite.



Flametown Burgers



Founded: 2023
Atlanta, Georgia
Number of locations: 53
flametownburgers.com

In under two years, the better-burger brand has fanned the flames of expansion with 53 delivery and brick-and-mortar locations across the U.S., the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates. In 2024, it continued rapid expansion with non-traditional locations opening at Auburn University and East Carolina University.



Ghost Taco



Founded: 2023
Ontario, Canada
Number of locations: 3
ghosttaco.ca

Ghost Taco started as a pop-up location as a way to keep staff on the job after the pandemic forced owners Samantha and Grant Buckley to close their first business. The plan was always for Ghost Taco to disappear - hence the name. It didn't take long to realize the concept had staying power, however, as it was slammed with orders each time it operated. The company has since perfected the menu, packaging and operations and is building a taco empire.



Konala



Founded: 2023
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
Number of locations: 2
konalafanchise.com

Founded by Trace Miller, whose personal battle with epilepsy was transformed by nutrition, Konala brings a commitment to health and wellness to an industry where convenience often compromises nutrition. With a menu built around six signature bowls, air-fried chicken tenders, and kid-friendly options, Konala offers nutritious meals without sacrificing speed or taste.



Spagato



Founded: 2024
Daytona Beach
Number of locations: 1
spagato.com

Bringing a fresh twist to the American dessert scene, Spagato offers spaghetti gelato inspired by the German classic, Spaghettieis, and a dirty slush — a fusion of slushy and gelato. Each serving transforms familiar ingredients into playful, photo-worthy creations that grab the attention of the modern consumer. This visually captivating and unique approach has already started to attract a buzz on social media, positioning Spagato as a standout brand in the fast-casual dessert market.



Matcha Magic



Founded: 2022
Bellevue, Washington
Number of locations: 1
itsmatchamagic.com

A woman and minority-owned plant-based matcha bar, Matcha Magic has reported a 50% year-over-year revenue growth by serving ceremonial-grade matcha paired with adaptogens and boosters like Ashwagandha, Reishi and Blue Spirulina. Dedicated to sustainability and social-



impact initiatives, Matcha Magic uses only compostable or recyclable materials and donates 5% of its sales to Ladies Who Launch, a nonprofit committed to bridging the equity gap in entrepreneurship for women and non-binary entrepreneurs of diverse backgrounds.

Catch by Just Poké



Founded: 2022
Seattle, Washington
Number of locations: 11
justpoke.com/locations/catchtmobilepark

An offshoot of Just Poké, Catch debuted in Seattle's T-Mobile Park and Climate Pledge Arena, home of the Seattle Mariners and Seattle Kraken, serving poké bowls and sushi rolls. Co-founders Norman Wu and Danny Brawer recently launched a franchise opportunity to meet the demand for nutritious, responsibly sourced food inside venues, retail environments and stadiums. It will soon open within Walmart stores.



Chicken Spit



Founded: 2024
Daytona Beach, Florida
Number of locations: 1
chickenspit.com

With plans to open a second location in Port Orange by the end of the year, Chicken Spit reflects a fusion of Mexican, Middle Eastern and Pan-Asian cuisine created by Chef Jason Goodenough. At the heart of its offerings is its signature trompo chicken marinated for 48 hours to infuse a deep, robust flavor, then cooked on a vertical spit to perfection.



La Pinsa



Founded: 2024
Daytona Beach, Florida
Number of locations: 2
lapinsausa.com

La Pinsa delivers an ancient Roman classic, pinsa, to the modern American dining scene. Rooted in the origins of pizza, pinsa is a lighter, airier and crispier version crafted from a unique blend of flours giving it a delicate crust and distinct flavor profile. La Pinsa reimagines the ancient dish for today's diners, who seek crave-worthy meals that don't leave them feeling weighed down.



Local Kitchens

Local Kitchens

Founded: 2020
San Francisco, California
Number of locations: 13
loalkitchens.com

Local Kitchens offers a tech-enabled, multi-brand model celebrating up-and-coming chefs serving dishes from around the world, such as Mediterranean-inspired creations by NYC's Queen of Falafel Chef Einat Admony and authentic Mexican by James Beard Award-winning Chef Gonzalo Guzman. Most recently, Local Kitchens introduced the Sweet Onion Burger by celebrity chef Alvin Cailan, a fresh take on the Oklahoma Onion Burger and a first-of-its-kind in Northern California



Inked Tacos



Founded: 2023
Atlanta, Georgia
Number of locations: 4
inkedtacos.com

Inked Tacos, created by Aziz Hashim's Experiential Brands, goes beyond the standard taco. The Birria Taco, for example, is made of slow-roasted and stewed-in-chil-pepper broth beef birria. It's a best-seller and the focus of the menu. The menu also includes carne asada and grilled chicken options and is complemented by four original salsas, ranging in heat and flavor complexity.

