

JULY 2008

Restaurant Business

STREET SMARTS FOR THE ENTREPRENEUR

THE FUTURE 50

Nobody told
these guys it's a
tough economy.
Our exclusive look at
the 50 fastest-
growing small chains
in the country.


Big profits from low-cost
menu makeovers

Wine training done right

The extra mile: our new
distributor column



THE FUTURE 50



BY MICHAELA CAVALLARO, ISABEL FORGANG, SUSAN HOLADAY AND DANA TANYERI

THERE'S NOT A LOT OF POSITIVE BUZZ OUT THERE RIGHT NOW, BUT percolating under all the doom and gloom is clear evidence that you just can't keep a good concept down or clip the industry's entrepreneurial wings. The Future 50, identified by Technomic, Inc. as the fastest growing chains with sales between \$25 million and \$50 million, includes 32 that defied the odds to grow sales by 20 percent or more in 2007. Of those, a dozen hit 40 percent or higher sales growth. As a group, they're hot, they're nimble and they've got what many of their large competitors don't right now—momentum.

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20. Hurricane Grill & Wings

STUART, FL
S \$31.2 million*/30%
U 25/56.3%
A \$1.5 million*/1.7%

Hurricane is pursuing aggressive national expansion, opening five casual inline units early this year with 69 more to come in Missouri and Illinois. A new area development pact calls for units in New York City's boroughs and Westchester and Fairfield Counties plus one in Suffolk County opening this fall. A new re-branding design for both interiors and menus moves away from a tropical theme to a "Beach Life" look.



JIM 'N NICK'S BAR-B-Q

21. Jim 'N Nick's Bar-B-Q

VESTAVIA HILLS, AL
S \$43.5 million*/29.9%
U 21/23.5%
A \$2.3 million*/2.2%

Jim 'N Nick's takes its casual dining pulled pork and Angus brisket barbecue concept to Charlotte, North Carolina where it is currently hiring. The chain promises "No shortcuts ever." The menu features "the best of Southern culture."

22. Greene Turtle Sports Bar & Grille

EDGEWATER, MD
S \$37.5 million*/27.1%
U 19*/26.7%
A \$2.2 million*/4.8%

This casual dining concept with Angus burgers, sliders and wings opened its first airport location last year at BWI/Thurgood Marshall Airport. The first unit outside of Maryland opened last year in Washington, DC's Verizon Center.

23. The Chop House

KNOXVILLE, TN
S \$29.5 million*/25.5%
U 11*/10%
A \$2.8 million*/7.7%

Part of the Connors group, which operates three separate concepts, The Chop House serves moderately priced, aged steaks, ribs, prime rib and seafood at units in Tennessee and Ohio. This summer, stores will open in Augusta, Georgia. The chain's goal is "made from scratch food" and "a superior dining experience."

24. RA Sushi Bar Restaurant

SCOTTSDALE, AZ
S \$42 million*/24.4%
U 16/45.5%
A \$3.1 million*/-3.1%

Founded in 1996 by childhood buddies Scott Kilpatrick and Rich Howland, the ultra-hip RA Sushi Bar Restaurant grew to four units in Phoenix before catching the corporate eye of Benihana, Inc. In December 2002, Benihana acquired RA and commenced taking the sushi and sake sensation into urban markets throughout the country.

25. Sammy's Woodfired Pizza

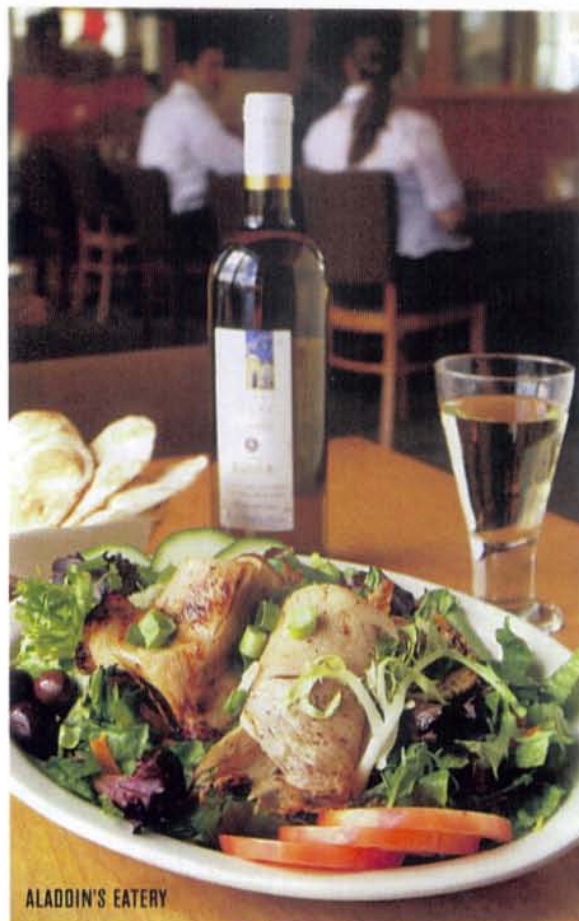
LA JOLLA, CA
S \$28 million*/24.4%
U 14/27.3%
A \$2 million*/0%

Founded by entrepreneur Sami Ladeki in 1989, Sammy's Woodfired Pizza offers a full menu of pizza, salad and pasta in an upscale casual setting. The chain's signature woodfired pizzas range from the traditional (spicy Italian sausage) to the unconventional (arugula and pear). Ladeki Restaurant Group recently finished a complete renovation of all Sammy's units and updated the menu to include more than 20 tapas. Four units are scheduled to open in California and Nevada this year.

26. Aladdin's Eatery

LAKEWOOD, OH
S \$26.5 million*/23.3%
U 26*/30%
A \$1.2 million*/4.5%

This casually upscale



ALADDIN'S EATERY

Lebanese-American concept offers healthy, natural pita pockets, "exotic" vegetarian dishes and meat-based specialties. Now franchising in 15 states, Aladdin's reports three to come this year as it moves into new markets in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Detroit, Michigan, and adds a unit in the western Cleveland 'burbs.

27. Bice Ristorante

NEW YORK, NY
S \$44 million*/22.2%
U 12/33.3%
A \$4.6 million*/2.2%

The Bice chain got its start in Milan in 1926, when Beatrice Ruggeri, known as Bice, opened a trattoria. Her sons, Remo (now deceased) and Roberto, developed a second location in Sardinia in 1978 and one in New York in 1987. Plans for 2008 include openings in Kansas City, San Diego, Florida and Arizona. Bice also operates in Tokyo, Paris, Sao Paulo and Amsterdam and will open in Dubai and Qatar, all under joint ventures and licensing agreements. The company is currently run by Roberto and Raffaele Ruggeri.

28. Whiskey Creek Wood Fire Grill

KEARNEY, NE
S \$35 million*/20.7%
U 16/23.1%
A \$2.5 million*/3.1%

This steakhouse chain, founded in 1995, locates its restaurants in smaller, secondary markets and suburban areas in the Midwest and Florida. Now up to 19 units (an update from the above Technomic figure), with ownership split roughly 50-50 between corporate and franchisees, Whiskey Creek distinguishes itself with its



THE KEY

- 2007 Systemwide sales/% change
- Total units open/% change
- Average unit volume/% change

RANKINGS BASED ON PERCENT CHANGE IN SALES
 ALL PERCENT CHANGES VS. 2006
 *TECHNOMIC ESTIMATE