

THE NEW RULES OF NETWORKING

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DIG INTO 2017'S **TOP 200** FOOD-BASED FRANCHISES

by TRACY STAPP HEROLD

WHILE THE FRANCHISE model has expanded into almost every type of business imaginable, franchises based around food remain an industry cornerstone. Almost a quarter of the 988 companies that applied for the 2017 Franchise 500 list were food-related. And according to the latest *Economic Impact of Franchised Businesses* report prepared for the International Franchise Association, "quick-service restaurants provided more establishments, jobs, and payroll and generated more output and contributed more to GDP than any other single line of business." Full-service restaurants and retail food businesses contribute significantly as well.

On the following pages we've ranked the top 200 food franchises, divided by category—such as Asian food, frozen desserts, and sandwiches—and then ranked them within their respective categories, so whatever type of food franchise you're interested in, you can see who comes out on top.

The rankings are based on each company's performance when run through our Franchise 500 formula, a comprehensive evaluation of more than 150 data points in the areas of costs and fees, size and growth, franchisee support, brand strength, and financial strength and stability. But keep in mind that the list is not intended as a recommendation of any particular franchise. Always do your own research to find the opportunity that's right for you. That means reading the company's legal documents, consulting with an attorney and an accountant, talking to as many existing and former franchisees as possible—and, of course, sampling the food!

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RETAIL FOOD

1
EDIBLE ARRANGEMENTS INTERNATIONAL
Sculpted fresh-fruit bouquets

STARTUP COST
\$196.6K–\$327.8K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
1,245 / 8

2
BEEF JERKY OUTLET FRANCHISE
Jerky, sausages, specialty foods

STARTUP COST
\$193.8K–\$293.4K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
72 / 2

3
THE HONEYBAKED HAM COMPANY & CAFE
Specialty foods, catering, cafés

STARTUP COST
\$291.8K–\$449.1K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
202 / 188

4
KILWINS CHOCOLATES FRANCHISE
Chocolates, fudge, ice cream

STARTUP COST
\$386.1K–\$540.6K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
105 / 2

5
WATERMILL EXPRESS FRANCHISING
Water and ice vending machines

STARTUP COST
\$456.7K–\$581.7K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
305 / 996

6
THE SPICE & TEA EXCHANGE
Spices, teas, related products

STARTUP COST
\$190.5K–\$291.7K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
47 / 1

7
ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHOCOLATE FACTORY
Chocolates, confections

STARTUP COST
\$115.6K–\$499.4K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
280 / 4

8
WINESTYLES TASTING STATION
Wine, craft beer, food, events, wine and beer club memberships

STARTUP COST
\$229K–\$380.5K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
17 / 2

9
HAPPY & HEALTHY PRODUCTS
Frozen fruit bars

STARTUP COST
\$49.7K–\$92.1K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
58 / 0

10
FRESH HEALTHY VENDING
Snack and beverage vending machines

STARTUP COST
\$122.5K–\$205.8K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
244 / 0

11
DREAM DINNERS
Do-it-yourself meal-assembly sessions

STARTUP COST
\$260.7K–\$448K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
76 / 10

12
CHOCOLATE WORKS
Chocolates, candy, parties

STARTUP COST
\$290.5K–\$456.6K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
20 / 1

13
DOC POPCORN
Kettle-cooked popcorn

STARTUP COST
\$39.5K–\$355.1K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
115 / 2

14
SCHAKOLAD CHOCOLATE FACTORY
European-style chocolates, coffee, gelato

STARTUP COST
\$121.5K–\$153.5K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
22 / 0

15
FUZZIWIG'S CANDY FACTORY
Self-serve bulk candy

STARTUP COST
\$184K–\$363.4K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
44 / 3

16
ICEBORN
Ice and water vending machines

STARTUP COST
\$271K–\$213.5K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
54 / 111

SANDWICHES

1
JIMMY JOHN'S SANDWICHES
Sandwiches

STARTUP COST
\$325.5K–\$555K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
2,574 / 62

2
FIREHOUSE SUBS
Subs

STARTUP COST
\$124.7K–\$1.3M

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
1,022 / 32

3
JERSEY MIKE'S SUBS
Subs

STARTUP COST
\$193.2K–\$660.4K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
1,138 / 53

4
McALISTER'S DELI →
Sandwiches, salads, baked potatoes

STARTUP COST
\$579K–\$1.5M

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
344 / 32

McAlister's Deli is harnessing social media influencers to increase awareness. To highlight National Sandwich Day last year, the company asked select food artists with strong social followings to create sandwich art using ingredients from McAlister's sandwiches. For Valentine's Day, McAlister's had family-oriented influencers talk about its kids-eat-free promotion and gave away a year's worth of free family date nights.

5
SUBWAY
Subs, salads

STARTUP COST
\$116.6K–\$263.2K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
44,830 / 0

6
CHARLEYS PHILLY STEAKS
Philly cheesesteaks, fries, lemonade

STARTUP COST
\$162.9K–\$475.9K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
517 / 55



8
SCHLOTZSKY'S
Sandwiches, pizza, salads

STARTUP COST
\$503.8K–\$786.98K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
333 / 26

9
WHICH WICH SUPERIOR SANDWICHES
Sandwiches

STARTUP COST
\$199.5K–\$488.8K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
399 / 3

10
PITA PIT
Pita sandwiches

STARTUP COST
\$211.4K–\$366.5K

TOTAL UNITS
FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED
589 / 22