

One on one with Peter Mammias: Foodtastic boss forecasts huge expansion for leading franchisor

MtlRestoRap

MIKE COHEN



It was back in the early 1990s when brothers Lawrence and Peter Mammias first ventured into the restaurant business, opening a retro diner concept that was originally called Smokey's. One of their partners at the time was the cousin of René Angélil, the manager and eventual husband of Céline Dion. They changed the name to Nickels and the rest is history.

The Mammias brothers never looked back, opening a string of other restaurants. In 2016 they established Foodtastic, which since that time has become a leading franchisor of restaurant brands in Canada.



Peter Mammias is joined by server Maria at the Souvlaki Bar location in St. Laurent.

Over the next year Foodtastic expects approximately \$1.2 billion of North American system sales across a network of over 1,200 new and existing stores.

Foodtastic's diverse range of brands includes popular names such as *Freshii*, *Quesada*, *Second Cup*, *Pita Pit*, *Tommy Café*, *Milestones*, *La Belle et La Bœuf*, *Monza*, *GattoMatto*, *Rôtisseries Benny*, *Au Coq Bacaro*, *Copper Branch*, *La Chambre Souvlaki Bar*, *Nickels*, *Shoeless Joe's Sports Grill*, *Fionn MacCool's Restaurant and Pub*, *Carlos and Pepe's*, *Chocolato*, *Le Gros Luxe*, *Big Rig Kitchen & Brewery* and soon *O'Tacos* and *Noodlebox*.

Peter serves as Foodtastic's President and CEO, while Lawrence is vice-chair of the board. It was a pleasure for me to sit down with Peter recently at Souvlaki Bar in St. Laurent, where he was enjoying his favorite dish of loose chicken with tomatoes and feta. I decided to order the same thing. It was a good choice!

Peter said that he hopes to see Foodtastic double sales to \$2 billion in 36 months and bring it to \$3 billion in 60. He decided to buy Noodlebox when he merely dropped in for a bite at one of their Vancouver locations. That deal closes on January 28. Montreal locations are indeed on the horizon. They have also made a deal to bring at least 50 O'Tacos spots to Canada. It is part of a unique arrangement with QSRP, which operates in France and Western Europe. "We will open up O'Tacos and they will get to do the same with Pita Pit," he said.

Milestones, a popular chain across Canada, became Foodtastic property in the summer of 2021. The first Quebec location opened at Fairview Pointe-Claire at the end of last summer. "It is already the busiest



The Tommy Café at Fairview.

Milestones in the country," shared Peter, noting that Laval and Royalmount are next on the list for the spring and summer respectively.

Still on the Foodtastic radar screen, says Peter, are restaurants that serve all-day breakfast, Asian cuisine and quick-serve burgers. I immediately suggested he make a deal with Denny's Canada. He did not say "no."

Foodtastic purchased Second Cup in 2021, initially expanding its cold beverages, teas and specialty drinks. Priority one now is to improve the food offerings.

Copper Branch has expanded with a franchise in Australia while Pita Pit now has 50 locales in New Zealand.

Peter is proud of Foodtastic's success. "It is hard to believe that a few years ago we had only 24 people working in our head office," he says. "Now we are at 251." For more information, please visit: www.foodtastic.ca

Follow Mike Cohen's restaurant adventures at www.MtlRestoRap.com. He can be reached at info@mikecohen.ca

Mike's Ottawa Resto Notes: Big Rig Kitchen and Brewery and Ralph & Sons Diner

OTTAWA – Montreal-based Foodtastic, one of Canada's leading restaurant franchisors, purchased Big Rig Brewery (www.bigrigbrewery.com) and Big Rig Restaurants (www.bigrigbrew.com) back in 2019. There are presently four locations in the Ottawa region and two in Greater in Toronto, with expansion in the plans.

We were pleased to give Big Rig a try for the first time. The flagship Iris Street locale seats 250 people and an additional 50 on a seasonal patio. There is a bar and plenty of booths and television monitors throughout showing the sports event of the day. On this evening there were a lot of families seated at the different tables.

Big Rig boasts a diversified comfort food menu featuring starters, greens and soups, handhelds, poutine, nachos, burgers, items from the southern smoke house and the grill, Mykonos chicken, Korean salmon bowl. Fish 'n Chips, southern fried chicken and a selection of Montreal-style pizzas. In 2024 a new menu is being introduced with more veggie and vegan options as well as back ribs.

For appetizers we shared the soup of the day (a piping hot and delicious bowl of beef and barley) and the fried pickles. As for the main course, we decided to share three items: the smoked prime rib, the smoked brisket (one pound) and the steak frites, a seven-ounce top sirloin. These items all came with homemade sauces.

For sides we each had some coleslaw and mashed potatoes (including some sweet potato mashed). Everything was delicious. Noted for its beer selection, they also make their own sodas. For more information call 613-688-3336 or visit www.bigrigbrew.com OURS

RALPH & SONS DINER: Ralph & Sons Diner is a family-owned operation located in a strip mall on Carling Avenue Ottawa. It has been in operation for over 50 years. I arrived for breakfast and perused the menu. Their omelet's, among them mushroom veggie, Western and Ham 'N' cheese, with your choice of toast on the side are among the favorites. You can order breakfast here from opening to closing time. If lunch is more your style, then you're in luck! The place has a variety of delicious dishes for you to choose from such as the four-piece chicken fingers, smoked meat on rye, or the fish and chips! They also have tasty clubs and to top it all off, homemade rice pudding. You can dine in, pickup or order via one of the apps. I ordered the smoked meat special- two farm fresh eggs, Montreal smoked meat, home fries toast and jam as well as my traditional decaf coffee. I added in some crispy pieces of bacon. You can find Ralph & Sons Diner at 3420 Carling Avenue. It is open 7am to 2 pm Wednesday to Sunday. Visit www.ralphandsons.com or call 613-828-0697.



Server Shelby showcases the prime rib at Big Rig on Iris Street in Ottawa.