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Tossed

Florida-based fast casual applies the build-your-own model to salads with healthy and indulgent gourmet ingredients. **BY JUDY KNEISZEL**

FOUNDERS: Marc Meisel, Daren Herzberg, & Adam Cohen

HQ: Fort Lauderdale, Florida

YEAR STARTED: 1998

ANNUAL SALES: Undisclosed

TOTAL UNITS: 5

FRANCHISE UNITS: 5

WEBSITE: www.tossed.com

UNTIL TOSSED'S CREATORS BROUGHT CHEF-inspired salads to New York City in 1998, a fast-casual salad meant iceberg lettuce and a few hard tomato slices prepackaged in a clear plastic box and refrigerated. But at Tossed, salads are made fresh to order, and guests can design their own from a combination of lettuces, dozens of fresh toss-ins, and 15 different dressings.

Tossed existed as a single chef-driven bistro from 1998 until 2004, when Jason Chodash founded Tossed Franchise Corporation to grow the concept beyond its one-store New York operation. For the next three years, Tossed was refined and rebranded, and then began franchising in 2007. It has since grown to five locations operating in the U.S., and units are under development both in the U.S. and the Middle East, says A.T. Toroyan, chief operating and development officer.

Toroyan, who joined the Tossed management team in 2012, says the number of open Tossed restaurants should double by the end of 2015 and double again in 2016.

Going from a single restaurant to franchise-ready took a while because the Tossed team wanted the concept to stay true to its chef-driven roots, while at the same time develop systems that were replicable on a national scale through franchising, Toroyan says.



“They were shelling their own corn and growing their own sprouts,” he says. “That worked with one unit, but we couldn’t do that with more than one. It’s labor intensive and impossible to implement quality control.”

Today, much of the prep work is done at a commissary and delivered to Tossed kitchens. Proprietary salad dressings are made by outside purveyors according to Tossed recipes and specifications.

“That does not mean a decrease in quality,” Toroyan says. “We want to make sure the guest has the best possible experience and the dressing tastes the same in L.A. and Florida.”

Those Tossed locations are somewhat spread out across the country. The original management team decided to move forward with growth wherever they

thought the right franchisee was present, Toroyan says.

He adds that the 2008 recession also delayed Tossed’s expansion, but the brand now has the momentum to move forward with a relatively aggressive growth pattern.

At Tossed, a salad with four toss-ins costs \$6.99. Additional toss-ins are 49 cents each for veggies, fruits, and crunchy items like croutons. More substantial add-ins, like chicken, shrimp, cheeses, and nuts, range in price from 99 cents to \$3.99.

Guests can also choose a chef-designed salad with classics like Caesar, Cobb, Garden, and Greek salads. More innovative offerings include the Southwest Blackened Chicken and Mango Cranberry.

Salads account for about 55 percent of Tossed sales. The menu also offers wraps,

ONES TO WATCH

grilled panini sandwiches, artisanal sandwiches, and soups. Popular sandwiches and wraps include the Smoked Turkey and Cheddar and the Pesto Chicken. Sandwiches, made on a choice of breads, include Tuna Salad, which is mixed with apples, dried cranberries, and light mayo and topped with baby arugula and tomatoes. An average ticket at Tossed is between \$10 and \$11, including beverage.

Tossed has improved its systems to the point where Toroyan says the time that elapses from register to pick-up for a design-your-own salad order can be as short as one minute. "People in that New York—minute mentality can enjoy their lunch more," he says.

Or, if they are enduring a New York, Boston, or Chicago winter, they don't have to go outside, since about 20 percent of Tossed sales are from catering.


"This concept works well for catering, because the food travels well and there's so much variety," Toroyan says. "People get bored with the same food day after day, but with Tossed, the same cus-

tomers can have something different delivered every day."

All Tossed stores, except for mall locations, are open for breakfast, too, serving bowls, muffins, oatmeal, and scrambles.

"We don't cook greasy breakfasts in our environmentally friendly, green kitchens. We do only healthy eggs," Toroyan says.

The brand markets the health of its menu options with a calorie counter on its website, but there is a balance of decadent options, too. At the end of the day, it's important to provide that variety to consumers with different nutritional needs, Toroyan says.

"You can eat a grilled cheese with tomato soup, chips, and a cookie, or you can have a light salad with a protein," he says. "We're intelligent, informed people these days. If someone is running a marathon, they don't need my menu to know what they need. We try to offer something for everyone." 

Judy Kneiszel is QSR's Ones to Watch reporter. Contact her at Judy@qsr magazine.com.