

**Fast
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2021

**20 FAST CASUAL
BRANDS
TO WATCH**



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Fast
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Being the new kid on the restaurant block is always scary, but few would argue that moving in during a global pandemic would be terrifying. After all, there are enough barriers to success without adding social distancing mandates and dining-in restrictions and closures.

Although the pandemic has forced thousands of brands — old and new — to shutter, the newbies on our list of “20 Brands to Watch” are finding ways to innovate their business models in order to stay afloat.

In some cases, that meant cutting the menu or reducing staff, while others have added technologies to allow for online ordering and contactless delivery. A few on this year’s list are even ghost kitchens, which takes the reliance on technology to a new level.

They have a few things in common, however. Each has fewer than 10 locations, is no more than five years old, and came to FastCasual’s attention for a creative menu, innovative operations model or unique growth plan.

Congratulations to the 2021 class of 20 Brands to Watch.

Cheers,

Cherryh Cansler

VP of Editorial

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Dosh is the fastest-growing cash back platform that automatically puts money into the wallets of consumers whenever they shop, dine or book hotels. The company is built on the vision to democratize advertising for the benefit of people everywhere. Dosh connects merchants with consumers, allowing them to give cash back directly instead of inefficiently spending that money on traditional advertising. Dosh’s mission is to positively impact people’s lives by moving billions of dollars to millions of people.

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APOLA GREEK GRILL

Since it opened in 2017, Apola Greek Grill has sizzled – so much so that the company with two Southern California locations is branching out, partnering with prospective franchisees.

The concept combines fresh ingredients, vegan spreads and halal-certified meats into popular gyros and salads. Founders Yiannis and Stefano Kosmides' intent has been to showcase their Greek heritage by crafting gyros just as Greek families eat them at home: tightly packed grilled meat combined with veggies and lemony, garlicky tzatziki yogurt, all wrapped in a warm pita stuffed with French fries.

Apola also features an extensive breakfast menu, with omelets, Greek yogurt and pitas.

Greek cuisine is under-represented in the fast casual space, and that is helping drive the business's success and fueling its franchise program. The company has established a strategy to work with entrepreneurs who possess the desire to own a franchise but aren't necessarily trained in the business model.



Apola Greek Grill



Apola Greek Grill