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Seven Top Fast Casual Independent Operations

by Valerie Killifer | 04 May 2009

In today's competitive marketplace, independent operators face bigger challenges when it comes to maintaining market share. With more than 945,000 restaurants throughout the United States, standing out requires a determined focus and consistent brand experience. These seven brands, in no particular order, have carved a name for themselves through a variety of methods. From upscale menu items to high-quality ingredients and interior designs, the independents listed below top our list of ones to watch now and in the future.

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Boloco, Boston

No. of locations: 16

What makes it special: Variety is the spice of Boloco's burrito offerings. Voted the best in Boston in 2006 and 2007, menu options include the Mediterranean, Summer and Bangkok burritos, which feature ingredients such as hummus, mango salsa and Asian slaw.

John Pepper, Boloco's co-founder, came up with the concept after living in San Francisco where he would frequent a local restaurant that featured a variety of burrito ingredients and options. The San Francisco restaurant failed, but it laid the foundation for Pepper's entry into the restaurant business.

The average annual unit volume was \$525,000 in 1997. Today it's \$1 million.

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