

WWW.GANDOLFOSDELI.COM
SALES: \$35 MILLION
HEADQUARTERS: LAWRENCEVILLE, GA.
EMPLOYEES: 1,000
SPECIALTY: SANDWICHES
DAN POOL, PRESIDENT: "IT'S NOT ABOUT ROYALTIES ... IT'S ABOUT HAVING SUCCESSFUL FRANCHISEES AND BEING ABLE TO CONTINUE DOING WHAT WE LOVE TO DO."



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Deli Delights

Gandolfo's New York Deli says it offers an extensive menu and a friendly atmosphere that can't be found in just any sandwich shop. **BY KATE BURROWS**

ALTHOUGH GANDOLFO'S NEW YORK DELI'S SANDWICHES HAVE been voted Best of Utah by *The Salt Lake Tribune* nine out of the last 10 years, its atmosphere is what truly sets the chain apart from its competitors, says President Dan Pool.

"This is a place where [customers] can go to hang out and spend time with people," he says. "It's a lot like a Cheers-style atmosphere, where we know everybody, and we try to make sure everybody knows us."

The Lawrenceville, Ga.-based company offers an authentic New York deli atmosphere that was designed by former New Yorker and franchise founder Craig Gandolph.

After moving to Utah and opening his first deli in 1989, Gandolph "started becoming homesick," Pool says. "So he gave all the sandwiches names that come from some of the best places in New York. People just loved it, because it was such a different concept from what was available in the state at the time. People found it interesting to have a true New York deli in Utah."

The deli's inspiration and authenticity stems from Gandolph's great-grandfather Thomas Anthony Gandolfo, who operated a meat and vegetable stand in Genoa, Italy, in the late-1800s.

Although the family name became Americanized, future generations followed in Gandolfo's footsteps and found success in restaurant management.

SPECIALTY SANDWICHES

Pool says the deli has few competitors in its markets. The company has 60 locations in 16 states, and the deli-style atmosphere is unique to sandwich shops around the country.

"We feel like there aren't any other restaurants that can compete with what we offer," he says. "People can go into many shops and get a sandwich and chips, but they can come into Gandolfo's and get their sandwich on fresh marble rye or sourdough. Customers can get chips here, too, but they can also get pasta salads and fresh green salads - side dishes that most

► places don't offer. We also do breakfast and make homemade flavored cream cheese."

Gandolfo's offers 70 sandwiches on the menu, and develops several new recipes per year.

"We take a lot of feedback from our franchisees," he says, adding that many owner-operators develop and submit their own personal recipes. "If they come up with a really great sandwich, that's great. We're always looking for ways to find new ideas."

Pool adds that although the company moves with the trends in eating by offering lighter versions of its regular menu offerings, its recipes emphasize taste and flavor over all else.

"People can come in and order low-carb wraps if they want, but we've found that delis attract mostly men who aren't interested in fad diets," he says.

"This is one of the few markets that appeals heavily to men, and most men know that when they come to a good deli, if the sandwich is made right, they'll have food on their shirt and will be licking their fingers by the end of the meal."

"We don't brag that [customers] can come here and lose weight," Pool continues. "Our sandwiches can be healthy, of course, but we really encourage people to eat when they're here. We put samples together all the time, so people can try out new dishes and leave feeling satisfied."

'MAYOR OF THE COMMUNITY'

The company's unique atmosphere attempts to bring a sense of community to each location. Each store owner is encouraged to get to know the neighboring businesses and "run for mayor of the community," he says.

"That's what a deli's all about. This is a place where people can come in and spend their time eating and getting to know people."

When new customers order at the counter, workers ask their names to add a personal touch to the dining experience. "This works especially well when a new store opens," Pool says. "Our employees know that when [a customer] orders something, they're going to ask for their names, to get to know them. When the food is ready, we call out their name to create a more personal experience."

TRAINING PROCEDURES

The company conducts an extensive three- to four-week training period before the franchisee fully takes over the location. "Most of our training takes place on-the-job, and is based on the person's individual abilities," Pool says. "We're also very hands-on during the opening of the restaurant. We have someone helping the new franchisee in the store for approximately 10 business days after the opening, to ensure a smooth opening."

Pool's strategy for growing the company is to continue on its path of expansion for as long as franchisees are successful. "It's not about royalties to us," Pool explains. "It's about having successful franchisees and being able to continue doing what we love to do. We don't push the business a lot, because we just haven't been forced to."

"Up until this past year, we weren't advertising on any Web sites because, on average, we would sell between six and seven franchises at each new-store opening. At the end of the day, we've had a lot of interest in the company because people know that when they purchase a franchise, they're buying a sandwich."

Recently recognized as one of the nation's top-55 fastest-growing concepts by *Franchise Times*, the company says it credits its continued success to its high-quality menu offerings. "Gandolfo's was created to deliver the bold and quality flavors of New York to the main streets of America," CEO Craig Gandolph said in a statement. "We have always led in food quality, but now we have a highly supportive franchise system to match the quality of our menu." 🍷

