

# FAST



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**ALEX SALGUIERO'S  
CAR COLLECTION**  
9 cars  
25 years collecting  
'68 Camaro was the first  
'67 Corvettes (preferably red) are  
his favorite  
**FEATURED BELOW:**  
'65 427 Cobra  
'07 Ferrari F430 Spider

# F *fast* *cash* D

**SO YOU WANT TO HAVE IT YOUR WAY? THINK OUTSIDE THE BUN.  
FOR YEARS AMERICANS THOUGHT THEY KNEW THE WAY A SANDWICH SHOULD BE AND ARE NOW TESTING  
THEIR SKILLS. WITH MANY STILL TRUDGING THROUGH THE RECESSION, YOU DESERVE A BREAK TODAY.**

WRITTEN BY RÉMY THURSTON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHAWN HEIFERT

Opening a restaurant is often a fleeting dream for many young entrepreneurs. But when reality hits, they find it takes months, more often years, of hard work and dedication to be successful. Many who try end up finding they'd much rather be served their ideal meal than be responsible for a well-oiled dining machine. The fantasy of owning their own restaurant is dashed by the tedium of profit-loss reports, stacks of crusty dishes and the grueling 18-hour workdays. But there is an answer. Buy a franchise.

One of the quickest, most reliable ways to make money in today's economy, franchises offer a business model that provides proven success, in-depth training and brand recognition. Adopting this concept, a string of local, hungry entrepreneurs have opened thriving eateries and succeeded. They all credit their success to being willing to clock in at 7 a.m. and out at 1 a.m., seeing past the stacks of paperwork to the bigger picture and having experienced the entire range of positions—from cashier to manager. Each of their backgrounds may be different, and their levels of success may vary, but they all share a common goal of making good money from good food.

## **ALEX SALGUIERO, BURGER KING**

There may be no story that better illustrates the

pursuit and accomplishment of the American dream like Alex Salguiero's. He has the burning-red Ferrari F430 to prove it. Born in Havana, Cuba, he and his family immigrated to Miami when he was 7. By the time Salguiero was in high school, like many American teenagers, he started working an entry-level job at a local fast-food joint. In his case, it was Burger King. Though he didn't know it at the time, taking the job was probably the best decision of his life. When Salguiero was 18, Burger King offered to pay for his college tuition on the condition that he would stay and work for them as a general manager, one of the youngest in the company's history. After completing his education at Florida International University, Salguiero climbed the ranks of the corporate ladder, taking positions that took him across the globe to open foreign Burger King franchises in countries such as Denmark and Columbia. In 1981, he accepted a promotion to be a regional manager in Atlanta because he was exhausted from all the travel.

"When you start kissing the customs people when you get to Miami, you know you've got a problem," Salguiero explains. Atlanta soon grew old for the newly married businessman, and Salguiero decided on a change of pace, buying all five of the existing Burger Kings in Savannah on May 31, 1986. He sat up all that night in a local law office, signing legal forms until his arm

was throbbing. That night he became his own boss for the first time in his life. Salguiero currently owns all 11 Savannah-area Burger Kings. His fortune comes from the tireless work throughout his career. He defines success first and foremost with profits. That is the businessman talking, but he also reveals that he regards himself as successful because he is happy with what he does. He provides for his family, works on his multitude of candy-red cars, and gets the satisfaction of making his customers happy. Many upstart franchisers now go to him for advice.

"If you want to be successful, you got to stick to your guns. ... There's that 'have it your way' slogan at Burger King—well, we don't have that slogan in this office; it's called 'have it my way.'"

In all, the franchising business is a lucrative business idea and Salguiero knows it.

"There are more franchises sold in the United States than in the whole world."

**AVERAGE INVESTMENT:** \$25,000-\$50,000 franchise fee plus \$1 million-\$1.5 million for land, equipment and landscaping.

**LOCATIONS:** 601 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Savannah; 7923 White Bluff Rd., Savannah; 14 W. DeRenne Ave., Savannah; 11711 Abercorn St., Savannah; 14241 Augusta Rd., Garden City; 4268 Ogeechee Rd., Savannah; 602 Fair Rd., Statesboro; 421 South Columbus Ave., Rincon; 815 E.G. Miles Pkwy. Hinesville; 1262 Highway 21, Springfield; 500 Hopkins Corner Dr., Waynesboro

**PATRICK HOPKINS, SHANE'S RIB SHACK**

Often times the best careers are those that are born out of hobbies. Just ask Patrick Hopkins, who turned his passion for barbecuing into a successful Shane's Rib Shack franchise. With 10 years of retail experience working for General Nutrition Centers, he was thrilled to find a way to combine his knowledge of cooking and sales. To bring together all the necessary ingredients for this business venture, Hopkins partnered with Bruce Watford and Russell Rosengart who had experience with their Sonic drive-in locations. Beyond Hopkins's love for the smoky, tender slow-cooked meats, he had a better reason why a barbecue restaurant would work in Savannah.

"We looked at a number of different concepts and felt like this was an excellent market that we could grow with barbecue. I felt like the sandwich industry was overcrowded," says Hopkins. The model was a perfect combination of cost effectiveness, product quality, and good ol' Southern-style cooking that would be well received in the Savannah area.

It has been two years since Hopkins opened two locations of Shane's. He credits his success to the consistency of the food. Shane's serves what Hopkins calls "clean barbecue." What he means is that the meat is pulled apart lovingly with all the fat and gristle removed so that the consumer can take a bite and not worry about finding something chewy between their slices of Texas toast. The most indicative clue of the franchise's success is the customers' smiles as they wipe a smear of barbecue sauce from their lips.

**AVERAGE INVESTMENT:** \$30,000 franchise fee plus cost of the building and equipment.

**LOCATIONS:** 6730 Waters Avenue, Savannah; 300 W. General Screven Way, Hinesville

**PAUL CHILDERS, YOUR PIE**

Paul Childers has always been a businessman, working in the furniture retail industry his entire career until the Great Recession. After it became apparent he'd have to find a new business, a friend familiar with Your Pie, a down-the-line pizzeria that allows customers to add their favorite ingredients to personal 10-inch pizzas, panini or calzones before watching their creations crisp and bubble in the blazing stone oven, suggested he look into franchising opportunities. After visiting a franchise, Childers was sold on the idea. He knew the local Savannah college students would be attracted to the low price and high quality.

"Savannah is open to new ideas, and I thought that if it was going to work it would work here," says Childers. However, he found after opening last Thanksgiving, his clientele was prominently business professionals on their lunch breaks. "You see the ties tucked into the button-down shirts so they don't get the cheese on them," says Childers adding that they now prepare an average of 160 pizzas a day. He and his son Michael, the manager, enjoy working for themselves and are content with how well the young franchise is doing. Their goal is to open more franchises throughout the Savannah area, but Childers wants to concentrate on his customer base first.

**AVERAGE INVESTMENT:** \$160,000 – \$325,000

**LOCATION:** 110 W. Bryan St., Savannah

**NEHAL "NICK" PATEL, JIMMY JOHN'S**

There is something irresistible about a good sandwich. The fact that customers can stack as many tender meats, cram as many crunchy vegetables and douse as many tangy sauces as two halves of bread will hold has led the sub sandwich to become a staple of the American diet. It is no surprise, then, that Nehal "Nick" Patel decided to leave his Midwest home to open his own Jimmy John's sandwich franchise in Savannah. The brand began in the Midwest, so Patel grew up eating Jimmy John's gourmet sandwiches. He knew the product, but more importantly he believed in the product.

Patel's journey started when he was laid off from a mortgage lending firm that folded under the poor housing market in 2009. His cousin Parth who lived in Savannah was also laid off from his job around the same time. Rather than fumble around for a new job in a faltering market, the Patel cousins decided to look for a new opportunity. Patel visited his cousin and found that Savannah was sans Jimmy John's.

After being a mortgage lender, the learning curve for the sandwich business was steep, but Patel says the training that Jimmy John's provided made the transition easier. Throughout the training, Patel noticed something unique about the people in the corporate office in Champaign, Illinois. "Everybody truly believed in the product, and everybody got behind the product ... I think that stuck out the most," says Patel. During the two months that he trained there, the atmosphere instilled a sense of pride in Patel for the product. With the combination of a great location that serves the Savannah business community and delivery that is "damn fast," Patel has nothing but optimism.

**AVERAGE INVESTMENT:** \$300,000-\$400,000

**LOCATION:** 7 E. Congress Street, Savannah

**CHRIS SMITH, FIVE GUYS BURGER AND FRIES**

Chris Smith, who bought the rights to his own franchise before even graduating from the University of Florida in 2007, proves it's never too early to go into business for yourself. Smith never guessed at the beginning of his senior year in college that soon he would be the owner of three Five Guys Burgers and Fries franchises. He had been contemplating going to law school, or earning a master's degree.

His future changed when one day while he was at his family's home in Orlando, and a vegetarian friend recommended, of all places, a burger joint. Smith says his friend is a very health conscious person and Five Guys is the only place they let their kids eat because they can be assured of the quality of the ingredients. Smith knew right then that he had to try the Five Guys' menu.

"The food was fantastic!" he says. That February, Smith signed his first deal with the Virginia-based company. Nine months later he was opening his first restaurant. Smith admits there were hurdles. Dealing with the customers and the food came naturally, but he found managing the "business of business" and processes like payroll more challenging as he juggled them all. Smith credits his work ethic and the simplicity of the Five Guys business model to the eventual success.

Now he's at the point where he is able to hire directors of operations so that he can focus on further development of the franchise to locations such as Pooler, the Southside of Savannah and Hilton Head.

**AVERAGE INVESTMENT:** \$25,000 franchising fee plus \$20,000 in development fees.

**LOCATIONS:** 900 Glynn Isle, Brunswick; 1019 Fording Island Road, Bluffton, South Carolina; 175 W. Bay Street, Savannah

**Franchise Figures****BURGER KING**

Opened: 1954

11 in Savannah, 200+ in Georgia  
7,300 in U.S., approx. 12,200 in world

**SHANE'S RIB SHACK**

Opened: 2002

41 in Georgia, 68 in U.S.

**YOUR PIE**

Opened: 2008

11 in Georgia, 17 in U.S.

**FIVE GUYS**

Opened: 1986

39 in Georgia, 750 in U.S.

**JIMMY JOHN'S**

Opened: 1983

20 in Georgia, over 1,000 in U.S.