

2019 fast casual
**20 BRANDS
TO WATCH**



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Rachel's Kitchen

Las Vegas, Nevada
<http://RachelsKitchen.com>

Debbie Roxarzade knows what it takes to open and run a successful restaurant. After creating a portfolio of seven acclaimed restaurants in Los Angeles, Roxarzade and her husband decided to relocate to Las Vegas.

There was no doubt that Roxarzade would continue her career as a chef and restaurateur. Yet before she could start her next chapter, she needed to answer an important question: where to open a restaurant?

While splitting their time between Las Vegas and LA, Roxarzade and her husband discovered Las Vegas suburb Summerlin, adjacent to Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. And that's when Roxarzade realized an opportunity.



Rachel's Kitchen's Signature Salad includes nut-crusted goat cheese, mixed baby greens, tomatoes, cucumbers and radishes tossed with balsamic basil vinaigrette.

"We loved Summerlin, but there wasn't anything I felt great about eating," she said.

Roxarzade secured a 1,000-square-foot location and, in 2006, opened Rachel's Kitchen (named for their daughter), a fresh casual eatery with a menu that included freshly pressed juices, sandwiches and salads.

Without a similar concept in the area, Roxarzade said initial reviews were mixed.

"People who loved it wanted a restaurant like Rachel's Kitchen," she said. "Other people still wanted milkshakes and American cheese!"

Roxarzade added several burgers to the menu to help Rachel's Kitchen "become a place for everyone," she said. And it worked. Roxarzade soon outgrew her original space and moved down the street to a location that was double in size.

"We kept growing from there, and now we're up to seven locations, including a grab-and-go space in McCarran International Airport," she said.

With multiple successful locations, Roxarzade could likely maintain her brand's status quo and achieve a fulfilling career. Instead, Roxarzade is always looking for opportunities to refine and improve her business model, an approach that, in 2018, focused on an ongoing technology rollout to help Roxarzade's operations become as efficient as possible.

"We've integrated new point-of-sale and inventory systems and are working on putting all of our training videos and materials online," she said.

Other 2018 enhancements included menu additions like vegan items and more create-your-own options.

These operational refinements play a key role in increasing Rachel's Kitchen's efficiency while reducing costs through initiatives like improved training. They're also helping Roxarzade create a strong foundation on which to expand to more locations, growth that's expected to begin in 2019.

"We're looking at our next market and have some letters of intent out in neighboring states," she said. "It will be a combination of corporate office growth and franchisees. We're at the point where we're figuring out what makes the most sense. We want to make sure the next market we go to is as perfect as our first one."