

Nation's Restaurant News names winners of inaugural CREATORS Awards

Brinker International, Yum! Brands Inc., Chipotle Mexican Grill and more to be honored at CREATE in Denver; CREATOR of the Year will be named during the event

NEW YORK, N.Y., U.S., September 16, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Nation's Restaurant News](#), the leading source for news and business intelligence for restaurant and foodservice professionals, has named six winners of its inaugural CREATORS Awards, which recognize restaurant leaders that best embody the spirit of innovation.

The CREATORS program, launched in conjunction with NRN's [CREATE in-person event](#) (Oct. 4-6 in Denver), honors brands and people in six categories, and one CREATOR of the Year will be announced from among those winners at CREATE next month.

"Over the last year and a half, we at Nation's Restaurant News have witnessed inspiring, outside-the-box thinking in all corners of the foodservice industry," said editor-in-chief Sam Oches. "But the 2021 class of CREATORS stands apart from the pack. These brands and leaders embody the curiosity, creativity and courage that will be necessary to succeed in a post-pandemic world."

The 2021 CREATORS winners and their respective categories are:

- Brinker International/It's Just Wings (Brand CREATOR — 201 units or more): The casual-dining company is recognized for the rapid development of It's Just Wings, a 1,000+-unit, \$170 million chicken wing-focused virtual brand.

The logo for "the CREATORS" awards. "the" is in a small, blue, lowercase font. "CREATORS" is in a large, bold, blue, uppercase font with a textured, slightly distressed appearance.

CREATORS Awards, by Nation's Restaurant News

The logo for "Nation's Restaurant News". "Nation's" is in a small, black, serif font. "Restaurant News" is in a large, black, cursive script font.

Nation's Restaurant News

The logo for "CREATE". The letters "C", "R", and "E" are in a grey, uppercase, sans-serif font. The letters "A", "T", and "E" are in a green, uppercase, sans-serif font. The word "CREATE" is underlined with a green line.

the future of foodservice

CREATE: The Future of Foodservice

- Portillo's (Brand CREATOR — 200 units or less): The Oak Brook, Ill.-based hot dog and sandwich brand is honored for how it reimagined its delivery model to streamline operations and keep its high-volume stores humming.
- Big Red F (Independent CREATOR): The Boulder, Colo.-based restaurant group wins for its commitment to keeping workers employed and engaged, through in-house delivery, virtual brands, pop-up events, tip-sharing and improved benefits.
- Virtual Dining Concepts (Marketing CREATOR): The company, co-founded by industry veteran Robert Earl, is honored for its innovation in the virtual brand space, particularly its unique ability to create viral, celebrity-inspired brands.
- Scott Boatwright, chief restaurant officer, Chipotle Mexican Grill (Operations CREATOR): Chipotle's digital sales soared during the pandemic, and Boatwright was behind several key technology plays, including the off-premises-only Chipotle Digital Kitchen and the expansion of mobile pickup and carside options.
- James Fripp, chief equity and inclusion officer, Yum Brands Inc. (Leadership CREATOR): The Yum! Brands veteran is honored for his longtime leadership on diversity and inclusion issues and for pioneering creative ways to fix the broken leadership pipeline that often prevents women and people of color from reaching leadership positions.

The CREATORS Awards are selected by the editors of Nation's Restaurant News. Winners will be celebrated with a cocktail reception and panel discussion during the upcoming CREATE event.

"We are thrilled to honor the first class of CREATORS and can think of no place more fitting than at CREATE next month," Oches said. "CREATE is about bringing together the people, ideas and products that are shaping the future of foodservice, and nobody better represents that spirit of innovation than these six CREATORS."

CREATE, which will be held at the newly renovated Sheraton Denver Downtown, is a unique gathering where restaurant leaders come together to learn, discover and advance their careers and businesses. CREATE's festival-style format ditches the old trade show model and puts attendees up close and personal with the best in foodservice leadership. Attendees from the largest chains to the most innovative emerging growth chains will come together to provide insightful presentations, drive meaningful conversations, build new relationships, and showcase foodservice innovations.

Highlights of this three-day inaugural event include:

- Pop Up Festival - Experience menu innovation from the Denver scene
- Ask the Experts - Q&A sessions with industry experts
- Fireside Chats - Intimate discussion with restaurant leaders
- Lightning Keynotes - No fluff "TED style" forward thinking and data driven presentations

- Raising the Bar - Interactive masterclass focused on the future of the bar

[More than 50 speakers](#) have already been lined up for CREATE, including: Monty Moran, former co-chief executive officer of Chipotle; Sheilina Henry, group vice president, diversity and inclusion, for Bloomin' Brands; Michael Lastoria, chief executive officer and cofounder of &pizza; Bill Phelps, chief executive officer of Dave's Hot Chicken; Damola Adamolekun, chief executive officer of P.F. Chang's; and more.

Visit www.informaconnect.com/create to learn more about CREATE and to register to attend.

ABOUT NATION'S RESTAURANT NEWS

Nation's Restaurant News (NRN) is the No. 1 source of business information for the foodservice industry. For more than 50 years, NRN has served the information and engagement needs of foodservice professionals, offering award-winning content across all mediums with the goal of driving businesses forward. NRN was named Best Media Brand by the Jesse H. Neal Awards in 2019. NRN is part of the Restaurant & Food Group by Informa Connect, the leading B2B integrated media group connecting products, solutions and thought leadership with the largest, most engaged and highly qualified audience in foodservice and food retail. The group connects the entire food and foodservice ecosystem of operators, chefs, retailers, manufacturers, vendors and solutions providers through traditional, digital, social and custom media as well as digital and live events. To learn more about NRN, visit www.nrn.com.

ABOUT CREATE

CREATE: The Future of Foodservice is the only digital and in-person experience of its kind, where restaurant leaders from the largest chains to the most innovative independents come together to learn from leading thinkers and change makers, discover products and services that will transform foodservice, and connect with like-minded peers forging new paths to advance the restaurant industry. Powered by NRN, CREATE provides on-demand content from restaurant thought leaders and industry experts; live sessions for Q&A and community interaction; small, curated virtual gatherings to tackle the most relevant topics; and a new festival-style, live event in October. To learn more about our CREATE digital experience, visit create.nrn.com. To learn more about our CREATE in-person event, visit www.informaconnect.com/create.

Jesse Yeung

Nation's Restaurant News

jesse.yeung@informa.com

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