

## Fla.-based Kisses From Italy plans major Reno expansion

By [Kaleb Roedel](#) on Monday, February 15, 2021



A look at the Kisses From Italy location in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Courtesy Photo

Pucker up, Reno.

Kisses From Italy, a Florida-based fast-casual restaurant specializing in Italian sandwiches, is looking to plant multiple locations in the Biggest Little City as part of a 2021 franchising initiative to expand its brand.

“We did a very high-level search and Reno really caught our attention,” Claudio Ferri, co-founder and CEO of Kisses From Italy, said in a phone interview with the NNBW. “From a business standpoint, it’s all about population growth — the region is estimated to grow close to 270,000 residents in the next 10 years. And Reno has the closest airport to Lake Tahoe, so tourism there is also going to grow.”

The company plans to open five to 10 franchises in the Reno area, said Ferri, who hopes to sign a handful of franchisees by the end of 2021. The 5-year-old chain is eyeing Reno’s Downtown, Midtown and Riverwalk District areas as three landing spots.

Ferri said the company is hoping to move into second-generation restaurant spaces rather than building from the ground up.

“We really like the Riverwalk District,” he noted. “It’s got a great restaurant scene. It could be a good asset for the company and for the area. We’re really excited about coming into the area. It’s got a great feel and I think it’s a great fit for us.”

A fusion of Italian heritage with American staples, Kisses From Italy serves everything from fresh sandwiches to Angus burgers to chicken wings as well as an all-day breakfast menu that includes omelets, pastries and more.

The eatery also features a selection of Italian-roasted espresso and coffee.

“I could be wrong, but I don’t think there’s another concept like us out there right now,” said Ferri, who co-founded Kisses From Italy with childhood friend Michael Di Turi, president of the company.

Natives of Montreal, the restaurant founders were inspired by the delis and bakeries Di Turi’s grandfather owned in Italy in the 1950s.

Ferri said Kisses From Italy is “for the night owls and early birds,” opening at 9 a.m. and closing at 3 a.m. in some locations. Currently, Kisses From Italy has three locations open in Southern Florida, one in Italy, and another in development in Chino, California, that’s set to open later this year.

Kisses From Italy says it has a scalable and flexible design footprint, including takeout and delivery capabilities, with just a small portion of the restaurant reserved for dine-in. Locations can range from less than 500 square feet to 1,500 square feet.

Every new Kisses From Italy that opens, Ferri said, would create an average of four to seven part-time and full-time jobs.

Kisses From Italy says it is looking for qualified single-unit and multi-unit franchisees, with ideal candidates “sharing a passion for food, family and being an active member of their community.”

The company says it is looking for franchisees with a restaurant operations background, but it is willing to train someone with good work ethic who is willing to be a true partner.

“The franchisees make up your business market,” Ferri said. “They’re the marketing, they’re the future, they’re the heart of the whole thing, so we’re looking at really working with them. It’s a person that’s investing hard-earned money into creating a job for themselves and others.”

According to the company, franchise owners must have a minimum net worth of \$350,000 for a single unit, with \$150,000 of liquid capital. The initial franchise fee is \$35,000.

Ferri, however, said the company is willing to work with any interested franchise owners that “fall a little bit short” of meeting the financial criteria if they have a passion for the restaurant business.

Reno is one of more than 10 markets Kisses From Italy has targeted for expansion. Along with plans to further grow its footprint in Florida, the company is focused on migrating to Georgia, Alabama, Texas, Tennessee, California, North Carolina, South Carolina, New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

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