



Taco John's Signs Biggest Franchise Agreement in Brand History

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Taco John's International inked its biggest area development agreement to date with the largest Wendy's franchisee, Meritage Hospitality Group, Inc.

Per the terms of the agreement, the group will build 50 new Taco John's restaurants by March 31, 2026 with options to develop an additional 150 restaurants.

“Taco John’s is the perfect fit for our company. While exploring concepts to expand our portfolio, we were quickly attracted to Taco John’s,” says Gary Rose, president and COO of Meritage Hospitality Group. “We are excited about the Mexican restaurant segment and the Bigger, Bolder, Better direction of the brand. We’re excited to open our first restaurants near our headquarters in west Michigan in 2022.”

“This is historic for our brand,” said Brooks Speirs, vice president for franchise development. “As we begin our aggressive growth into new markets, there is no better partner than Meritage. While getting to know the group, I’ve been impressed with the organizational infrastructure, attention to detail, commitment to people, operations capabilities and development of top-notch restaurants. The best is yet to come for Taco John’s!”

Differentiating itself in the popular Mexican quick-service segment, Taco John’s prides itself on a unique menu that features delicious, quality-made food. Its commitment to quality has established the brand as the go-to restaurant in its markets. Additionally, its significant drive-thru business, which represents 65 percent of systemwide sales, has helped insulate the brand from recent market shifts.

“Over the last few years, we have been building fantastic momentum,” says Jim Creel, president and CEO of Taco John’s. “As a 50-plus year-old brand we knew we needed a modern look to energize our current locations. At the same time, we have elevated our executive team and board. Our evolution has helped us become an even more appealing investment to large multi-unit operators. The agreement with Meritage is a capstone moment, illuminating all the hard work the Taco John’s team has put in place.”

Taco John’s is a thriving legacy brand with strong unit-level economics, prime markets available for multi-unit development and a unique menu. The brand has recently launched several new and innovative menu items, a refreshed brand look and feel, and is rolling out a systemwide remodel program to attract new consumers and retain longtime fans. As Taco John’s expands, it is seeking qualified, experienced and passionate franchisees, franchise groups and convenience store operators to develop the concept in key markets.

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