



## Franchise Spotlight

### Interview with Rising Roll Gourmet President, Mike Lassiter.

By Ed Teixeira

*Rising Roll Gourmet is an exciting franchise concept built upon a menu of quality sandwiches sold in a variety of venues. Read my interview with President, Mike Lassiter.*

When it comes to an emerging franchise program Rising Roll Gourmet has injected a great deal of creativity into both its menu and franchise program. Based in Atlanta Georgia, [Rising Roll Gourmet](#) headed by President, Mike Lassiter began operating in Atlanta as Uptown Gourmet Sandwich Company in 1996. It currently has sixteen locations in five states. Recognized for its creative and quality menu Rising Roll has received kudos from QSR (Quick Service Restaurant) and Fast Casual Magazines and has been ranked Excellent by Zagats for 12 consecutive years.

A Rising Roll Gourmet menu features a wide assortment of sandwiches including various selections such as:

- Turkey Cheezer - Oven roasted turkey breast and provolone, lettuce, tomato and mayo.
- Don't Tell Charlie (White Tuna) -All white meat albacore tuna with lettuce and tomato.
- Key West Crab Cake- Baked crab cake topped with cheddar, mayo, lettuce and tomato.

Recently, I had the opportunity to speak with Rising Roll President, Mike Lassiter.

*“Over the past few years tight credit markets indicated to us that our franchisees needed an option to fully develop their territory so we introduced the Express Unit for a variety of locations.” Mike Lassiter*

Mike told me that a major difference between Rising Roll and other QSR franchises is that Rising Roll features a large menu of quality and value priced sandwiches available from a variety of venues. In our conversation he explained to me that during the recession a number of fast casual restaurants were lowering prices or reducing portion sizes. Rising Roll instead remained focused on maintaining quality and value to our customers and building sales through customer service and value pricing.

Express Unit locations are in hospitals, Class A office buildings, shopping centers, airports and college campuses. According to Mike: “This strategy provides our franchisees the opportunity to market the Rising Roll brand in a variety of locations. An Express Unit location is smaller and doesn't require ovens or ventilation systems and can be supplied by the franchisees retail location.”

*Each Rising Roll franchisee territory is customized based upon the characteristics of that market including local demographics, traffic flows, access to the territory and other factors. This approach provides each franchisee the opportunity to maximize the potential of their territory.*

When it comes to the franchisee territory, Mike was able to draw upon his prior experience as the operator of a 40 location multi-unit QSR franchise in the Houston market. Rather than relying upon the same geographic boundary for each territory, such as a four mile radius, each Rising Roll franchisee territory is customized based upon the characteristics of that market including local demographics, traffic flows, access to the territory and other factors. Mike believes this strategy provides each franchisee the opportunity to maximize the potential of their territory.

In terms of revenue; catering represents approximately 35% of sales with the goal to increase catering to 50%. The company has a “Grab-and-Go” option where franchisees can set up tables to offer boxed lunches on a cash-only basis in a company’s lobby multiple times per week.

Mike indicated that they are working with select national real estate developers in order to install Rising Roll franchisee express locations in their office buildings.

The Rising Roll Gourmet franchise has a \$30,000 franchise fee and a 6% royalty with a 3% brand development fee for retail locations and 1.5% for food courts. A full size Rising Roll location is from 1500 to 2600 square feet seating 50 to 90 customers. The food court location is 300 to 900 square feet.

With an exciting menu, a focus on quality and a creative franchise program Rising Roll Gourmet is headed in the right direction

Information on the Rising Roll Gourmet [franchise is available on the website.](#)

[http://www.franchiseknowhow.com/buying\\_franchise/risingroll.htm](http://www.franchiseknowhow.com/buying_franchise/risingroll.htm)