



Top 50 Fast Food Chains in the U.S.

The QSR 50 is an annual ranking of limited-service restaurant companies published by [QSR Magazine](#). The 2025 QSR 50 report highlights the current state and future trends of the fast-food industry. Below are some key insights from report and also [a table outlining the Top 50](#) and how they fared in 2024:

Notes about the Top 5 Performers

1. McDONALD'S

McDonald's retained the top rank with \$53.5 billion in U.S. systemwide sales, relying on value strategies and organizational changes, despite facing a sales dip tied to an E. coli outbreak

The company used its successful \$5 Meal Deal as a cornerstone of the McValue platform to counteract consumer pullback, especially from lower-income guests

An E. coli outbreak linked to sliced onions in Q4 2024 resulted in a 1.4 percent drop in U.S. same-store sales, leading McDonald's to invest \$100 million into a recovery initiative

To accelerate innovation, McDonald's restructured, forming a new Restaurant Experience Team and creating category leaders for beef, chicken, and beverages to better compete against specialty chains

Innovation efforts include testing crafted beverages from its spinoff concept CosMC's inside existing stores and planning the return of Snack Wraps and the introduction of chicken strips later in the year

The chain added 102 net restaurants in 2024, marking the largest increase in unit growth in a single year since 2013

2. STARBUCKS

Starbucks achieved the highest unit growth across the industry in 2024 and implemented the "Back to Starbucks" strategy focused on emphasizing customer connection and improving speed of service through operational and labor investments

Starbucks opened an industry-best 589 net stores in 2024, growing its U.S. footprint to 16,935 units and quickly approaching Subway as the largest U.S. restaurant chain. CEO Brian Niccol's "Back to Starbucks" plan includes in-store design refreshes to restore the "third place" atmosphere, bringing back the condiment bar, and having baristas write messages on cups.

The brand expanded a 700-unit pilot focusing on staffing and deployment, which led to a sizable improvement in transactions and speed, with average wait times decreasing by two minutes.

The theme for the brand is shifting focus from beverage production via equipment (like the "Siren" package) to "craft and connection," supported by menu simplification (trimming by 30 percent).

3. CHICK-FIL-A

Chick-fil-A continued to generate unrivaled sales volumes at scale in 2024, posting the highest average unit volume in the QSR 50 and accelerating its plans for international expansion

The brand led the list with an unrivaled blended Average Unit Volume (AUV) of \$7.5 million

Chick-fil-A grew its total unit count by 145 restaurants and reached \$22.7 billion in systemwide sales

The brand announced ambitious international expansion plans, including a \$100 million plan for the U.K. and a \$75 million plan for Asia

The Asia development effort is scheduled to begin with openings in Singapore in late 2025

4. TACO BELL

Taco Bell achieved a record \$1 billion in profit in 2024 and detailed an aggressive “R.I.N.G. The Bell” strategy aimed at expanding its footprint, doubling menu innovation, and driving AUV and digital sales dramatically higher by 2030

The chain reached a record \$1 billion in profit for the first time in 2024, reporting over 24 percent restaurant-level margins and contributing 80 percent of Yum! Brands’ U.S. profit

Taco Bell introduced the “R.I.N.G. The Bell” growth plan, targeting an increase in AUV from \$2.2 million to \$3 million and profit to \$2 billion by 2030

Digital sales, which were 35 percent of the mix in 2024, are projected to surpass 60 percent by 2030, contributing an estimated \$225,000 in incremental AUV

The chain sees a path to reaching 10,000 U.S. restaurants (up from 7,604) by leveraging nontraditional asset types

Loyalty members are significantly more engaged, increasing their visits by 76 percent (from 5.8 to 10.2 visits per year) after joining the program

5. WENDY'S

Wendy's is executing a disciplined growth strategy focused on targeted global expansion, operational modernizations through the Global Next Gen design, and focused marketing to attract high-frequency QSR super fans

The company plans to open 1,000 net new restaurants globally by 2028, with 300 locations targeted for the U.S., using the energy-efficient and digital-first Global Next Gen design

The brand is focused on replacing underperforming markets with high-potential restaurants, resulting in the net shuttering of 97 U.S. locations in 2024 Wendy's aims to

capture more visits from their “super fans”—customers who visit fast food nearly 130 times annually—by optimizing marketing for target audiences like Gen Z and multicultural guests

Menu innovation includes expanding the Frosty lineup and investing in its core chicken platform, as well as boosting beverage options like craft lemonades and morning drinks

The company expects to reach \$17.5 billion to \$18 billion in global system sales by 2028

THE TOP 50 FAST FOOD (QSR) CHAINS*

RANK	COMPANY	2024 U.S. SYSTEM-WIDE SALES (MILLIONS)	2024 AVERAGE SALES PER UNIT (THOUSANDS)	2024 FRANCHISE/LICENSE UNITS	2024 COMPANY UNITS	2024 TOTAL UNITS	TOTAL CHANGE IN UNITS FROM 2023
1	MCDONALD'S	\$53,469	\$4,002	12,887	672	13,559	102
2	STARBUCKS	\$30,400	\$1,800	6,777	10,158	16,935	589
3	CHICK-FIL-A	\$22,746	\$7,500	3,054	55	3,109	145
4	TACO BELL	\$16,200	\$2,130	7,106	498	7,604	199
5	WENDY'S	\$12,554	\$2,098	5,552	381	5,933	-97
6	DUNKIN'	\$12,468	\$1,300	9,734	34	9,768	188
7	CHIPOTLE	\$11,111	\$3,213	0	3,644	3,644	273
8	BURGER KING	\$10,980	\$1,639	5,524	1,177	6,701	-77
9	SUBWAY	\$9,653	\$495	19,502	0	19,502	-63
10	DOMINO'S	\$9,500	\$1,354	6,722	292	7,014	160
11	PANDA EXPRESS	\$6,199	\$2,592	175	2,330	2,505	85
12	PANERA	\$5,819	\$2,626	1,105	1,101	2,206	35
13	POPEYES	\$5,726	\$1,819	3,050	98	3,148	97
14	PIZZA HUT	\$5,500	\$839	6,534	23	6,557	-36
15	SONIC DRIVE-IN	\$5,384	\$1,500	3,144	317	3,461	-60
16	RAISING CANE'S	\$4,960	\$6,560	22	806	828	10
17	DAIRY QUEEN	\$4,909	\$1,165	4,210	2	4,212	-42
18	KFC	\$4,900	\$1,336	3,589	80	3,669	-122
19	WINGSTOP	\$4,765	\$2,138	2,154	50	2,204	278
20	JACK IN THE BOX	\$4,396	\$2,007	2,037	150	2,187	3
21	ARBY'S	\$4,325	\$1,300	2,286	1,079	3,365	-48
22	WHATABURGER	\$4,257	\$4,026	206	879	1,085	88
23	PAPA JOHNS	\$3,808	\$1,157	2,752	539	3,291	7
24	JERSEY MIKE'S	\$3,731	\$1,325	2,970	27	2,997	313
25	CULVER'S	\$3,680	\$3,691	990	7	997	52

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26	LITTLE CAESARS	\$3,500	\$900	3,705	580	4,285	69
27	ZAXBYS	\$2,630	\$2,790	825	143	968	26
28	JIMMY JOHN'S	\$2,599	\$977	2,647	42	2,689	45
29	FIVE GUYS	\$2,270	\$1,536	875	613	1,488	35
30	IN-N-OUT BURGER	\$2,175	\$5,240	0	415	415	15
31	BOJANGLES	\$1,881	\$2,351	559	266	825	12
32	HARDEE'S	\$1,830	\$1,146	1,393	204	1,597	-110
33	DUTCH BROS	\$1,819	\$2,018	312	670	982	15
34	CARL'S JR.	\$1,520	\$1,430	1,014	49	1,063	-5
35	CRUMBL	\$1,435	\$1,355	1,058	1	1,059	87
36	TROPICAL SMOOTHIE CAFE	\$1,420	\$1,005	1,514	1	1,515	143
37	SHAKE SHACK	\$1,351	\$3,900	44	329	373	39
38	QDOBA	\$1,200	\$1,695	613	164	777	30
39	FIREHOUSE SUBS	\$1,153	\$973	1,191	42	1,233	38
40	EL POLLO LOCO	\$1,096	\$2,300	173	325	498	3
41	MARCO'S PIZZA	\$1,051	\$932	1,117	45	1,162	46
42	McALISTER'S	\$1,018	\$1,891	524	36	560	2
43	FREDDY'S	\$988	\$1,900	515	35	550	35
44	DEL TACO	\$957	\$1,611	461	133	594	2
45	CAVA	\$954	\$2,900	0	367	367	58
46	CHECKERS/RALLY'S	\$853	\$1,171	532	229	761	-26
47	CHURCH'S CHICKEN	\$847	\$1,097	602	159	761	-28
48	KRISPY KRUNCHY CHICKEN	\$800	\$300	3,168	0	3,168	325

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49	AUNTIE ANNE'S	\$786	\$763	1,210	1	1,221	23
50	TIM HORTONS	\$776	\$1,188	630	23	653	22

* as per QSR Magazine's 2025 Report

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Link to article:
<https://www.foodindustry.com/articles/top-50-fast-food-chains-in-the-u-s/>