

● SALADWORKS

WWW.SALADWORKS.COM

2004 SALES: \$40 MILLION

HQ: CONSHOHOCKEN, PA.

EMPLOYEES: 2,000

SPECIALTY: FRESH SALADS

JOHN SCARDAPANE, CHAIRMAN &

CEO: "YOU CAN EAT [AT SALAD-

WORKS] FOUR OR FIVE TIMES A

WEEK AND FEEL GOOD

AFTER YOU EAT

THERE."

Saladworks focuses on ingredients that are in season to create seasonal salads.

Fast and Fresh

The key to Saladworks is freshly prepared salads made to order and a menu that reflects the customers' desire to eat fresh and nutritious food that tastes great. **BY ERICA BURKE**

PEOPLE ARE BOMBARDED WITH FOOD CHOICES DAILY, SOME HEALTHIER than others. Saladworks has set out to be an alternative to fast food with its variety of freshly made salads, soups, sandwiches and wraps.

John Scardapane, founder, chairman and CEO, says customers seek out Saladworks for meals that are healthier and lighter without giving up flavor or convenience.

Founded in 1986, Saladworks now boasts 64 locations in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Florida, Maryland, Illinois and Washington, D.C.

"I came up with the concept to achieve a place [where] you can eat four or five times a week and feel good after you eat there," Scardapane says. "In 1986, people on the go were limited to fast food. Instead, we wanted to focus on nutrition and health. And although we do not consider ourselves 'health food,' we definitely lend ourselves to a healthy lifestyle."

In addition, Scardapane says the chain doesn't change its menu to conform to fad diet programs, but instead offers

quality products prepared fresh on premise.

"This is the best way to get the highest quality and best nutrition you can get out of food," he says. "The whole basis of why people come to us is that we have basic, good-quality ingredients that we prepare on site daily.

"And although sometimes we struggle to do that and know it's easier to go to a commissary, we won't."

In order to maintain quality and consistency, he says, employees receive 12 weeks of extensive training.

NEW MENU ITEMS

Salads are, of course, a major part of Saladworks' menu. The salads include seasonal items that are rotated regularly.

"We focus on ingredients that are in season - whatever comes fresh off the farms - and use them to create seasonal salads," he says.

A professionally trained chef, Scardapane is a major part of the company's R&D department. "We also have our home office

staff and franchisees on board assisting our R&D activities. We're always coming up with new flavor profiles we develop and test," he says.

After a product is developed, it is reviewed by a committee made up of 10 franchisees and four home office employees, the company says.

"If it makes it past this committee, it goes into an eight-store test," he says. "If it is successful, we roll out the new item to the entire system. We're continually adding new and exciting items that deliver on taste and customer satisfaction."

THE RIGHT PEOPLE

When franchisees join the Saladworks' franchise community, the company says they become an important part of the "new way America dines out."

When selecting the right franchisees, Saladworks looks for three simple qualities: passion, honesty and potential.

"If they possess those three, we can teach them everything they need to know," Scardapane says. "If a potential franchisee is interested in more than one unit, they need to have prior experience managing multiple units."

He says most Saladworks franchisees eventually grow to own multiple locations. Because it's hard to operate more than three locations, Saladworks offers special management training for three or more units. Saladworks has successfully helped franchisees achieve their business goals.

Franchisee Jim Dooney said he's always dreamed of opening his own business and as a Saladworks franchisee, "I took

advantage of the great business opportunity and support team Saladworks offered," he explains. "Today, I have my own financial freedom."

Rich Zawrotny says he was inspired to become a franchisee when three of his colleagues left to open a location.

"After seeing the success they experienced, I took a big step and left the corporate world to become a Saladworks franchisee, too," he recalls. "My location has constantly grown and is extremely profitable. After four years with Saladworks, I am now expanding with two new locations."

GROWING FRESH

Scardapane insists Saladworks has never been bottom line-driven from a profit standpoint, but it always strives to develop the best concept possible.

"We initially grew only with friends and family, but four years ago, we got to the point where our team wanted to continue to grow and develop, on a larger scale, so we created an infrastructure to support the growth," he says.

As a result, the company began growing more aggressively, especially with franchise locations. The growth is expected to continue and Saladworks' long-range goal for 2010 is to have 350 total locations.

"Our prime strategy is to dominate the salad category," he says. "We want to be the nation's leading healthy food concept. In addition, we want to continue offering unmatched customer satisfaction and want consumers to rate us the best with no competition that comes close." 