



Episode 4 “Falloon’s Philadelphia Food”

Welcome to the fourth episode of the NJFPA Stradley Ronon Food Forum. In this episode, [Bill Mandia](#), Partner at [Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, LLP](#), speaks with [Roger Falloon](#), Chief Operating Officer of [Chickie’s & Pete’s](#) restaurant company. Bill and Roger talk about legendary Philly institutions, saying yes to hard decisions and the past, present and future of Chickie’s & Pete’s.

Guest Bio:



Roger is the Chief Operating Officer of the iconic Chickie’s & Pete’s restaurant company, with multiple locations throughout the region (and beyond) including Philadelphia’s major sport venues. He is an experienced C-level executive who has incredible skill and understanding consumer purchase patterns in order to maximize sales and profitability in a cost effective manner. Prior to Chickie’s and Pete’s, Roger held a number of positions within Rita’s Italian Ice including serving as their Vice President of Operations, and he has been a major contributor to the growth and success of both brands which are staples of the NJ food community.

Listeners will hear:

- How local networking brought Roger to Chickie’s and Pete’s - 3:20
- The history of the Chickie’s and Pete’s brand - 7:46
- Chickie’s and Pete’s initial response to COVID shut down - 14:00

- Roger's thoughts on what they would have done differently - 19:54
- What changes and lessons from the last year Chickie's and Pete's will keep - 24:27
- Roger's career advice to new professionals - 35:07

Edited Interview Transcript

Bill Mandia, Stradley Ronon 0:48

Hello, and welcome to another episode of the Stradley Ronon New Jersey Food Processors Association Food Forum podcast today I'm very excited to have as a guest, Roger Falloon, Chief Operating Officer of Chickie's & Pete's and I think more importantly, a distinguished alum of the number one high school in America: Father Judge.

Roger Falloon 0:49

Absolutely!

Bill Mandia, Stradley Ronon 0:50

I did make a deal with the Food Processors, Roger that we would not sing any of the fight songs or any of that kind of stuff.

Roger Falloon 1:18

I had my cheat sheet here, just in case.

Bill Mandia, Stradley Ronon 1:22

Always got to have it at the ready. Right?

Roger Falloon 1:24

That's right. That's right!

Bill Mandia, Stradley Ronon 1:25

So anyway, welcome to the show, the podcast. If you could just briefly introduce yourself, what you do at Chickie's, and tell us a little bit about your background.

Roger Falloon 1:37

I'm Roger Falloon, as you mentioned, Chief Operating Officer at Chickie's & Pete's I've been at Chickie's for 10 years. Prior to that, I was VP of operations at Rita's. So I'm born and raised northeast Philly Mayfair guy St. Tim's, Father Judge, Holy Family University. I don't know that it gets more northeast and Mayfair than that. I'm really excited that over the course of my career I had the opportunity to work two Philadelphia icon brands with Rita's and now Chickie's & Pete's. My responsibility at Chickie's is day to day operations, make sure things are going the way they need to be, strategy, long term thinking and really just the day to day operations of the business. So the last year obviously has been

difficult but things are getting better every day and I'm looking forward to getting back to normalcy with each passing day.

Bill Mandia, Stradley Ronon 2:47

So I tried to stay away from the whole St. Tim's - St. Matt's thing, but I just couldn't resist it. The only way you can get more Mayfair than that is if you would have went to St. Matt's. A close runner up St Tim's.

Roger Falloon 3:00

There you go, neighboring schools.

Bill Mandia, Stradley Ronon 3:04

All joking aside, tell us a little bit about your transition from Rita's to Chickie's and maybe a little bit about the history of Chickie's too. I think it has a fascinating history as a local brand.

Roger Falloon 3:20

I was at Rita's, I've only had two professional jobs. Coming out of Holy Family, I was hired at Rita's in their ops department, entry level position there at Rita's. I had a long, successful 13 year career at Rita's where I worked my way up through the organization. Towards the end of my time at Rita's, when I was the VP of operations, Holy Family had put into play an advisory group for their business department. At the time, they asked if I would be part of that willing to contribute to it, which I absolutely was. And as fate would have it, Pete from Chickie's & Pete's founder and CEO was also on that advisory board. So we'd worked together there for a couple years. And again I literally could hit the original Chickie's & Pete's with a football from the house that I grew up in. It was that close. So when I found out that he was on the board as well, from day one, I had just looked forward to spending time with Pete and picking his brain and just talking to him as a successful business person in the neighborhood and in the community. We served on that board for multiple years together.

I'll never forget it, one morning before one of our board meetings, Pete and I were having coffee sitting there and talking back and forth. And he said to me, people tell me all the time that I could really grow the Chickie's & Pete's brand. This was 2010. It was already a successful entity that had grown from a single location. With my background in franchising, and the growth of Rita's - when I started at Rita's, there were approximately 130, 140 stores. When I left, there were 600. And seeing all the different types of franchises and people that were franchising and growing their business out there, my response to him was, absolutely, you could grow the Chickie's & Pete's brand. You have a great product, great experience, something that was very unique in the marketplace, there was no doubt in my mind that he could do that. His response to me was, that's great. If I decide to do it, I'd love to pick your brain and talk to you a little bit about your thoughts on growing and things like that. Again, for me from growing up around the corner, I was like, hey, whenever, happy to sit down and have a conversation with you about how that would work.

So to be honest with you, I didn't really think much of it after that. I thought that next time I saw him at a meeting for Holy Family maybe he would ask me about it. And I don't even think it was a week later, my phone rang, and it was Pete, and he said, hey, I'd love to have lunch with you up at our new parks casino location and talk about the things we talked about. So I went and met him for lunch. In my mind, at this point, this was just a conversation about providing him maybe some tidbits or some insights into how he could grow. When I met him for lunch, he had a couple other members of his headquarters team there at the time. We spent about an hour and a half, two hours over lunch talking. And at the end of that meeting, he said, I really think that I'm ready to grow this and try to blow this up, bigger than it is today. And if I do that, I'm going to need someone like you to help me, do you know anybody who might be interested? And I said, Yeah, absolutely. Me! That was the start of a month of a little bit of back and forth, and making sure we were in the right spot. And January of that year, January of 2011, I started at Chickie's.

Roger Falloon 7:46

When you look at the growth of the brand, and really even before I started, the original location is a corner bar in Mayfair, where there's hundreds of them. It just happened that this corner bar had the magic of the menu, the experience, Pete's personality, all of those things coming together to just make it the most successful corner bar, maybe in the history of the city, probably in the history of the city. It opened in '77 and continued its successful run and is still open today. In '98 '99 Chickie's opened up on the boulevard and then in the early 2000s in South Philadelphia which was another huge step for the brand. The South Philadelphia Chickie's & Pete's which is by the stadium complex is actually a closed supermarket. So there's not many sports bars or restaurants around the country that are able to go into a supermarket location, 20,000+ square feet. And he really made that location very successful. The growth was slow and steady from then. There were venue locations, meaning in stadiums and in arenas at that point.

When I started in 2011, we tried to ramp up both sides of the business. So there's really two sides to our business. One is the full service restaurants that we own and operate. And then the other is kind of a smaller concession type locations that you're familiar with seeing in Citizens Bank Park, Lincoln Financial Field. We're also in a number of theme parks now. We're in football stadiums outside of this market, and arenas and stadiums outside of this market is as well. So we've really ramped up the growth from on both sides of the business with very successful results both in and outside of this market from a venue standpoint. Most of the full service restaurants are still local to the Philadelphia area, we are as far south as Atlantic City, as far north in Jersey as Bordentown, Audubon, PA. We have a location coming in Malvern, PA, which will be our furthest West one. And then when you get to a venue standpoint, we're in Kansas City in the Chiefs and the Royals Stadium, Minnesota, Ohio, we're in Florida.

The reach of the brand has really grown exponentially over the last few years. But it was really on a good trajectory before I started. The most important thing with gross growth like that is that you have a successful, unique, brand product. And that's what we've seen and that's what Pete created with Chickie's & Pete's.

Bill Mandia, Stradley Ronon 11:06

So the pandemic, obviously, through more than just a monkey wrench into a lot of people's businesses, and in particular, the restaurant industry. So if you could talk to us a little bit about where you guys were about a year ago when we had these unprecedented shutdown orders being issued, and kind of where we are today, what you guys have done in the interim, and what you've learned from that experience?

Roger Falloon 11:39

Talk about a curveball! The last year was unlike anything that we had prepared for. I don't think that anybody really prepared for anything like that. I think when you look at the restaurant bar industry specifically, it was extremely difficult the timing of the pandemic, and just how everything really kind of came about. In the restaurant, bar business, January, February are typically, a little bit slower times for us. And then March is really the kickoff of our call it good season, good year. Things really start to ramp up in March. You have St. Patty's Day, you have March Madness, which is a huge thing for us and for all the Chickie's & Pete's, and really any sports bar out there. The tournament was huge. We could kind of feel the impact of COVID, in our numbers, late February. We were noticing some anomalies in some of our numbers as the first case hit in the US. and [people become] more concerned. Then there was a case in Jersey and there was more concern and we felt it coming.

None of us really thought even at that point that we were trending towards a full shutdown or anything like that. But when we got into the middle part of March and literally a day or two before St. Patty's Day and the Monday before the tournament kickoff... From our standpoint, we're getting ready to ramp up. We have everything kicked into high gear, because that week is typically one of the top five weeks of our year. That Monday, orders are coming in and big orders coming in, and [we are] getting ready to stock up for what we hoped to be a good week. Now, obviously, the couple days before that, there were some things coming out about some restrictions and things like that. So we weren't quite as heavy as we would normally be. But we also didn't think that we were going to be shut down completely. And then obviously, we were shut down completely as most every other bar / restaurant was.

Roger Falloon 14:00

So like everybody else, we transitioned as quickly as we could. We moved over to to-go only operations. We had to make just a ton of very, very difficult decisions that impacted a lot of great team members that we had across the company. In terms of laying people off, just making sure that we're able to protect the business so that when things were lifted, that we would be able to be back to normal. Again, at that time there's a two week

shutdown and two weeks turned into... Obviously, we're still not back to normal capacity, but we're much better than we were then. But nobody knew what was going on at that time. We did what we thought was the right thing to do, to protect the long term business to make sure that people had a spot to come back to. But it was a lot of very, very difficult decisions. A lot of things we put in play at that point that are still in play today, in terms of what's most important to us is first and foremost keeping our people and our guests safe. We spent a lot of time putting together a safety plan that we rolled out and implemented in all of our locations, to do the best we could to keep people safe. That was when we were open for to-go only. Then as we slowly started to be able to have outdoor dining, and then some outdoor and some indoor dining opportunities. That was coming out of the gate.

One of our main focuses, from the business side of things, was cash management, obviously extremely important during that time. We're very grateful to a number of our vendors that were willing to work with us, to help us through, especially those initial couple of weeks and months. Before the shutdown, again, things were normal. So you're within your normal terms, and then all of a sudden the world stops and you have no more revenue, or virtually no revenue compared to what you were doing before. But all your bills that are 30 days due, are paid based on normal revenue. So it just throws the cash management side of the business really out of whack.

The other thing that we did, right out of the gate that was important to us was we wanted to make sure that we over communicated with our team. Especially during the first month or two, we had a daily conference call with our team to talk about questions, what are we seeing, what do we need to do different, what are different ideas. Anything we could do to try to make sure that people felt that they had the information they needed to help make it through it, the opportunity just to ask questions. There was so much stress on everybody, really, from a personal and just an individual standpoint, but then also from a business standpoint. It was critical for us that we had those opportunities to talk as a group, express how we were feeling, what challenges we were having, how we could overcome those challenges. And those things we're doing today. We're still doing those calls multiple times a week just to give updates on different things. In the beginning, it was like trying to take a sip of water from a firehose, right? I mean, the information was coming so fast, it was so hard to keep up with. Having everybody on those calls, just to be able to tell us what they heard from their county locally was important, and a very big part of, I think, helping us get through it to the point that we have.

Then the other part was communicating with the team in general. We tried to communicate with our hourly team as well, team members that were laid off. We tried to send the messages a couple times a month, just 'Hey, we're thinking about you guys, you're in our thoughts and prayers.' Again, a credit to Pete, we allowed anybody that was laid off, was able to come pick up family meals at Chickie's for no cost. We wanted to make sure that they were okay, that they were taken care of, that they felt like we were behind them, and that as soon as we could bring people back, we would. And that's what

we did. Certainly, we're not perfect, and we could have done things a little bit better. But when we look back at that time, we think we made a lot of sound decisions. It really starts with the team members that were in the locations and in the restaurants. Those are the guys and women that really helped us pull through this. It's one thing to have our headquarters team here and support those guys, but those guys were at the front lines of taking care of people and in very uncertain times. We can't thank those guys enough for what they did, day in and day out, especially over those first two, three months, which were very, very difficult.

Bill Mandia, Stradley Ronon 19:44

So I'm going to toss maybe a little bit harder question at you. If there was one thing from the last year that you could do over, what would that be?

Roger Falloon 19:54

So it's not really that hard of a question. I wish we would have done it different from the start. I think what's important with anything is that when you debrief on how any situation went or any decision or, or multiple decisions go, that you learn from it. Make sure you put yourself in a different spot the next time something comes up. So, when we experienced the first shutdown, we made the decision that we were going to operate the restaurants with management team members only. We laid off really the overwhelming majority of our hourly team members. We did so because we didn't know what sales would look like, on the to-go only model. We really had no idea. At that point in time, our to-go and third party delivery sales on a given week were probably 3-6%, or 3-7% of our total sales. So as we all know, if that's where it stood, we weren't going to get very far with that type of model. So fortunately, because there was no other option, that that number skyrocketed over the course of those first couple months. We made the decision to run the locations with management team members only for the most part. And in hindsight, it would have been better if we also kept on some hourly team members to help support those guys as well.

So if we had to do it again, and fortunately, or unfortunately, as we all know we went through the initial months, the summer got better, the fall started out okay. Then as we got into November, December, things took another turn for the worse. We ended up getting shut down again, specifically in our Pennsylvania and Philadelphia locations. I think the important thing is that when we realized and talked to all of our team members, in the summer, when things started to open back up. We asked them all, 'hey, what should we have done different? What would have helped you guys? what would have made it better?' That [having more hourly team members] was the answer that we got most frequently. So when November rolled around and we started to get additional restrictions put into place, instead of going back and doing what we did before, what we did was talk to the general manager of each location, and gave everybody a labor percentage goal for them to hit with a mix of hourly and management team members.

It made a world of difference on the mental side of things from having the ability to have a couple more people there helping out. And as well as sales, we kept people, when it was just managers, we were asking those guys to do things that they knew how to do, but it wasn't what they typically did on a day in and day out basis. Where this time, those guys were able to help out and manage and we had some staff in there that were aces at doing the things that we need them to do. So it put us in a better mental state from an overall standpoint, and also in a better sales state from an overall standpoint.

I think that when something like this happens, we made decisions quick, we were decisive about those decisions, making sure that we were protecting the long term. But when you have the opportunity to debrief and go back and look at what could we have done differently? It's important to identify those things, and then put those things in play if you need to, if it happens again. Now, we're all hoping that we never have to put those things in play again and we don't need that playbook again. But that's what we would have done different the first time back in March when this hit.

Bill Mandia, Stradley Ronon 24:09

So is there anything when we return to normal (or the new, normal, whatever that looks like) is there anything that you've done differently over the course of the pandemic that you think is something that you'll stick with when it's hopefully over?

Roger Falloon 24:27

There's a lot of things that we put in play over the course of the last year that we will stick with moving forward. Some of those are internal processes. From a communication standpoint, there's no doubt that we will continue and to this day are still continuing, touching base on conference calls multiple times a week with our team to make sure they feel connected and that they have the most up to date information. We're keeping them in the loop of where things stand from a company standpoint. And also with our hourly team members trying to regularly be in communication with those guys as well.

Not that we ever were not focused on some of the numbers in the business, but the last year has made us hyper focused on some of those numbers [like] cashflow and our cash position. We look at it on a daily basis, on a weekly basis, to make sure we know exactly what's going out, projecting what's coming in. Those things were happening before but just not as detailed and focused as they are today. Those will definitely be things that we continue to carry forward.

All of our outside spaces and the importance of outside dining are things that we will carry forward. Our Malvern location that's in development, we went back to the initial plans for that location. We really took another look at it and made sure that we had an area there that would be able to continue to operate, if something like this ever happened again, five years down the road, eight years down the road. We're building some of those things into our operations currently, but also into the long term thinking of how do we prepare for if this happens again. We'll be able to continue to do business to some

degree, whether it's a three seasons room or windows that open that make it more of an outdoor space with the airflow. Those are things that will be part of our development where they can moving forward, because of what we experienced last year.

Bill Mandia, Stradley Ronon 26:47

One area there was a lot of talk about at the beginning of the pandemic, when I don't think it was very clear to scientists, or anyone, what exactly we were dealing with, was disruption to the food supply chain. I think, fortunately, it did not turn out to be as disruptive as people feared it was going to be. I am curious to hear a little bit from you about how you think the supply chain performed during the pandemic? And do you think there are some changes there that have taken place that are going to continue going forward?

Roger Falloon 27:21

I think those guys did an amazing job. When you take a step back and look at it, I don't know how those guys could have done a better job, especially the ones that we work with, from a supply chain standpoint. We were ramping up. When you think about Chickie's and Pete's specifically, all of those for the most part venue locations that we talked a little bit about earlier, 95% of them were closed when this first started happening, but 95% of them were getting ready to open. So our boardwalk locations, our theme park locations, baseball stadiums, all of those types of locations were getting ready to start to ramp up in March and April. So when you look at our supply chain, all of our suppliers and vendors were bringing in massive amounts of product to prepare for that stuff. And they had massive amounts of product because we were going into the busiest week of our year, when the shutdown hit or one of the busiest weeks of our year when the shutdown hit. What typically kicks off a busy spring season for us, we did not feel any disruption to our product early on.

Even over the course of the summer, we had ample supply of the items that we needed. A ton of credit goes to all of our vendors that we work with, from a food side of things. All of our purveyors that do the Chickie's and Pete's private label brand items, we have plenty of product. We did obviously make some decisions on some menu items, during that initial time. We tried to cut the menu back a little bit without losing the identity of Chickie's and Pete's and what makes it different. But I thought that those guys did an outstanding job covering things. Then we had the opposite fear as things started to ramp up. Because everybody had so much stuff, and then everything slowed down so much it was like push, pull, push, pull. The summer start with outdoor dining and then a little bit of indoor dining started to get better again so we needed more stuff. Then the fall we slowed back down again because we had the surge, and now we're picking back up. I think I've been on, and have one actually later today, calls with our major suppliers to talk about where things stand from a forecast standpoint. Those guys deserve a ton of credit, everybody that we work with has been phenomenal during the course of the last year. We've never been without any of our major items at all.

Bill Mandia, Stradley Ronon 30:25

So I think you touched on this a little bit already talking about your Malvern location, but what do you see as sort of the future for in person dining? And also for your outlets that you have in the various sports venues? How do you think things are going to change, if at all, for those kinds of operations going forward?

Roger Falloon 30:47

I think that they will get back to normal at some point. But I do think there will be some longer lasting changes in both the in person dining standpoint, as well as from a stadium venue arena theme park standpoint. I don't think there's any question that people are more comfortable today, using third party delivery apps, picking up food, getting food from restaurants that they may not have thought about before. To get to-go food from [restaurants], they are now comfortable doing that. That 3 - 6%, that was typical for Chickie's and Pete's to do for to-go, is probably going to stay at double that, maybe a little bit more than that for the foreseeable future. I think that that's a long lasting thing that's going to come out of this last year.

I also also think that the last year has kind of pushed forward people's comfortableness with technology. I think that people are using apps and third party apps for delivery, or to place orders for pickup, where before, they may have been more of a phone person, or I'm just going to go there in person and do it and maybe have a beer at the bar while I'm waiting for it, which we would still encourage. But I think that this has pushed forward people's acceptance of technology a little bit quicker than before, the use of QR codes for menus, the use of scanning a QR code to pay at the table and not have to give a server or a bartender your credit card, or cash or things like that. Those were things that were obviously part of the industry prior to COVID, I just don't think they had as much general acceptance as they do today. I think we're going to see that continue to expand in the years to come as people try to figure out how to protect against something like this happening in the future.

I think you'll see the same thing in stadiums and arenas. I think the use of technology is probably the biggest thing that will come from this and in those places. We've seen it in the past where you could order food from your seat and it would be delivered. I think you're just going to see more and more of those types of things where the guest experience is a little bit different based on having the food delivered directly to your seats. From a venue standpoint, just to try to keep people as spread out as they could be, not congregating in lines and things of that nature.

In [restaurant] locations I think it's going to get closer to normal as we continue to work our way through this over the course of the rest of this year. Hopefully, at some point later this year or in 2022 we're able to go back to just normal full capacity, regular bar operations, things of that nature. I think there might be a little bit more space between tables and barstools and things like that than what we were used to in the past. But overall the in person dining experience from a people standpoint, I think we'll be back to normal.

Bill Mandia, Stradley Ronon 34:32

So just kind of switching gears, maybe off the pandemic and the future of that. Let's let's talk a little bit about what you could share from your experience that may be beneficial to listeners who are at the early stages of starting their business. You talked earlier about your experience with Rita's and now at Chickie's with large scale growth phases for both companies. So I think it'd be very interesting for our readers to hear some of the lessons you've learned and some advice you can give on that front.

Roger Falloon 35:07

The first one, I'd love to say that this was purposeful, but it really wasn't. It kind of plays off of one of Ritz Carlton's core philosophies, which is: 'The answer is yes. Now, what is the question?' I was always a guy at Rita's that no matter no matter what the Ask was, I said, Yes. And I think that was extremely beneficial to launching my career and my upward mobility at Rita's. I established myself as somebody that could be relied on. But also, if there was a difficult ask, that I would say yes to the ask and come through.

And just a couple quick examples of that is, early on in my career, I gave you the lineage of my history and Mayfair. I never went away to college, lived at home for a while. Early on in my career at Rita's they came and asked me to move to Columbus, Ohio to operate a corporate store. Rita's never really had many corporate stores. They wanted to expand westward, and Columbus was an area that they had targeted, the location had been open for a couple years. Each year, they tended to send a different personnel to run it for the season, basically. They came to me and asked me if I would move out there from March to October and run the store. At the time, it really wasn't something that a lot of people would have been excited about. But they came to me and asked me and I said, Yes. I went out there and it really was a tremendous benefit to my career, specifically at Rita's, because it gave me a lot of credibility with the franchisees and working with the franchisees over time. I had to do everything that they had to do on a day in and day out basis: hire, make the water ice, clean the custard machine, deal with the person calling out at four o'clock on Saturday, and they weren't coming in for their shift. It was a new market where people really didn't understand the product. I knew when someone came up to our window and was from Philly, because they said, 'wooter' the way that I say 'wooter' and they were few and far between. We struck up a nice conversation with them based on that fact.

So that was one lesson and the other one a couple years later. The company had been sold, there was a new CEO who was running the business. We were a couple days before doing one of our franchisee conventions, literally a couple days and we had a couple changes that ended up happening. He came to me two days before this presentation in front of more than half of the franchise body and said, Hey, I need someone to get up there and do this presentation. Will you do it? And again, I said yes. Two days to prepare for a presentation in front of 4-500 people was probably one of the more nerve wracking things that I've agreed to, at the time. But it was something that established with the CEO

at the time that I can be a go to person that can be counted on and relied on. I think no matter how small the ask is, that people remember that. People remember the people that are willing to do something for the team. Maybe it's not the most desirable thing, but they're willing to step up and do something for the team.

Two other quick things that I would say is, stay involved and network. That Holy Family Business Advisory Board made the connection for me and helped facilitate my career. I loved Rita's, I loved everything about it. I love it to this day. I love my large lemon water ice on the first nice, warm day of the year, but it helped facilitate a move for me that now was 10 years ago. Network, stay active, meet people. Work your personal brand as well as being proud about where you work. Stay up on the trends, read as much as you can. Those are the things that I would say are important. If I could give that advice to people that are starting out, those things are helpful.

Bill Mandia, Stradley Ronon 40:02

All great advice there. The one thing I hear coming across in that is how important it is to take ownership of whatever it is that you're doing, and try to treat it that way and really learn the business all the way down to the ground level. It's so critical to understand all the different parts of the operation. I think sometimes that gets lost. You learn so much from this, the little experiences along the way that just prove to be critical later, because you understand it from a totally different perspective.

So final question. You mentioned you have some locations in New Jersey now, and hopefully you will have even more as we get on the other end of the pandemic. The food industry is a huge part of New Jersey's economy all the way down from farming to food processors or restaurants, packaging companies and transportation. It's a huge part of this economy. Is there anything that you think, whether it's the restaurant industry or other parts of the industry, that government and business leaders should be thinking about. Things to be keeping on the front burner that really could be addressed to help both the local and regional economy and also the employees who work at different food companies?

Roger Falloon 41:24

I think the biggest thing right now, based on the last year that all of us had, the states are in the same boat because they've had just as much of a challenging year as the businesses that operate in the states, is to take our time. There's no silver bullet easy fix, that's just going to make all of the challenges that we all just experienced last year go away. I don't want there to be a rush towards we have to get everything back over the course of a year or two years. So many businesses are struggling, so many businesses are going to struggle to just get back above water over the course of the next two years. We've really have to take a long term outlook on how this recovery is going to play out.

I just hope that when people are in the pressure situation, we all understand that nothing about any of this is easy, right? This is not an easy decision. This is not an easy process. These are not easy problems. We hope that people take a longer term outlook on it, and

understand that we can't put more restrictions, and we can't put more things on small businesses and businesses that are going to hamper the recovery. Because it may solve one problem, but it's going to cause another, I think the longer term outlook we take, it's more sustainable for everybody. It's not going to be easy for everybody, but it's more sustainable for everybody if we spread it out over a little bit longer of a period of time. That's really what we hope for, that everybody is not just trying to get everything back in one year. That there is a little bit more of a longer term outlook to get back to normal.

Bill Mandia, Stradley Ronon 43:30

I think that's a great point, you hear so much talk about pent up demand. And I think there's a ton of it. Just Saturday night, I was out my wife and I were out kind of riding around and I can already see the restaurants as people are getting vaccinated. It's picking up. I think there are a lot of people that are chomping at the bit to get out there. But I also think it's important to bear in mind, it's not going to be a magic wand that you just wave and everything goes back to the way it was

Roger Falloon 43:55

Right, a couple good weeks is not going to make up for a year. We definitely see a direct correlation between the amount of people getting vaccinated and our sales curve. That correlation also involves, as we talked about earlier, March, and things typically start to get better for us in March. So, the pent up demand is real, there is no doubt that there's a ton of pent up demand. So all those things right now are working in small businesses, restaurants and bars, favor and Chickie's and Pete's favor as well. But what's happening right now is not going to fix what happened over the course of the last year. It's long term and that's how we're looking at it as well. We are taking a long term outlook on it. We're not looking at it: well, we have to do X, Y or Z now to make up for what happened over the last year. We're going to make up for that by doing what we do best, delivering great food and great experience, great service, in a great environment. That's what Chickie's and Pete's is, that's what Pete built. We try to execute that on a daily basis and that's what's going to pull us through the next several years.

Bill Mandia, Stradley Ronon 45:14

Roger, thanks so much for your time and your insight. I think myself, like many, are looking very forward to getting back out to Chickie's. Once things level off, particularly at the ballpark. In fact, just as we're talking here today I'm getting hungry for crab fries. I didn't realize that the location in South Philly used to be a supermarket. That's one of my favorite venues that's out there. It's a great location. So anyway, thanks so much for your time, and we really appreciate it.

Roger Falloon 45:45

My pleasure. Thanks, guys.

On behalf of the New Jersey Food Processors Association, we thank you for listening to this episode of the NJFPA Food Forum. For more information, you can visit us at www.njfoodprocessors.org. And if you have an idea for a future episode, please email us at

help@njfoodprocessors.org. We would love to connect with you and make your story and your experience part of this series too.