

TAMPA BAY BUSINESS 100

No. 27: Front Burner Brands

🔑 **SUBSCRIBER CONTENT:** Oct 24, 2014, 6:00am EDT | **UPDATED:** Oct 24, 2014, 12:21pm EDT

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No. 27
Front Burner Brands
2013 revenue: \$248 million

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In a concerted effort to show consumers that The Melting Pot is not your grandma's fondue restaurant, parent company Front Burner Brands hired Chef [Jason Miller](#) away from Capital Grille in New York City to oversee culinary development.

When he spoke to the *Tampa Bay Business Journal* in July, the newly installed executive chef had just begun developing innovative menu items.

"I'm essentially deconstructing the classic idea of fondue," he said.

It's a fitting move for upstart Front Burner, established in 2011 and the youngest company on the Tampa Bay Business 100 List.

Front Burner's other brands are **Burger 21** and GrillSmith. The latter contracted this year, shedding its underperforming Brandon restaurant, leaving the chain with five locations.

On the other hand, Burger 21 is in expansion mode, driven by solid sales gains. The "better burger" chain, which opened its first restaurant in Westchase in 2010, has 14 locations reaching to upstate New York and Arizona, with more than 25 in development across the country.

The Melting Pot — with 134 units in North America and 25 in development in the Middle East and Indonesia — launched an aggressive growth campaign in 2014. Franchisee interest "has never been stronger," said Front Burner Communications Manager [Alisha dos Santos](#) in an email. "But we want to approach our growth cautiously because The Melting Pot is not a concept that can oversaturate markets."

The executive suite added its first-ever general counsel, [Brad Culp](#), this summer. [Maryellen Torres](#) joined as its first chief brand officer, while [Michele Whaley](#) became senior director of marketing.



The Melting Pot

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Eric Snider is a reporter for the Tampa Bay Business Journal.