

torchystacos.com / Headquarters: Austin, Texas / Specialty: "Damn good tacos" / Ed Malloy, director of purchasing: "Damn good tacos. It's who we are. It's not just a tagline."

Taco Junkies!

Torchy's Tacos has implemented a new supply chain model to accommodate its rapid growth. *By Kat Zeman*

The Trailer Park taco made of hand-battered fried chicken with green chiles, lettuce, pico de gallo and freshly grated cheddar jack cheese is a fan favorite.



Torchy's Tacos isn't afraid to be edgy. It serves "damn good tacos" and is not shy about broadcasting it. Its innovative approach to this Mexican dish is generating newly-indoc-trinated taco junkies in Texas, Colorado and Oklahoma.

"Damn good tacos," says Ed Malloy, the company's director of purchasing. "It's who we are. It's not just a tagline."

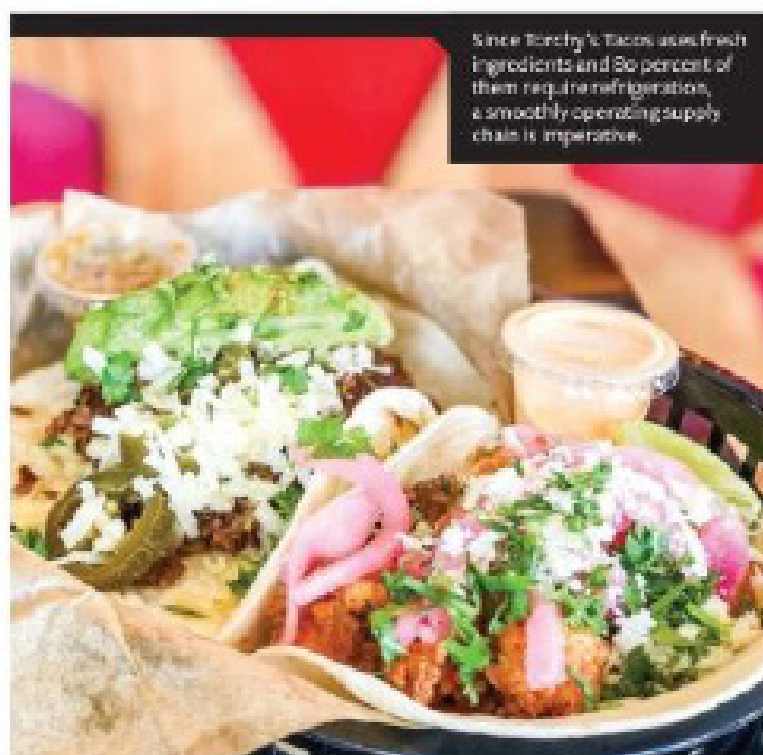
Malloy has an important job. In order for Torchy's Tacos to keep serving its customers those damn good tacos, Malloy has to make damn sure that his supply chain is operating at optimum.

Torchy's Tacos, a chain of more than 60 casual-dining restaurants that claims fame in Texas, Colorado and Oklahoma, has tripled in size over the past five years. The company estimates that it will open 100 new stores in the next five years and is expanding its reach into Arkansas.

"One of my responsibilities is to make sure I'm building a supply chain network that will cover all those stores," Malloy says. He has been with the company for about four years and has seen 30 new stores open during that time. "It's the food," Malloy explains. "We have an incredible following and as we've expanded, the following has continued."



ED MALLOY
director of
purchasing



Since Torchy's Tacos uses fresh ingredients and 80 percent of them require refrigeration, a smoothly operating supply chain is imperative.

ply chain for its clients by offering a one-call solution to source the freshest produce from more than 70 third-party inspected, independently owned local distribution centers across the United States and Canada. It provides category cost management through commodity contract pricing, in-house consultation services and integrated produce program distribution management.

"We have aligned ourselves with them because they are a fresh source and that's what we do," Malloy says. "And another thing that PRO*ACT has been able to do is take risk off the table by aligning us with quality companies. To manage our supply chain, we need to align ourselves with companies that give us the quality products we want and we monitor that."

Another change that Torchy's made to its supply chain is to change its distributor to Hardie's Fresh Foods, which has a rich history in the fresh produce business in the Southwest. The company has been providing farm-fresh fruit and vegetables to the foodservice industry for about 75 years. Hardie's is still family-owned and operated and makes daily deliveries of fresh produce throughout its market. It is also a member of PRO*ACT.

"We've created a new supply chain model that most people wouldn't follow because it's not easy," Malloy says. "But I'm proud of that. It's not out of the box. Most people want to go to one of the big national food distributors and let someone else manage their business. That's not for us. We put together a program that lets us focus on the food we

those damn good tacos. Today, Torchy's Tacos is a growing taco empire that has won national awards for its culinary creations, garnered national praise from food critics and developed a fanbase.

"When we opened our first store, we already had a following," Malloy says. "I think people gravitate to the quality of food we put out."

Even the Houston Astros have gravitated towards Torchy's. The baseball team has a Torchy's restaurant inside its stadium. In addition, Rypka won the 2018 Chef of the Year award from the United Fresh Produce Association in the fast-casual food category. He was acknowledged for helping to promote fresh produce.

Although Torchy's is known for its food, it's also known for being a lot of fun. "We like to think we're a little edgy," Malloy says. "We're not afraid to hire people with tattoos or colored hair."

Its restaurants are known for their lively designs and ability to adapt themselves to the communities they serve.

"Each store is a little different," Malloy says. "We try to incorporate the local feel. That's a big part of who we are. We are not a cookie-cutter store. It's a fun and friendly atmosphere that serves phenomenal food and I think that's why we're successful."

Customers place their orders at a counter but the staff brings it to their tables. Not all, but most of its locations also have a full bar. "We appeal to very large demographic," Malloy says. "We have older customers and young families and we're very proud of that." 🌮



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