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# Sonoma Chicken owners hatch growth plans



Jeff Starbeck of Sonoma  
Chicken Coop.

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by [Cathy Weselby](#)

Sonoma Chicken Coop

Launched: 2002

Headquarters: San Jose

Locations: Downtown San Jose,

Almaden, Campbell and one opening

soon on Skyport Drive.

Employees: 350-400

2007 revenue: [REDACTED]

Phone: (408) 247-2376

Web site: [www.sonomachickencoop.com](http://www.sonomachickencoop.com)

Sonoma Chicken Coop is spreading its wings. The popular chicken rotisserie restaurant is on track to open its fourth location next month and plans to expand the concept nationwide by partnering with a franchise development company, Fransmart.

Founded in 2002 by Jeff Starbeck, Bob and Bonnie Ray and MacKenzie Davis, the fast casual restaurant now serves between 1,000 to 1,200 customers daily and generates [REDACTED] million in sales annually at its two locations that have been open more than a year.

A third Sonoma Chicken Coop opened in Almaden in late 2007, a fourth on the corner of Skyport and Technology drives is scheduled to open in July and another location is slated for the new terminal at the Mineta San Jose International Airport.

San Jose Downtown Association executive director Scott Knies says the restaurant is a tremendous success story.

"The restaurant took off like a meteor from day one when they opened up in San Pedro Square," Knies says. "The coop pioneered this niche that struck a chord with the market and they've been printing money."

Starbeck started with humble beginnings, owning six hot dog vending carts, and then opening Peggy Sue's in downtown San Jose in 1994. Gazing across San Pedro Square, Starbeck envisioned a courtyard oasis where an asphalt parking lot and drab office building stood. In 2001, Bob and Bonnie Ray visited a similar rotisserie chicken concept in Los Angeles and the four hired a chef to develop a menu that could serve a high volume of customers while keeping food and labor costs down.

Sonoma Chicken Coop goes by the slogan, "inexpensive excellence," and has no wait staff, quick meal turnaround, low prices and a broad menu selection.

The Campbell location opened in 2004 in a building outfitted to brew beer and is now the location with the highest volume. "Each store we open, we learn from our mistakes," Starbeck says. "When we opened the first location, we underestimated our volume by 200 percent."

Starbeck says that Sonoma's kitchens have grown to accommodate the volume. The kitchen for the new Skyport site is three times the size of the original San Pedro Square location.

Even as restaurants face soaring food costs, the menu prices at Sonoma Chicken Coop have not increased in the past year. The check average is ■■■■. Starbeck says instead of raising prices they've analyzed portions and cut back on labor to cope with the diminishing profit margins.