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Fast-Casual growth a good sign for Tootie Pie Corp.

Home-spun Texas pie baker [Tootie Pie Corp.](#) is poised for growth as two national trends – one in business and the other in popular culture – merge on the doorstep of its local cafés .

While sales in most of the restaurant industry remain flat, the fast-casual segment is growing by nearly 6 percent a year, with the bakery/café segment claiming a large chunk.

Tootie Pie Corps, ticker symbol TOOT, mirrors that growth. By the end of October, the company expects to have seven cafes in operation with [new locations in high-income areas](#).

Despite the economic downturn, people are still flocking to fast, comfortable, quality food. Industry magazine “QSR” reported fast-casual sales grew 3.4 percent in 2010 while other sectors remained flat. In addition the number of stores has increased. The number of fast-casual venues increased 3.4 percent in 2010 compared to the top 500 chains, where there was only 0.6 percent growth, and quick service, or fast-food, chains with only 0.3 percent growth.

Even among fast-casual chains, Tootie Pie has another advantage, whole-pie sales. Unlike competitors like Panera Bread, Tootie Pie can sell a \$35 pie to its customers as they head out the door, or sell a stack of pies to a harried party host.

While a pie sold by the slice can yield \$50 per pie for the store, a whole pie purchase at the end of a meal has driven up check averages for the local cafés. A check average for a typical fast-casual restaurant is \$8 to \$15. Check averages at Tootie Pie cafés are \$15 to \$18, said Randy G. Graybill, director of business development.