

# restaurant development + design

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Project Profile

**DEL FRISCO'S  
DOUBLE  
EAGLE D.C.**



says. "This goes back to the question of whether the food your brand serves fits the market you want to expand into."

In addition, it is important to understand how easy it will be to get the kind of ingredients a concept needs to the region.

When Anthony Russo was looking to expand his Houston-based Russo's Restaurants — Russo's New York Pizzeria and Russo's Coal-Fired Italian Kitchen — the Middle East was his first choice. However, there was a big learning curve in regard to supply chain and the country's import rules and regulations. Despite having a Middle Eastern franchisee already in the restaurant business, it took Russo nearly eight months to get his list of ingredients approved for import into the region.

"We talked with the local municipality to see what their requirements were, and they were pretty strict," he says. "The ingredients could not contain alcohol so we eliminated some dishes that used wine from the market. Everything also had to be less than one year old."

Russo uses a Baltimore-based exporter who handles product labeling and paperwork.

"We decided to get approvals in advance even though it costs more," he says. Yet despite the cost, the move has been worth it. The company's first unit in Dubai has led to deals in



While Freshii firmly establishes the brand's appearance across each unit, the chain remains flexible in regard to how the standards are reflected in each of the 13 international markets it serves.

Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qatar and Riyadh.

"I was so surprised at how they have embraced us," Russo says. "They love to eat out. It's almost like food is a form of entertainment. And the location is such a mixed culture that it doesn't

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