

CHIPOTLE EXPANDS RESTAURANT LEADERSHIP PIPELINE, AIMS TO PLACE AN APPRENTICE IN EVERY RESTAURANT BY THE END OF 2027

- Enhanced Apprentice program supports Chipotle's long-term goal of developing restaurant leaders from within
- The company's decade-long partnership with Guild has helped nearly 25,000 employees pursue debt-free education, supporting career advancement and Chipotle's long-term growth

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif., Sept. 15, 2026 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- Chipotle Mexican Grill (NYSE: CMG) today announced enhancements to its Apprentice program that place greater emphasis on developing talent, strengthening restaurant operations and preparing leaders to support the company's continued growth.

As the company works toward its long-term goal of operating 7,000 restaurants across the U.S. and Canada, it expects to open between 350 and 370 new restaurants in 2026. To enable its expansion, the company aims to place an Apprentice in each of its more than 4,200 company-owned restaurants by the end of 2027, strengthening the management infrastructure needed to support its growing footprint.

Today, Apprentices support approximately three-quarters of Chipotle's restaurants. Extending the model across its entire restaurant portfolio will create additional opportunities for Crew Members to advance while building deeper management benches across the organization.

More than 85% of Chipotle's restaurant managers began their careers as Crew Members, underscoring the company's commitment to promoting from within. The Apprentice role serves as a critical bridge to becoming a General Manager, preparing high-performing employees to oversee restaurant operations, develop teams and uphold Chipotle's operational standards. Chipotle's career pathway provides employees with a clear roadmap to advance from Crew Member to General Manager—and ultimately into field and regional roles.

"Every Crew Member we hire has the potential to become a future restaurant leader," **said Ilene Eskenazi, Chief Legal and Human Resources Officer**. "Developing leaders from within allows us to create meaningful careers for our people while ensuring every restaurant is led by someone who understands our culture and our commitment to exceptional guest experiences."

In addition to building Chipotle's pipeline of future General Managers, Apprentices provide additional leadership and staffing coverage during peak periods and weekends, helping teams focus on operational execution. The role also helps build a stronger team culture while delivering more consistent guest experiences across in-restaurant and digital occasions. By taking ownership of key areas, including training and the digital makeline, Apprentices allow General Managers to distribute responsibilities more effectively, improve digital execution and consistently deliver Chipotle's standards for hospitality. Restaurants with Apprentices also generally achieve better operational scores, which can contribute to improved restaurant economics over the long term.

Building Leaders Through Education

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Cultivate Education, powered by [Guild](#), a leading education and upskilling company. Over the past decade, the program has become a cornerstone of Chipotle's leadership strategy, helping employees gain the education, skills and confidence to advance their careers.

Key Cultivate Education milestones over the past decade include:

- Nearly 25,000 Chipotle employees have enrolled in an education program
- More than 14,000 employees have completed an education program
- 57% of graduates earned a college degree, while 43% earned a certificate

Eligible Chipotle employees can pursue fully online bachelor's and associate degrees, certificates, boot camps, language learning, high school completion and college preparation programs. Chipotle pays 100% of tuition for select college degree programs and provides up to \$5,250 annually toward additional educational opportunities or tuition reimbursement. Employees also receive one-on-one coaching throughout their educational journey and can earn college credit for eligible on-the-job training through Guild.

The investment has also strengthened Chipotle's workforce. Employees enrolled in Cultivate Education experience a 66% lower average annual turnover rate than non-participating peers and are promoted approximately 1.4 times as often, demonstrating the impact of education on retention and career advancement.

"Ten years ago, Chipotle made an early bet on the potential of its people. Today, employees participating in Cultivate Education are moving into business-critical roles and staying longer. These outcomes are strengthening the company as it expands and

supporting the customer experience. Guild is proud to partner with Chipotle as it continues to pioneer employee investments that transform careers and build the leaders its business needs," **said Bijal Shah, CEO of Guild.**

As Chipotle continues expanding in the U.S. and Canada, its greatest competitive advantage remains the people who grow with it. By investing in leadership development, education and clear career pathways, Chipotle is building the leaders who will power its next chapter.

To learn more about careers at Chipotle, visit careers.chipotle.com. Eligible employees can explore Cultivate Education benefits at chipotle.guilleducation.com.

A Workplace Built for Growth and Innovation

Chipotle's commitment to investing in its people and fostering a culture of growth and innovation continues to earn external recognition. The company was recently ranked No. 2 on [Fast Company's 2026 Best Workplaces for Innovators](#) list, which recognizes organizations that demonstrate a strong commitment to encouraging and developing innovation at all levels. Chipotle was also named to [TIME's World's Best Companies 2026](#) list, which recognizes top-performing companies around the globe based on employee satisfaction, revenue growth and sustainability transparency.

About Chipotle

Chipotle Mexican Grill, Inc. (NYSE: CMG) is cultivating a better world by serving responsibly sourced, classically-cooked, real food with wholesome ingredients without artificial colors, flavors or preservatives. There are over 4,200 restaurants as of June 30, 2026, in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the Middle East and it is the only restaurant company of its size that owns and operates all its restaurants in the United States, Canada and Europe. With nearly 140,000 employees passionate about providing a great guest experience, Chipotle is a longtime leader and innovator in the food industry. Chipotle is committed to making its food more accessible to everyone while continuing to be a brand with a demonstrated purpose as it leads the way in digital, technology and sustainable business practices. For more information or to place an order online, visit www.chipotle.com.

Forward-Looking Statements

Certain statements in this press release are forward-looking statements as defined in the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995, including statements about Chipotle's Apprentice Program and goal for 2027, the number of new restaurants we expect to open in 2026, Chipotle's goal to open 7,000 restaurants and the anticipated benefits of these investments to our talent, operations and business growth. We use words such as "aim," "anticipate," "expect," "believe," "could," "have the potential," "seek" and similar terms and phrases to identify forward-looking statements. The forward-looking statements in this press release are based on currently available operating, financial and competitive information, available to us as of the date of this release and we assume no obligation to update these forward-looking statements. These statements are subject to risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ materially from those described in the statements, including the competitive labor market, which impacts our ability to attract and retain qualified employees, the impact of government laws and regulations relating to our employees, employment practices, restaurant design and construction, and the sale of food or alcoholic beverages, and the other risks described from time to time in our SEC reports, including our annual report on Form 10-K and quarterly reports on Form 10-Q, all of which are available on the investor relations page of our website at ir.chipotle.com.

SOURCE Chipotle Mexican Grill

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