

# Soaring with flavour with Flying Food Group

This is a special feature from *PAX International's* October 2024 [IFSA Global EXPO](#) issue.



Nicolas Rondeau, Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing (left), and Olivia Stoll, Sustainability Manager at Flying Food Group

*CHICAGO, USA*—Flying Food Group ([FFG](#)) has been elevating the art of airline catering for more than 40 years, transforming inflight meals into gourmet experiences for travellers around the globe. The company, founded by visionary Sue Gin, has grown from humble beginnings to become a global leader, serving more than 70 international airlines with world-class culinary experiences. From its early days supplying baked goods to airlines, FFG has flourished into a full-service caterer, renowned for its authentic, chef-driven cuisine that reflects the cultural diversity of its airline customers.

*PAX International* visited FFG's Chicago, USA headquarters in September, sitting down for an interview with Nicolas Rondeau, Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing, and Olivia Stoll, the caterer's Sustainability Manager. The interview took place nearly 10 years to the day since Gin's passing.



Flying Food Group has more than 70 international airline customers

FFG began when Gin, a bakery owner at the time, was served a half-frozen pastry inflight. Driven by her desire for better quality airline food, she began supplying fresh pastries to the airline, and from there, Flying Food Group was born. Through the years, the company has expanded its customer base to include a broad range of airlines such as [Japan Airlines](#), [Air India](#), [Singapore Airlines](#), [Lufthansa](#) and [Hawaiian Airlines](#).

At the heart of FFG's success is its commitment to authenticity and culinary expertise, Rondeau explains. With 50 full-time chefs from around the world, the company is dedicated to creating meals that are not only delicious but also culturally resonant and complementary to the airlines' branding and heritage.

"Food discovery and constant learning is very important here at FFG, and we love it," he says.

FFG's headquarters in Fulton Market District is an important part of its identity. Once an industrial area, the neighbourhood has transformed into a bustling business hub, home to company headquarters such as McDonald's, Mondelez and Google's Midwest HQ.

The location reflects Gin's forward-thinking approach—her vision for the company extended beyond food. She had an eye for real estate, choosing a location that has since become a hotspot for growth and innovation, Rondeau explains.

"I wonder if there were things Sue Gin couldn't do," says Stoll with a smile. She joined FFG just more than three years ago.



A view of Chicago, USA's Fulton Market where Flying Food Group is headquartered. Image credit: fultonmarketdesigndays.com

While the company celebrates its rich 40-year history, it is also focused on its sustainable future. Under Stoll's direction, the company is making significant strides toward reducing its environmental footprint. She emphasizes that sustainability is not just a goal but an ongoing journey.

"I've learned something new every day since joining FFG," she says. The company has implemented various initiatives aimed at reducing food waste, improving energy efficiency and sourcing ingredients responsibly.

Currently, Stoll is heading up the company's recycling trials which aim for caterers to be able to recycle at least some international waste instead of incinerating and then sending it to landfill, which is the regulation according to guidelines from both the USDA ([U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)) and APHIS ([Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service](#)). The project is spearheaded by CBP ([U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#)), USDA and IATA ([International Air Transport Association](#)).

Another of FFG's key sustainability initiatives is to minimize food waste by optimizing meal preparation processes and collaborating with airline customers to better forecast demand. This ensures passengers receive what they want, reduces waste and landfill contributions, lightens the flight load and reduces fuel burn for airlines—benefitting caterers, airlines and passengers alike.



Flying Food Group is currently trialling a recycling program with goals to reduce contributions to landfill

Additionally, the company is exploring overall ways to reduce its carbon footprint through energy-efficient practices at its 18 U.S.-based facilities, where 5,000 employees prepare 300,000 meals and snacks daily.

“Our employees are paramount,” says Rondeau, reflecting on the company’s people-centric approach. FFG prides itself on fostering a strong sense of community within its workforce, a value that Gin herself embodied. “When Sue would tour the facilities, she would lose track of time because she would end up sitting in the lunchroom eating and talking with the employees,” he recalls fondly.

This commitment to employee wellbeing is part of what has made FFG a resilient and successful company over the years, even despite tragedies such as the pandemic. Rondeau emphasizes that in such a manual business, it is crucial to prioritize the health, safety and happiness of its workforce.

Looking ahead, FFG is optimistic about the future. After navigating the challenges of the pandemic, the company expects its finances to return to or exceed 2019 levels by the end of this year.

“We feel good about where we’re headed,” says Rondeau, expressing confidence in the company’s future growth.