



Kickass Entrepreneur: Johan Engman

By [Amber Mesker](#) 6 A.M. JULY 28, 2015



Johan Engman, founder and owner of Rise & Shine Restaurant Group. *Rick Nocon*

Johan Engman, a native of Sweden, moved to San Diego when he was 16. One of his first jobs out of high school was working as a dishwasher, then as bus boy and eventually moving up to server. He fell in love with the restaurant industry and it didn't take Engman long to decide that someday he would own his own restaurant and do things his way. For years, he saved money and finally at the age of 27, Engman opened Fig Tree Cafe in Pacific Beach in 2008.

In the beginning, Engman had to work three other jobs just to keep the doors open. But he believed in what he was doing and stuck with it. He made sure to surround himself with a great team and after a few years they turned the cafe into one of the most popular places to eat in Pacific Beach. Now, five years later, Engman's Rise & Shine Restaurant Group also owns and operates Fig Tree cafés in two other locations, including Hillcrest and Liberty Station, as well as Café Cantata and the recently opened Breakfast Republic.

Q: The motto that you try to live by everyday?

A: Stay humble: Character is how you treat those who can't do much for you. Never let success get to your head and never let failure get to your heart.

Q: With all your restaurants, which is your favorite dish and why?

A: I'm a simple guy, I eat the same thing for breakfast about four times a week: Scrambled egg whites, black beans, avocado, tomato, wheat bread and turkey bacon.

Q: Best part about doing business in San Diego?

A: All my restaurants have a patio because I just love the weather in San Diego, can't get enough of it.

Q: CEO or company you admire and why?

A: Tim Ferris, entrepreneur and author. I personally love to travel, I try to travel two-three months out of the year. Tim Ferris has me beat by a landslide, he travels a lot more and is known for simplifying things and walks to the beat of his own drum, which I greatly admire.

Q: Describe your most perfect day in San Diego?

A: Wake up, shower and head over to Breakfast Republic for a delicious breakfast, say hi to some customers and have a meeting with Grant (Price, director of operations for Rise & Shine Restaurant Group). Go to the gym and later that evening go check out a cool dinner restaurant for good food and inspiration.

Q: If you could travel somewhere in the world right now, where would it be and why?

A: I'm planning a trip in September: Sweden-Italy-Kenya-Congo-India-Thailand-Burma-Vietnam-Philippines. I've been to several of these countries before but some will be new territory; I love exploring new cultures and food. At Breakfast Republic a number of the dishes come from travel inspiration that I've gained from a number of different countries throughout the world.

Q: If you could have a super power what would it be and why?

A: I'd like to be able to fly so that I could hover over the skyline of San Diego and so I could overcome my fear of heights.

Amber Mesker is an entertainment and lifestyle reporter for DiscoverSD. She loves providing readers updates on Hollywood gossip, San Diego fashion and cool weekend events. You can follow Amber and laugh at her fun, crazy life at @ambermesker