Free Stock Pick from our Safest Dividend Yields Model Portfolio for January 2025

This week's free stock pick is from our Safest Dividend Yields Model Portfolio. Too often, dividend investors just assume that companies have the cash flows needed pay their dividends.

Did you know:

1. companies can grow their reported earnings while cash flows are negative.
2. most companies overstate their reported earnings.
3. lots of companies have to borrow money, issue stock, or dip into cash reserves to pay dividends.

The only way to know that a company can afford to pay its dividends is to measure its free cash flow (FCF). FCF must be equal to or greater than its dividend; otherwise, the company must raise capital or use cash reserves to pay its dividend. Or…the company has to suspend or cut its dividend.

In other words, FCF is important. There is no good excuse for not doing the diligence on FCF to be sure a company's dividend is safe.

As our regular readers know, no other research firm measures FCF better than we do. It's proven. So, our research gives you the best insight into the safety of dividends. For example, in Figure 2 below, we directly compare the featured stock's cash dividend payments to its free cash flow. Our clients enjoy a very clear read on exactly how well the company can afford its dividend payments.

Today's free stock pick provides a summary of how we pick stocks for this Model Portfolio. This summary is not a full Long Idea report, but it gives you insight into the rigor of our research and approach to picking stocks. This free report is a great way to understand how our proven superior data can give you the edge you need to make quality investment research and analysis.

We hope you enjoy this free research on this month's featured stock for the Safest Dividend Yields Model Portfolio. Feel free to share this report with friends and colleagues.

This Model Portfolio only includes stocks that earn an Attractive or Very Attractive rating, have positive free cash flow (FCF) and economic earnings, and offer a dividend yield greater than 3%. Companies with strong free cash flow provide higher quality and safer dividend yields because strong FCF supports the dividend. We think this portfolio provides a uniquely well-screened group of stocks that can help clients outperform.

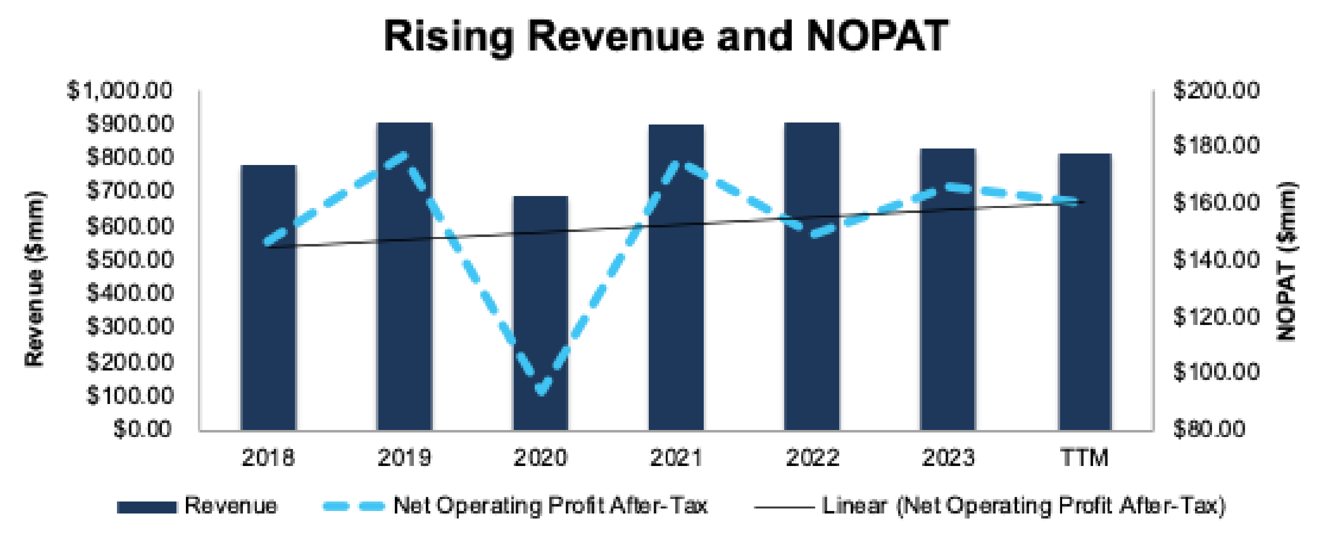
We update this Model Portfolio monthly. January's Safest Dividend Yields Model Portfolio was updated and published for clients on January 23, 2025.

Stock Feature for January: Dine Brands Global Inc. (DIN: $29/share)

Dine Brands Global Inc. (DIN) is the featured stock in January's Safest Dividend Yields Model Portfolio.

Dine Brands has grown revenue and net operating profit after tax (NOPAT) by 1% and 2% compounded annually, respectively, since 2018. The company's NOPAT margin improved from 19% in 2018 to 20% in the TTM, while invested capital turns rose from 0.3 to 0.4 over the same time. Rising NOPAT margins and invested capital turns drive the company's return on invested capital (ROIC) from 6% in 2018 to 7% in the TTM.

Figure 1: Dine Brands' Revenue & NOPAT Since 2018



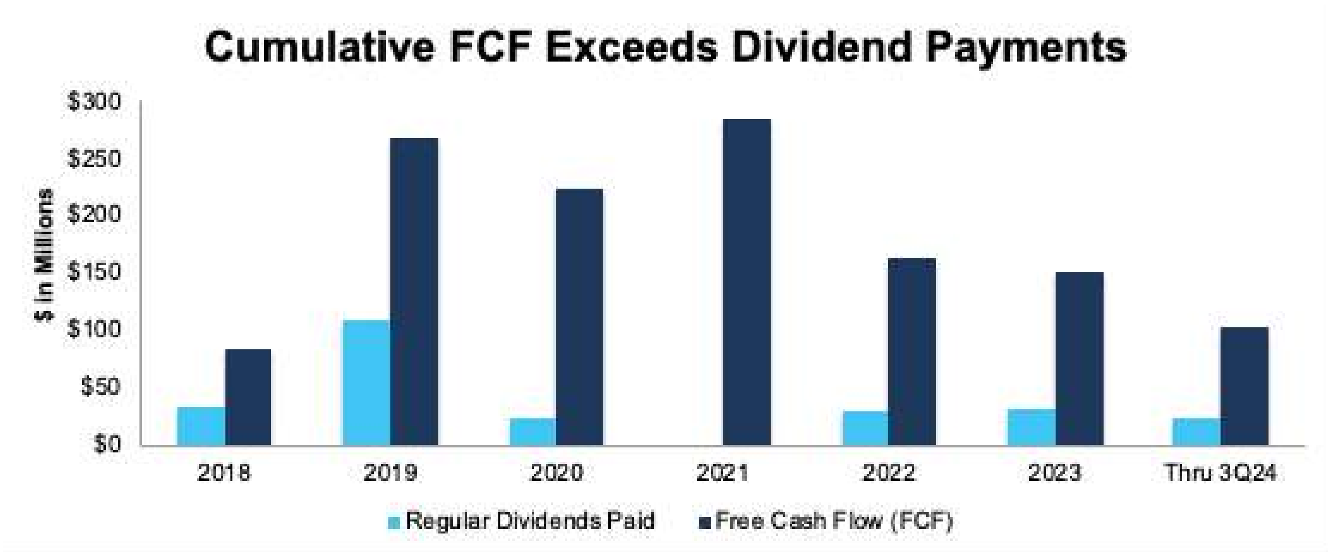
Sources: New Constructs, LLC and company filings

Free Cash Flow Exceeds Regular Dividend Payments

Dine Brands has increased its regular dividend from $0.40/share in 4Q21 to $0.51/share in 4Q24. The current quarterly dividend, when annualized provides a 7.0% dividend yield.

The company's free cash flow (FCF) easily exceeds its regular dividend payments. From 2019 through 3Q24, the company generated $1.3 billion (64% of current enterprise value) in FCF while paying $253 million in regular dividends. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Dine Brands' FCF Vs. Regular Dividends Since 2018



Sources: New Constructs, LLC and company filings

As Figure 2 shows, this company's dividends are backed by a history of reliable cash flows. Dividends from companies with low or negative FCF are less dependable since the company would not be able to sustain paying dividends.

DIN Is Undervalued

At its current price of $29/share, this stock has a price-to-economic book value (PEBV) ratio of 0.4. This ratio means the market expects the company's NOPAT to permanently fall 60% from TTM levels. This expectation seems overly pessimistic given that the company has grown NOPAT 2% compounded annually over the last five years and 5% compounded annually over the past two decades.

Even if the company's:

- NOPAT margin falls to 14% (the lowest margin in the last five years and below TTM margin of 20%) and
- revenue grows at consensus rates in 2024 (-2%), 2025 (1%), and continues to grow at 2025 consensus rate (1%) each year thereafter through 2033,

the stock would be worth $35/share today – a 21% upside. In this scenario, the company's NOPAT would fall 3% compounded annually through 2033.

Should the company's NOPAT grow more in line with historical growth rates, the stock has even more upside.

Critical Details Found in Financial Filings by Our Robo-Analyst Technology

Below are specifics on the adjustments we make based on Robo-Analyst findings in this featured stock's 10-K and 10-Qs:

Income Statement: we made over $120 million in adjustments with a net effect of removing over $70 million in non-operating expenses. Professional members can see all adjustments made to the company's income statement on the GAAP Reconciliation tab on the Ratings page on our website.

Balance Sheet: we made around $1.2 billion in adjustments to calculate invested capital with a net increase of just under $900 million. The most notable adjustment was for asset write downs. Professional members can see all adjustments made to the company's balance sheet on the GAAP Reconciliation tab on the Ratings page on our website.

Valuation: we made just under $1.9 billion in adjustments to shareholder value, with a net decrease of around $1.6 billion. Other than total debt, the most notable adjustment to shareholder value was for excess cash. Professional members can see all adjustments to the company's valuation on the GAAP Reconciliation tab on the Ratings page on our website.

This article was originally published on February 7, 2025.

Disclosure: David Trainer, Kyle Guske II, and Hakan Salt receive no compensation to write about any specific stock, style, or theme.

Questions on this report or others? Join our online community and connect with us directly.

It's Official: We Deliver the Best Fundamental Data in the World

Many firms claim their research is superior, but none of them can prove it with independent studies from highly-respected institutions as we can. Three different papers from both the public and private sectors show:

1. The stock market is missing footnotes – and only we have that critical data.
2. Legacy fundamental datasets suffer from significant inaccuracies, omissions, and biases.
3. Our proprietary drives novel alpha. Our measures of Core Earnings and Earnings Distortion materially improve stock picking and forecasting of profits.

Best Fundamental Data in the World

In The Journal of Financial Economics, a top peer-reviewed journal, Core Earnings: New Data & Evidence proves our Robo-Analyst technology overcomes material shortcomings in legacy firms' data collection processes to provide superior fundamental data, earnings models, and research. More details.

Key quotes from the paper:

- "[New Constructs'] *Total Adjustments* differs significantly from the items identified and excluded from Compustat's adjusted earnings measures. For example… 50% to 70% of the variation in *Total Adjustments* is not explained by *S&P Global's (SPGI) Adjustments* individually." – pp. 14, 1st para.
- "A final source of differences [between New Constructs' and S&P Global's data] is due to data collection oversights…we identified cases where Compustat did not collect information relating to firms' income that is useful in assessing core earnings." – pp. 16, 2nd para.

Superior Models

Ernst & Young features the superiority of our ROIC, NOPAT and Invested Capital research to Capital IQ & Bloomberg's in Getting ROIC Right. See the Appendix for direct comparison details.

Key quotes from the paper:

- "…an accurate calculation of ROIC requires more diligence than often occurs in some of the common, off-the-shelf ROIC calculations. Only by scouring the footnotes and the MD&A [as New Constructs does] can investors get an accurate calculation of ROIC." – pp. 8, 5th para.
- "The majority of the difference…comes from New Constructs' machine learning approach, which leverages technology to calculate ROIC by applying accounting adjustments that may be buried deeply in the footnotes across thousands of companies." – pp. 4, 2nd para.

Superior Stock Ratings

Robo-Analysts' stock ratings outperform those from human analysts as shown in this paper from Harvard Business School. Bloomberg features the paper here.

Key quotes from the paper:

- "the portfolios formed following the buy recommendations of Robo-Analysts earn abnormal returns that are statistically and economically significant." – pp. 6, 3rd para.
- "Our results ultimately suggest that Robo-Analysts are a valuable, alternative information intermediary to traditional sell-side analysts." – pp. 20, 3rd para.

Our mission is to provide the best fundamental analysis of public and private businesses in the world and make it affordable for all investors, not just Wall Street insiders.

We believe every investor deserves to know the whole truth about the profitability and valuation of any company they consider for investment. More details on our cutting-edge technology and how we use it are here.

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