

Small Business **TRENDS**

Spotlight: The Lost Cajun Brings Unique Food, Atmosphere to a New Location

By Annie Pilon | October 11, 2017



Cajun restaurants might be all the rage in Louisiana. But they're not nearly as common in the mountains of Colorado. So when the founders of [The Lost Cajun](#) moved across the country from their home in Louisiana, they realized there was an opportunity to bring their favorite foods to a new market.

Read more about this business and its growth in this week's Small Business Spotlight.

What the Business Does

Serves Cajun inspired food specializing in seafood and gumbo.

Owner Raymond Griffin told Small Business Trends, "The Lost Cajun is known for our Cajun culture, open kitchens and family friendly atmosphere. Our service is top-notch and like no other in the market place."

Business Niche

Offering a laid-back Cajun inspired atmosphere.

Griffin says, “Each restaurant has a true hole-in-the-wall feel with wooden tables, unique decorations and an expertly crafted playlist of Zydeco music. The open kitchen concept harks back to the wooden counters in Louisiana’s gumbo houses; patrons can watch their food being cooked and hear the courtesy and respect commonly associated with Cajun culture. Our customers’ comment all the time that it’s like having dinner at your neighbor’s house!”

How the Business Got Started

After a big move.

Griffin says, “For 15 years, my late wife, Belinda, and I owned and operated a fishing lodge just south of New Orleans. That’s where I learned how to cook authentic Cajun food. But then came Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Gustav, and the oil spill. After that last disaster, we took an RV vacation to Colorado. We were so impressed — we decided it was time to leave Louisiana for good. We had always talked about opening a little gumbo shop, but I didn’t have any idea of how to operate a restaurant. I knew how to cook, and I knew how to give good service. Let’s keep it simple — cook some gumbo and fry some fish. We opened the original Lost Cajun in October 2010 in Frisco, Colorado. Today, there are 12 locations with several others in various stages of development.”

Biggest Win

Successfully translating the idea into a franchise program.

Griffin explains, “Having franchisees tell us our ops manual that we created was easy to read, understand, and follow was a huge success for the brand. Another big win was when I created a specialized system to mass produce our gumbo so that the quality remained the same across all locations.”



Biggest Risk

Trying to expand nationwide too quickly.

Griffin says, “Our biggest risk was opening restaurants too far from our home base and not having control. From this, we lost two stores. We have learned that locations must be in our area of control.”

Lesson Learned

Keep processes consistent.

Griffin says, “I would have created a better ops manual prior to expanding outside of our home base and enforce keeping our practices uniform nationwide. It’s easy for people to get off track and even harder to get them back on track.”



How They’d Spend an Extra \$100,000

Training and support.

Griffin says, “I would create better training manuals. Along with these manuals, I would hire more district managers for our locations to increase franchisee support and help train new employees.”

Quote to Live By

”I’ll break your heart with the truth, but I’ll never lie to you.”