

Adding a Mobile Aspect to Your Existing Restaurant

By Rieva Lesonsky

The mobile food truck craze is still going strong. If you own a brick-and-mortar restaurant, how can you take advantage of this popular phenomenon? There's still plenty of room for more food truck players—especially in cities with big populations where the mobile trend hasn't yet taken hold. And adding a food truck can expose your business to a whole new audience that may never have visited your restaurant.

Before you start shelling out money to outfit a truck with the latest cooking and storage equipment, however, ask yourself a few crucial questions:

Is there a need? Have your customers been hinting they wished your restaurant had more locations? Were you already planning to expand, but finding the right spot was proving too expensive or unavailable? If you're at maximum capacity with your establishment or you see areas where there is demand for mobile food trucks, adding a mobile aspect to your business could be a cheaper alternative to opening a new brick-and-mortar location.

Is your menu adaptable to a mobile unit? Maybe you have a certain item or items on your menu that are ideally suited for a food truck. Think about your customers' favorite dishes and whether you could land new customers or more sales from existing customers by bringing the food to them. In a [Mintel](#) survey of Americans under age 34, 62 percent said a restaurant's proximity to their workplace is an important factor when deciding where to eat.

Is your city food-truck friendly? Do your homework and find out what is involved with permitting, licensing and regulating food trucks in your city. Are there areas in your city with a perfect setup for food trucks, such as downtown areas with lots of workers looking for lunch, or large entertainment complexes with lots of foot traffic? Many cities have adapted to the popularity of mobile food business by setting up specific locations for food trucks to gather. In Long Beach, California, Wednesdays from 11:30 to 2:30 are "Lunch Truck It" days where a large parking lot is set aside for the trucks and customers to gather.

Are there special events where a food truck makes sense? If your community supports a large number of events such as 10K races, festivals and street fairs, you may be able to generate enough business at these events to make adding a mobile business worthwhile. Check with event organizers regarding permits and any restrictions for food trucks. Or consider creating



your own event, as several brewpub owners in Los Angeles did with a mobile beer garden called [CoLLaboration](#). The businesses joined forces to hold daylong craft beer events all over the city; these events sell out on a regular basis.

Adding a mobile aspect to your business does take a bit of trial and error, but since you've already got restaurant experience, you're one step ahead of the game.

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