

Starting a Mobile Restaurant

By Rieva Lesonsky

Although the mobile gourmet food truck trend has been around for a couple of years, the concept is only getting hotter as the trend catches on across the country. Many established restaurants are now adding a mobile aspect to their businesses, and for new entrepreneurs, mobile offers a great way to get into the food business without a lot of overhead.

Here's why starting a mobile food business makes sense:

- *People like convenience.* Taking the food to them, whether to their place of business or in an area they frequent, is going to call attention to your business and attract the customers you desire.
- *Overhead is low.* With a mobile business, there is no rent or landlord to deal with.
- *Marketing costs are low.* The way the word spreads about your business is almost purely social media.



Native New Yorker Kim Ima wanted to combine her love of the city with her love of baking and in 2007 she started [Treats Truck](#) with the help of her local [SCORE office](#). Her treats became a hit with New Yorkers; since then her business has grown to include a delivery service, T-shirts and more. And ice cream entrepreneurs Bryan Petroff and Doug Quint's [Big Gay Ice Cream Truck](#) has been so successful, they plan to open a brick-and-mortar store.

How to get started? Treat Trucks founder Ima advises doing a lot of homework and finding out as much as possible about the area where you want to open. "Each city is different in how they approach the permitting, licensing and regulating of food trucks. Try walking around to observe the area, talking to local street food vendors and going to city offices for information," says Ima. "I find that other food truck owners are often open to talking to you, as long as you approach them respectfully and appreciate their limited time."

Think about the concept for your food truck business. You may be the first in your area to start this type of business; if so, you could focus on any type of food, depending on the demographics of the area. Then check into trucks that suit your needs for cooking and storing food. Treat Trucks does all its baking in a kitchen in Brooklyn, then carries its baked goods and drinks in the truck for delivery. A used, retrofitted

truck can cost from \$20,000 to \$40,000; a new truck could cost as much as \$100,000, according to *New York Magazine*.

Other startup costs include supplies, security, insurance, truck storage and city permits. Check with the city where you plan to do business to see if the truck needs to be stored in a certain facility and if any city streets are off limits to street vendors.

Most food trucks post their whereabouts via social media and also list locations on their website. The mobile food business has become so popular in Los Angeles there's an entire [Find LA Food Trucks](#) website dedicated to just food truck locations.

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