



GUIDE TO START A RESTAURANT BUSINESS IN BRISBANE

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Abstract

Starting a restaurant business in Brisbane offers exciting opportunities due to the city's vibrant culinary scene, multicultural population, and thriving tourism industry. This guide provides a comprehensive overview of the essential steps to establish a successful restaurant in Brisbane, Queensland. It explores key aspects such as market research, location selection, licensing and legal requirements, business planning, menu development, staffing, and marketing strategies. The guide also highlights important considerations specific to Brisbane's competitive food and beverage industry, including local food trends, customer preferences, and regulatory compliance. Whether you're launching a fine dining establishment, a casual eatery, or a food truck, this resource aims to equip aspiring restaurateurs with practical insights and actionable steps to turn their culinary vision into a profitable and sustainable business in one of Australia's fastest-growing cities.



1. Introduction

Brisbane, the capital of Queensland, is rapidly emerging as a food lover's paradise, with its dynamic mix of local and international cuisines, bustling nightlife, and strong support for small businesses. As one of Australia's fastest-growing cities, Brisbane offers immense potential for entrepreneurs looking to enter the hospitality sector, particularly the restaurant industry. With a growing population, a steady influx of tourists, and an increasing demand for unique dining experiences, now is an ideal time to invest in a restaurant venture.

However, turning a culinary dream into a successful business requires more than just a great menu. From understanding the local market and selecting the perfect location to navigating complex licensing laws and building a strong brand, there are several key components that contribute to long-term success. This guide is designed to walk you through each stage of starting a restaurant in Brisbane—offering practical advice, local insights, and step-by-step instructions tailored to the Queensland business landscape. Whether you're a seasoned chef or a first-time entrepreneur, this guide will help you build a strong foundation for your restaurant business.

2. Writing A Restaurant Business Plan



Maybe you overheard about a famous restaurant business in town. Or perhaps after you went to your vacation in Europe, and saw one of their prime time food locations, you decided that you'd want to open up a restaurant of a specific culture. Whether it's formal, fun-center, fast food, or family fare, you'll need to know the basic information in order to start out right and create your restaurant.

- Decide what type of restaurant you really want to have. Fast-food joints or family based restaurants are better for beginners. Keep in mind that if you have a fun-center, you'll need to pay attention to your budget more. Fun-centers are the most popular restaurant options and can attract a great number of people no matter what time of the year. Or you may even want to go exotic and open up a restaurant for a culture of some sort. Whatever method you choose, be sure and plan out your steps carefully, so you can keep your business at a great start.

- Do more research. If you decided that you want to manage a restaurant, then do research about the joint that you want to create and have. Are you creating a restaurant for the country of Mexico? Then if so, what are some of the meals served there? What food prices are you willing to give? Ask yourself these questions, and ask your friends if they have any suggestions. Also of importance in your research is the location of the restaurant. Do you want it on a busy street where many people will see it, or a quiet street with little traffic. Do you want it near some schools, in a financial district, or in a shopping mall. How many other restaurants would be maybe so close to yours that potential customers won't come at first.
- Know your budget and stick to it. Try to keep your budget at a quality like base for your customers, but be sure that you offer discounts whenever possible. Tips are a helpful option, but not necessary, in restaurants.
- Decide if you want to go entertainment or non-entertainment. You'll have a better chance of attracting more customers if you choose some sort of an entertainment posse for your restaurant. Game arcades, book reading, and activities for kids and teens are sure to make your restaurant more elite and recommended.
- Choose the right décor for your restaurant. You may want multi-colored walls, brick tables, or booths. Or you might prefer to have white walls, stone tables, and no booths. If you do decide what decorative and exterior method to use, you'll want to make sure it compliments the food and the atmosphere. For example, a fancily made chocolate cake won't compliment well with plain white walls and a fast-food service menu.
- Create an outside dining area which can add to the delight of the food served there. Your guests will enjoy sitting at a comfortable spot and enjoy their meal. If you do decide to have an outside theme, Choose comfortable tables and benches for people to sit on. You may even want to decorate the outside with paper lamps, lanterns, lights, and/or light based interiors at night or evening time. If your doing a formal restaurant, table lamps in pink and yellow pastel colors compliment well. Even lamps that are brightly colored and have fun patterns will work for fun-centers. If a family centered restaurant is being planned, leave the lamps out. Try using colored walls or statues, since they go better with this environment. You might even want to mix earth tone colors with pastels for a sophisticated look.
- If you prefer to, decide which staff you want to hire for your restaurant. A basic beginner restaurant needs waiters, a cashier for the front desk, clean up crew, and a chef. Waiters are suitable for a restaurant because they help people order food, and suggest new dishes to try that have been featured on the menu.
- Plan out your menu design. For a more formal restaurant, a menu with a cream color and a reddish brown on the inside works out just fine. You wouldn't want that form for a

fun center, but instead an idea is to create the children's menu with bold patterns, colors, and techniques.

- Where do you find appetizers on the menu? Choose which menu layout you'd want to use. Try to put the appetizer dishes right next to the main entrees, because people can have better luck finding the food that they need. It's also a good idea to put the children's menu right underneath the adult menu. A basic age preference for the children's menu is two-eleven years old. The drinks and beverage items should be placed right next to the Children's menu.
- Mascot decision. If you wish to have a mascot for your restaurant, keep in mind that animals are more popular with kids instead of people mascots. A good starting out animal would preferably be a dog. Provide a budget for guests for pictures if available.
- If you need to, it's a good idea to place your restaurant where a great number of people will be attracted to it. If there's already a fun center opened, putting your restaurant right next to it will be helpful.

3. Choose your business location



The success of your business can depend on the space you use and where it is. Here are some things to consider when searching for the right premises.

Types of business premises

Business premises means a building or any other space where you do business.

For example a:

- warehouse, manufacturing plant or storage facility
- commercial office or co-working space
- temporary space such as a market stall or pop-up store
- home office if you run a business from home
- retail store.

Define your needs first



Any space has its advantages and disadvantages. The one that's right for you depends on what your business needs.

Before you start your search, write a list of your needs to guide you.

Here are some questions to consider.

Location

- Do you need to be close to your customers?
- Is high foot traffic (the number of people who visit the area) important?
- Should it be easily accessible by public transport or for supplier vehicles?
- Are there car parks nearby?

Size and layout

- How much space do you need for customers, business activities, equipment and storage?
- Do you need an open floorplan or private rooms?
- Do you need an office area separate to the rest of your business?

Cost

- What's your budget for rent, utilities (like electricity, internet and water) and other costs?
- Are you looking for a long-term lease or something more flexible?
- How much can you pay for a fit-out before you start selling to customers?

Facilities and utilities

- Do you need high-speed internet, special equipment or a specific power connection?
- What about bathrooms or a kitchen?

Compliance

- Is the area zoned for your type of business?
- Are you able to get the permits you need to use the space?

Future growth

- Does the space need to support your plan to expand?
- Can you adapt it as your business evolves?

Prioritise your needs based on how important they are to your business. Decide if they're essential or desirable.

4. Understanding The Financing Options For Your Restaurant



Where you look for financing for your restaurant will depend not only on why you need the funding and how you'll use it but also on your qualifications. Credit, industry, time in business, financials and cash flow are just some of the qualifications funding sources will consider.

The restaurant business is a highly competitive industry. You need to keep ahead of the competition and leave no stone unturned. Whether it's marketing your restaurant through your website, upgrades to the location, acquiring expensive new equipment for the kitchen or general working capital, there are many reasons your restaurant may need to seek financing.

You need to know what financing options are the best fit for your needs, what you'll qualify for and where to go to get it. Let's explore where to find the best financing options for your needs.

Banks

The first stop on your journey to find financing is the bank you do your business banking with. In many cases, banks offer the best rates and terms through a business line of credit or an SBA loan. Not all banks are the same, so you may find some banks more friendly than

others as it relates to financing restaurants. Some banks don't offer a product you may need, like an SBA loan. You may have to switch where you do your business banking if a bank other than your current one is willing to offer terms that make the most sense.

Qualifications at banks can be tough, so a restaurant may find it challenging to get approved. I believe the search should always start with banks, but if you can't get approved through one, there are other options.

Online Business Lenders

Online business lenders are relatively new to the scene of business financing for restaurants. They typically offer a quicker and easier process than a bank and may have higher approval rates, but this can come at a price with less favorable terms than a bank. The terms usually give restaurants six to 18 months to repay the loan, with interest rates or factor rates that are higher in cost than traditional financing. This may be the best available option for your circumstances, but make sure you review the terms and balance that with the use of the funds for the restaurant before accepting an offer.

Merchant Cash Advance Providers

A merchant cash advance funder is the next step if a bank or an online business lender won't make an offer. A merchant cash advance is an advance of money based on current sales volumes that you repay by allowing the funder to take a percentage of future sales or make regular withdrawals from your bank account. Approval rates are often much higher than those of other financing alternatives but can come at a substantially higher price than traditional business loans. Always weigh the risk versus reward before accepting this type of solution. Restaurants typically use this option for working capital needs.

Business Loan Brokers

Business loan brokers represent different products and work with a variety of lenders and/or funders; they help a restaurant shop for the best product and terms available in the marketplace. They can have a diverse menu of products that a bank or online lender may not have. Brokers are paid by the lender or funder, and the restaurant should not have to pay the broker directly for any professional service fees. Not all brokers are equal, and some only represent certain products, so you should still shop around and make sure you are getting the best product for your need.

Equipment Financing Companies

Equipment financing is a specific-use product that is very common for restaurants, as kitchen equipment can be expensive. You can find some of the best equipment financing companies at the distributor or retailer that you're purchasing the equipment from. That's often where you can get the best rates and terms for equipment financing. If you can't get approved

through those sources, there are alternatives online and through certain brokers. Keep in mind that it's easier to find a company to finance new equipment than used equipment. You may have to look at online lenders or brokers if you can't get financing through the retailer or distributor you buy equipment from.

5. Things to Consider Before Starting a Restaurant



The restaurant industry is vast, with plenty of profit to go around. However, if you own a restaurant, you must consider many factors, including its location, menu and hours of operation. You also have to create a solid business plan that outlines how you intend to be successful and includes research on your potential competitors.

Here's what to keep in mind before you launch your new restaurant business, along with the software and services that can help you achieve your goals.

What to consider before starting a restaurant

Before you launch your new restaurant, consider the following elements.

1. Restaurant name

Have you ever been chatting with a friend who said they went to a place with an intriguing name and then immediately asked them, "What's that?" That's the power of an attention-

grabbing, memorable restaurant name. Come up with a word (or two or three) that both reflects your restaurant concept and lingers in someone's mind.

The name you choose should stand out not just in conversation but also on listing websites. When someone is faced with a big list of options on Yelp or Google Maps, they'll be drawn to the most interesting names. Make sure your restaurant is one of those.

2. Funding

A fully functional restaurant requires a location, a sizable staff, tons of kitchen equipment and plenty of other resources, all of which quickly become costly. Chances are, you don't just have the money lying around to cover all of these expenses, so it's essential to consider how you'll fund your operations.

Joe Camberato, founder of National Business Capital, advised saving enough to cover costs while giving yourself some extra for the unexpected. "You need enough to cover the full cost of the buildout, plus at least 25 percent more for the inevitable surprises," he said. "On top of that, you'll want a minimum of six months' worth of operating expenses, though having a full year's cushion is even better."

Traditional loans are an option, but you may need funding from multiple sources. Izzy Kharasch, president of Hospitality Works, noted that aspiring restaurateurs will probably have to use at least some of their own funds and that it may take time to obtain all of the capital you need.

"I recommend that in addition to looking at bank loans, look to the SBA [Small Business Administration], investors and, of course, putting in their own investment money," Kharasch said. "Some of my clients achieve the funding in 12 months, but most are closer to 18 months."

3. Location

Wherever you decide to set up shop, be sure your restaurant is visible. It should be easy to spot from the street. Your parking is almost as important as your restaurant's space; if a customer can't find a place to park, you've lost business. Restaurants located off of a highway are often busy.

It's not enough to pick the right neighborhood, though. Camberato emphasized that the amount of space at your new location will affect restaurant profits.

"Location can make or break your business," Camberato said. "You need enough foot traffic to bring people in, but you also need a space big enough to generate the revenue required to stay profitable. Too many restaurant owners don't do the math before signing a lease."

They fall in love with a spot but don't calculate how many tables they need to turn each night to cover costs."

He stressed the importance of having a detailed financial plan before committing to a location. "Before you even start looking, be really clear on what size and setup you need to hit your financial goals," Camberato said. "Some restaurant models, especially quick-service concepts, only make sense at scale. If your numbers don't work for a single location, you might need to plan for multiple locations from the start."

4. Marketing



Have a plan to get the word out about your new restaurant. Take advantage of social media marketing, and look into joining restaurant coalitions so you can work with other restaurateurs to cross-promote your businesses. Many cities promote local businesses, so join a chamber of commerce and participate in food festivals to get the word out.

Joshua Wood, CEO of CJ Digital, also recommended leveraging digital marketing tools and focusing on search engine optimization (SEO).

"Restaurant entrepreneurs should use an SEO tool to see how many people are searching for restaurants in that area," he said. "These tools can tell you that 10,000 people are searching 'restaurants in Greenwich,' for example. This indicates the level of demand. This software also indicates how competitive the area is (e.g., how many restaurants are competing for the same keyword phrase)."

Wood also mentioned that partnering with influencers, who already have large followings, can help spread the word about your new restaurant. “Our favorite way of marketing a restaurant is currently to find influencers, get them to create a video advocating that restaurant as a hot spot and then boosting that video via a brand partnership ad [or] spark ad on TikTok to everyone that lives within ... [the area],” Wood explained.

5. Licensing and permits

Before you can open your restaurant, you need to apply for the proper licenses and permits. You may need to pass several inspections before you can begin operations. Reach out to your city government to find out what you need for your restaurant. You also must consider state and federal requirements, so do your homework long before you set a date for your grand opening.

Your permit needs will vary depending on your location, but it helps to start with a checklist when you’re doing your research. Kharasch offered a rundown of which bases to cover.

“All cities have different licenses and permits, but most have building permits, demolition permits, electrical installation permits, HVAC requirements, liquor license requirements,” he said. “But the most important [thing] to keep in mind is the health permit. We recommend to our clients that they meet with the health department as soon as possible so that they understand what is required and begin building that relationship which is the longest-term city relationship they will have.”

6. Target customers

The type of customers you want to attract will affect the kind of restaurant you operate. It’s important to consider the income level, age and lifestyle of your ideal customer persona. For instance, do you want to attract customers who typically take their time while eating? Will your target audience be willing to travel to the restaurant? How much money will they be willing to pay for their meal? Is your target customer available in the early morning, late evening and/or anytime during the month?

Once you know the answers to these questions, you will have a clearer vision of the type of restaurant you want to own, as well as the menu, price range and decor.

7. Competition

Before you sign the lease on a restaurant, it is essential to know your competition. Be sure to visit as many of the restaurants in the area as possible. Visiting your competitors gives you a chance to identify their strengths and weaknesses, which can help you differentiate your offerings and atmosphere. Look for their customers’ preferences so you can incorporate them into your restaurant, and recognize their failures and successes to learn what and what

not to do. A solid competitive analysis is key if you want to take your restaurant to the next level.

6. Top restaurant trends across Brisbane right now



Steak

Despite beef prices skyrocketing, steak has become a must-have inclusion on the menus of new restaurants. Whether it's grass-fed, grain-fed, Angus or wagyu, eateries are determined to appeal to carnivores serving everything from \$50 steaks with fries, salads and sauces to a pricey \$300 2GR full-blood 9+ wagyu at The Lodge Bar in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley. The love for steak has also meant a rise in grill-style restaurants, with Rothwell's in Brisbane City, Herve's in Brisbane's Albion and CC's Bar & Grill in Cairns launching with a line-up of proteins cooked with char.

Regional restaurants

Particularly booming this year are Queensland's regional areas as culinary giants from the southern states move north, chasing sunshine and diners with a growing appetite for change, while local operators venture further afield. So far it has led to a tasty onslaught of eateries from Cairns to Coolangatta, as witnessed with Rubi Red on the Gold Coast from Melbourne top chef Michael Lambie, while fellow Melburnian Jason Jones opened Bandita in

Noosaville, and famous foodie family the Gallettos moved their beloved Sydney Italian institution north to Tewantin.

More veg

As “meat-free-Mondays” becomes part of the vernacular and veganism continues to boom across the country, vegetable-based dishes are no longer an afterthought, but a starring attraction on menus. Brisbane’s hugely popular fire-powered restaurant Agnes makes zucchini a hero, serving it with whipped peanuts, burnt leek oil and sweet purslane, while giving equal attention to eggplant, brining it in koji, and accompanying it with macadamia and a tangle of sweet potato leaves. Also ensuring vegetarians are just as well catered to as carnivores is Greek favourite, Hellenika, just down the road at The Calile Hotel, where patrons can fill up on meat-free fare such as warm green beans with tomato, dill and parsley, spinach and rice with lemon, the classic Greek salad, baked feta in a braise of chilli and capsicum, and their signature zucchini chips. While in Newstead, diners can indulge in a complete vegetarian or vegan degustation menu at Rogue Bistro.

Cocktails



Cocktails are no longer just for bars, with restaurants across the state making them a mainstay on menus. Shaking up signature drinks as well as classics, venues are experimenting with different flavour profiles to ensure there’s a drink to match every dish.

Baja Modern Mexican in Fortitude Valley has become known for its cracking margaritas, while Myrtille in Crows Nest, near Toowoomba, has teamed up with a local distillery to create its own gin for use in creative concoctions. Then there's Humble on Duke at Sunshine Beach which turns out refreshing combinations using artisan spirits from Sunshine Coast distillers.

Non-alcoholic drinks

Just as big as boozy cocktails are non-alcoholic options. From artisan teas at Brisbane's contemporary Chinese restaurant Donna Chang, to tropical-inspired mocktails at Palm Cove's Nu Nu, sommeliers are putting equal care and attention into catering for teetotalers as they are the drinking public. Degustation-only restaurants Elska and Exhibition in Brisbane are even offering complete non-alcoholic drinks pairings to go with their multi-course menus, using inspiration and ingredients from the kitchen to form sips such as beetroot kombucha and yuzu and clarified apple spritzes. The trend is only bolstered by the boom in better quality booze-free drinks, whether it be zero beers, wines or spirits.

6.1. Restaurant Business for Sale In Brisbane



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Restaurant

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Mount Gravatt, Brisbane, Queensland

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Restaurant

Bars For Sale in Ipswich Brisbane QLD

Get in the game with Australia's no1 Sports Bar & Grill!...

Ipswich, Brisbane, Queensland

Undisclosed

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Conclusion

Starting a restaurant business in Brisbane can be both a rewarding and challenging journey. With its growing population, diverse culinary interests, and a thriving food culture, the city presents a fertile ground for innovative and well-managed dining ventures. However, success in this competitive industry demands more than passion—it requires thorough planning, compliance with local regulations, strategic marketing, and an unwavering focus on customer satisfaction.

By understanding the Brisbane market, choosing a suitable location, crafting a compelling menu, and building a strong team, aspiring restaurateurs can lay the groundwork for long-term growth and profitability. This guide aims to empower entrepreneurs with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate each stage of the business journey—from concept development to grand opening and beyond. With the right approach and a commitment to excellence, your dream of running a successful restaurant in Brisbane can become a reality.

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