

5 Tips for Restaurant Expansion



Eric Silverstein, executive chef and founder of The Peached Tortilla, dishes on the early days of his food truck business and how he grew from one truck to an Austin food empire.

Many food truck owners dream about restaurant expansion, about making the leap from service window to full service restaurant. But when Eric Silverstein, founder of The Peached Tortilla, looks back at his journey from food truck to food empire, he remembers not a single leap, but a series of small steps.

Eric started in the food industry at 16, working at Einstein Bros. Bagels and other chain restaurants before heading off to college to become a lawyer. But the restaurant world still pulled at him. "I tried to raise money for a restaurant and it just wasn't going to happen," Eric says.

It was unfortunate timing: 2009 and the economy was just starting to recover from the recession. "People were tight gripped with their money and weren't going to invest in somebody who had no experience."

Eric wasn't ready to give up. His attention turned to LA, a city where the food truck market was already booming. After some research, he decided to leave his career in law and start a food truck business, with plans to expand down the road.

Today Eric's empire stretches across two full service restaurants, two food trucks, an event space, and a 2,500-square-foot commissary kitchen, all serving The Peached Tortilla's signature fusion of Asian-Southern fare. Plus, in 2019 he released his first cookbook *The Peached Tortilla: Modern Asian Comfort Food from Tokyo to Texas*. You can read all about that publishing journey [here](#).



Wondering how to successfully expand your own restaurant? Eric shares the highs and lows of how he turned a food truck business into a restaurant empire.

1. Accept That You Will Encounter Unexpected Problems

“Everything was a challenge,” Eric says, remembering his first year of running the food truck. Contrary to his expectations, after three or four months he realized it was all going to be an uphill battle.

“The actual physical truck was a challenge. It didn’t run every day. [There were issues with] everything from tires to engine to fuel tanks. And the heat. There’s no AC in these trucks, and it’s 105 degrees outside. There’s nothing easy on a food truck.”

2. Expand Your Restaurant in Small Steps

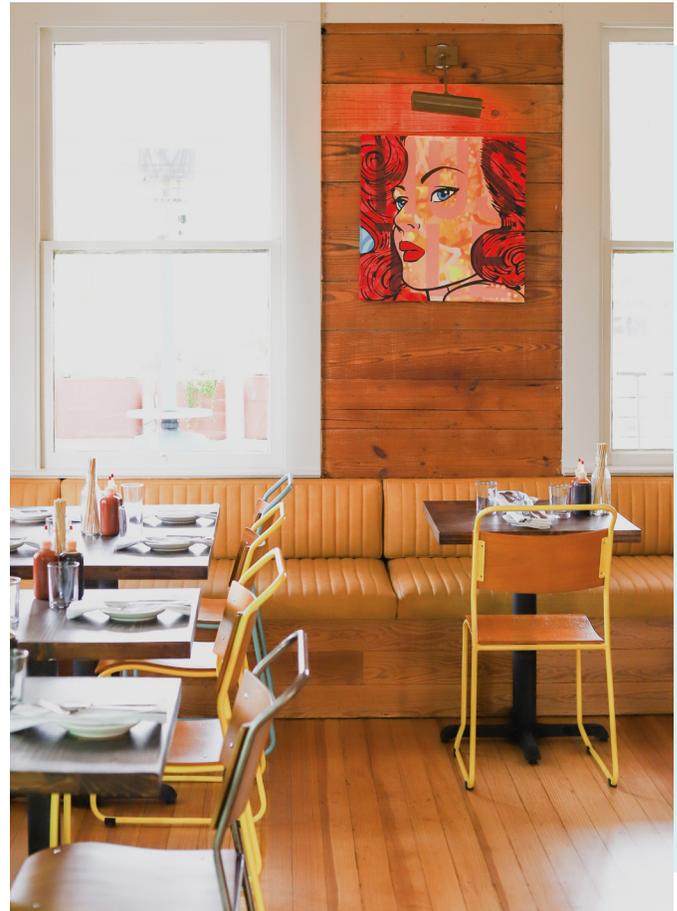
Once the food truck was well underway, Eric focused on taking small steps forward to expand the business. “When I first started the business, I was leasing a food truck. So the first step was to buy a truck, build some equity, and have an asset.”

Eric custom built one truck, then another. Next came the catering business and, finally, the restaurant lease.

The business grew from there, adding a couple new elements every year that expanded the reach of the business. Eric’s catering space needed a commissary kitchen, so he moved into a new facility. The new facility led to an additional event space called the Peached Social House.

Before long, Eric had signed a deal for a restaurant location at the Austin airport.

“And then we decided we needed more space for catering, so we built a 2,500-square-foot warehouse and extended the space at Social House another



550 square feet to include a patio,” says Eric. “So it happened in layers, not all at once.”

3. Get a POS That Will Grow with You

While The Peached Tortilla grew through a lot of little steps, the move from food trucks to brick and mortar was more of a leap. Eric knew the POS system he was using on his trucks wasn’t going to be sufficient for a full service restaurant expansion.

Enter TouchBistro POS: Eric found the system had the features he was looking for but also required less hardware, fewer upfront costs, and lower licensing fees than a traditional POS. “I’ve always felt like some things are done in this industry just because they’ve

always been done a certain way – but maybe that’s not the best way to do them.”

TouchBistro became part of The Peached Tortilla journey, helping Eric open the first brick and mortar location. Now he uses the system not only to process transactions but also for daily sales reporting, year-over-year reporting, and tableside ordering – a feature that increases his speed of service and rate of table turnover.

4. Envision a Clear Goal from the Beginning

What is it you want to accomplish with your restaurant expansion? Multiple restaurants? A catering business? A product line? You should be thinking about these things when you’re just starting your business, so you can work towards them.

“My advice for food truck owners would be have a long game. Know what you’re in it for,” says Eric. “If you don’t know what your end game is, you’re going to fail. There’s no reason to run a food truck forever – there’s just not enough money in it.”

Eric suggests basing your expansion plans on something other than your food truck sales numbers. “Chances are they’re going to be okay but not great. Don’t let that deter you from growing,” he says. “There are a lot of sacrifices that need to be made to be successful in this business. So if you’re willing to

make those sacrifices, you’re passionate about your food, and you think you can be successful, then go for it. But make sure you have a plan.”

5. But Be Flexible with Your Business Plan

Does anything ever go according to plan? (No.) Restaurant owners know this reality all too well. While Eric stresses the importance of a plan, he’s also learned to expect the unexpected.

“My plan changed drastically,” he says. “I did what I had to do to survive. I never thought I would have a full service, full-blown catering company that employs 50 people. I never would have guessed that. I never thought I would have an event space. I didn’t expect the business to grow the way it did.”

Throughout the highs and the lows, the carefully laid plans and the plans made by the seat of your pants, Eric’s advice for restaurant expansion is to focus on the future. That next step. Then that next next step.

The same advice holds true for the restaurant technology that will help you get there. “The way of looking at POS systems in restaurants is changing,” Eric says. “I think a lot of younger restaurant owners value an iPad-based POS system, especially when you can take an iPad mini tableside, take orders, and speed up the process. Why not be at the forefront of this kind of stuff?”





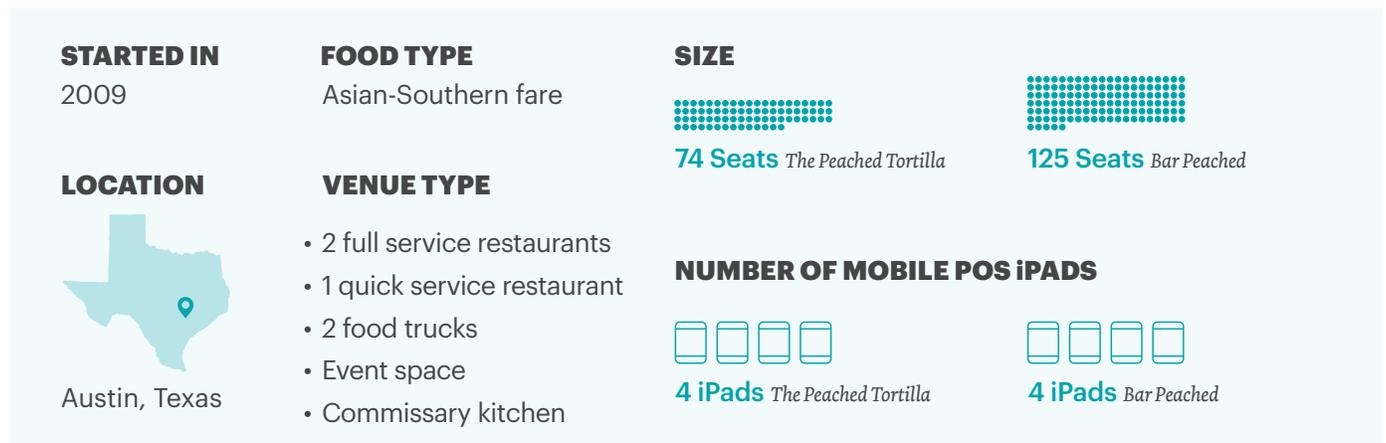
How The Peached Tortilla Uses TouchBistro:

- Heat maps to determine busiest times
- Daily sales reports of food, alcohol, and merch to place inventory orders
- Daily sales reports to measure average check and average spend per seat
- Year-over-year reporting to see progress and growth
- **Tableside ordering for faster service and higher turnover**

How TouchBistro Helped The Peached Tortilla Increase Sales by 37%

In 2018, The Peached Tortilla's executive chef and founder Eric Silverstein added a new airport location, promotions with OpenTable, and tableside ordering with TouchBistro.

Restaurant Stats



PROBLEM

- Servers punched in multiple orders at once
- Kitchen overwhelmed by waves of tickets
- Long wait times for food
- Poor customer experience

Growing Pains: Stacking Orders

“Before we offered tableside ordering, servers would have to take an order, write it down, and then go to one of the POS iPads,” Eric says. That meant servers tended to stack orders, taking everyone’s order in their section, then going to the POS station and punching in four table’s orders at once.

“The kitchen got all those orders at the same time. And, if multiple servers were stacking tickets because we just sat a whole restaurant at once, we got waves of tickets and the kitchen couldn’t keep up,” Eric says. “Then that becomes longer ticket times and a poor experience for customers.”

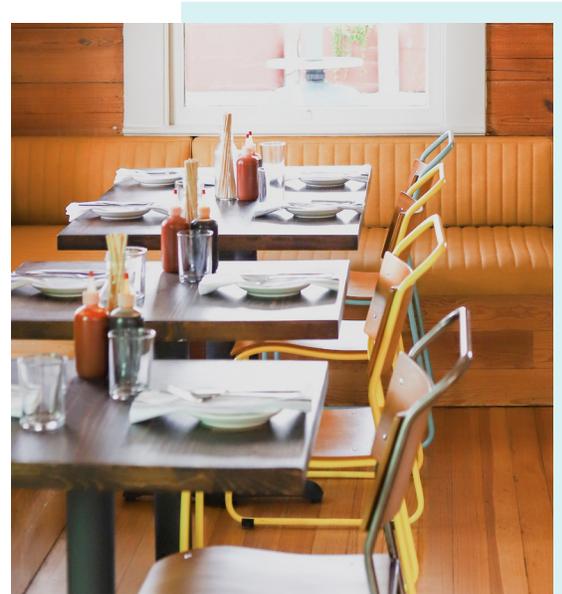


SOLUTION

Tableside Ordering to the Rescue

Eric introduced tableside ordering with mobile iPads from TouchBistro and immediately saw benefits. "One, it allows us to give a better dining experience which yields more return business. And two, it boosts our efficiency and allows us to run a better operation, honestly," he says.

Tableside ordering allows servers to get orders in faster, which helps the kitchen get food out faster because tickets aren't coming in all at once. "And there's less room for error when you're just punching in an order right then and there. Servers forget things. They're human," says Eric.



OUTCOME

INCREASED SALES

- **Summer sales went up by 37%**
(August YOY)
- **Fall sales went up by 24%**
(October YOY)
- Turns tables faster, more efficiently
- Gains more return business from better customer experience

IMPROVED SERVICE

- Gives diners a smoother experience with fewer errors
 - Staggers orders to the kitchen, so food gets out faster
- "Tableside ordering gives you a better opportunity to really connect with your guest. Being able to send and get drinks started while still getting to know them not only improves ticket times, but their drink could hit the table before you even walk away."**

-Jenna P., General Manager at The Peached Tortilla



The Impact of a Mobile POS

After implementing tableside ordering in August of 2018, Eric saw The Peached Tortilla's **sales increased by 37%** over last year. And, in the fall when sales typically decline due to football season, **year-over-year sales were still up by 24%**. Other initiatives like the new airport location also contributed to this boost.

"My restaurant is not that big and tableside has been useful," he says. "I would think the bigger your restaurant, the more impact it would make because the distance to the POS stations would be greater."

TouchBistro is an iPad POS and integrated payments solution built for restaurant people, by restaurant people. Our system helps thousands of restaurateurs around the world increase sales, delight guests, and save both time and money. From POS to online ordering to reservations, find out how our solutions can help make it easier to run your restaurant.



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