

The Charleston Restaurant Report

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The Charleston Restaurant Report is an email newsletter focused on the restaurant business in the Charleston area. The newsletter is intended to inform and enlighten local restaurateurs and stakeholders in the local restaurant economy.

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Green Scene – Reduce Electricity and Improve Your Bottom Line

Restaurant operators all know how painful it is to open the monthly electricity bill and wince at the damage from the previous month's usage. There are a multitude of ways to reduce electricity usage in a restaurant – in the kitchen and the dining room. Roughly 40% of your restaurant power bill is consumed by the heat & air system. It is critically important to monitor your thermostats every day and every shift. Your staff may think of the t-stat as a gas pedal, but it is not. Training your staff on proper temperature settings and the costs involved in maintaining and repairing the HVAC system will go a long way toward reducing your electricity bill.

In the kitchen, focus your staff's attention on changing bad habits like turning off ovens when empty, keeping hot and cold storage equipment doors shut as much as possible, turning off heat lamps during slower serving periods, maximizing dishmachine loads and minimizing trips into the walk-in coolers/freezers. Paying attention to seemingly small operational items will make a substantial impact on your electricity bill. A dollar saved is a dollar earned.

News from the Local Restaurant Scene – Independent Operators Keep Moving Despite the Economy

If you watch the nightly news, or read the industry trade journals, you'd think that anyone in the restaurant business is heading to the poor house. Many regional and national casual dining chains are shuttering underperforming units and marketing lower-priced meals on television and the internet to drive traffic into their restaurants. However, a look at the local market shows that many independent restaurant operators

are moving forward with developing new restaurant locations, despite the tough economy. Look at the "Openings" and "Coming Soon" lists below. Most of those listed are independents, not associated with an out-of-state franchise or corporate group.

These operator/entrepreneurs are taking advantage of lower lease rates; lower construction costs; better Landlord incentives – ie. healthier tenant improvement allowances, longer rent abatement periods and more creative lease structures to prepare themselves for the future. Establishing low overhead costs now will position these restaurants for even stronger profit margins as consumer confidence and disposable income levels improve in the future.

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Restaurant Openings/Closings/Coming Soon in the Charleston area --

Openings –

Buddy Roe's (Mount Pleasant – former Island Clubhouse)

Chick-fil-A (Mount Pleasant)

Dolphin Cove Marina Restaurant (North Charleston)

Fiery Ron's Home Team BBQ (Sullivans Island – former Bert's Bar)

Finz (Mount Pleasant - former Ray's BBQ)

Firewater Grille (Summerville – former Morris' Restaurant)

Jersey Mike's (North Charleston)

Liberty Tap Room & Grill (Mount Pleasant – former TBonz Gill & Grill)
Mozzo Deli (Mount Pleasant – former Schlotzky’s Deli)
O’Brion’s Pub (James Island – former Twizt)
Old Post Office (Edisto)
Soda Water Grill (Mount Pleasant – former Red Pepper)
Taco Boy (Downtown Charleston)
Tantra (Mount Pleasant)

Closings --

AC’s (Mount Pleasant)
Gelateria Modica (Downtown Charleston)
Island Clubhouse (Mount Pleasant)
Kennedy’s Market (Downtown Charleston)
Mama Fu’s (Mount Pleasant)
Oink (Mount Pleasant)
Schlotzky’s Deli (Mount Pleasant)
Sticky Fingers (North Charleston)

Coming Soon --

Fuji Sushi (Mount Pleasant)
Five Guys Burgers (Downtown Charleston – former Coldstone Creamery)
Kitty’s Fine Foods (Downtown Charleston)
Palmetto Pig (Mount Pleasant – former Mama Fu’s)
Park Pizza Company (North Charleston)
Vespa Pizzeria (Daniel Island – former Soda Water Grill)
Wild Wing Café (Mount Pleasant)
Willie Jewel’s BBQ (North Charleston)
Woody’s BBQ (Mount Pleasant)
Your Pie (West Ashley)

Disclaimer: Please forgive unintentional omissions.

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Available! Restaurant Real Estate –

Parkway Town Center in Summerville, SC

Parkway Town Center is a new 57 acre commercial development at the intersection of Highway 78 & Berlin G. Myers Parkway in Summerville. There are four restaurant pads available for purchase or lease at the main entry circle. The Town Center will include hotels, banks, office space, large anchor retail, community retailers and restaurants. The property is being marketed by Lat Purser & Associates, Inc. Call Benjy Cooke or Blake Easterling for information. 843.884.1104.

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Ideas from the National Restaurant Scene – Independents Band Together to Promote Local Dining

In light of the rough economy, independent restaurants are banding together to maximize marketing ad dollars and promote local brand loyalty. Their efforts are aimed at attracting new customers, but more importantly, they want to retain existing customers who may be tempted by national chains that can still afford to offer deep menu discounts and coupons. In Charlotte, NC, for example, twenty-six local independent restaurants created Eat Charlotte. The group contributes equally to a marketing budget and intends to spread the good word through cross promotions, a neighborhood dining guide and a website (www.eatcharlotte.net). In Columbia, SC, eighteen local restaurants have joined the Columbia Originals group, part of a nationwide Originals program. The group encourages folks to spend money at local restaurants by offering reward points to frequent diners. The more you spend, the more discounts you earn (www.columbiaoriginals.com).

The Charleston Restaurant Report is a quarterly email newsletter produced by Thomas Kennedy and distributed to stakeholders in the Charleston-area restaurant scene. Send comments and suggestions to thomas.kennedy@latpurser.com

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