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FOOD & LIFESTYLE

Restaurant chain, years in the making, continues to grow under Boyds' leadership



D'Bo's Wings franchisee Ronnie Williams and company president David Boyd enjoy some of the fruits of their labor. The business has taken off through franchising.

IN THIS ARTICLE

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Many small businesses are started when people try to make a living at something they enjoy.

For the husband and wife team of David and [Leticia Boyd](#), owners of D'Bo's Inc. dba D'Bo's Wings N More, that meant chicken wings.

The couple founded the company in August 1990, but the idea for the business went back a few more years.

The name D'Bo's came from David's nickname at Morehouse College in Atlanta.

"Wings were what we did on the weekends," David Boyd says. "Every Friday after class were wings and beer. We decided we needed to bring wings back to Memphis."

The Boyds did that by building a concession trailer they set up at the corner of Lamar Avenue and Pendleton Street.

"We sat there two years and built the company," says David Boyd, a past president of the Memphis Restaurant Association.

The couple then moved into their first store, a 1,200-square-foot bay at 3287 Kirby Parkway.

The company now has five locations: 7050 Malco Crossing, 4407 Elvis Presley, 5727 Raleigh LaGrange, 1400 N. Germantown Parkway in Cordova and 1397 Missouri St. in West Memphis, Ark.

The restaurants have a diverse menu that includes wings, sausages, hot dogs and salads. The company also has a heart-healthy menu, which includes steamed vegetables and turkey burgers.

Although it stays away from residential deliveries, D'Bo's does do corporate deliveries and catering.

The Boyds decided to start franchising a few years ago, but didn't have any experience in that aspect of the restaurant business.

They turned to a franchise consultant and business development firm, Atlanta-based National Franchise Associates Inc., which had helped develop a franchise plan for Zaxby's.

“We specialize in developing new franchise programs for people who have successful businesses,” Stephen Raines, president, says.

The company did an initial marketing plan for D’Bo’s, as well as a franchise plan which outlined franchisee and franchisor duties and responsibilities. National Franchise Associates also drafted franchise legal documents, a pre-opening procedure manual and an operating manual so that even a novice could open a location.

David Boyd was looking for a way to grow his brand without having to raise more capital or manage each new store, according to Raines.

“It is a common way for a lot of businesses who have a proven prototype to grow without having those up-front expenses and ongoing worries,” he says.

The Boyds got a chance to test their franchise program when they were approached by Ronnie Williams, a business acquaintance who was also a 20-year veteran of local food service company Sysco Corp.

“I just kept asking him to put one in West Memphis and he wasn’t ready,” Williams says. “A few years ago, we started talking again and both decided it was something to do.”

Williams opened a free-standing, 1,200-square-foot store in West Memphis, complete with a drive-thru.

D’Bo’s franchises have a one-time \$25,000 fee on the front end. After that, it’s a weekly flat fee, not a percentage of sales, as is the case in many franchise agreements. The fee starts at \$400 a week and gradually increases to \$600 a week after three years.

“If Ronnie makes a bazillion dollars, it doesn’t matter, it’s one flat fee,” David Boyd says. “It’s simpler. It eliminates the chance of double books or people lying. It removes that from the equation and you know what your fixed cost is.”

While D’Bo’s has successfully grown, it also faced the challenges of the economy, as costs continue to grow. One way to mitigate this is by changing the menu often to take advantage of deals offered by suppliers.

They aren’t afraid to haggle for better prices as well.

“Negotiation is every day,” Williams says. “With Dave and I working together and with our backgrounds, we can bounce things off each other. Dave might find a good deal on chicken where two months ago I was able to get us a good deal on oil.”

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