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FOOD & LIFESTYLE

D'bo's David Boyd on the allure of the hot wing, franchising, and the next generation



David, Corey, and Julian Boyd of D'bo's

SUSAN ELLIS | MBJ

IN THIS ARTICLE

Restaurants



By Susan Ellis
Projects Editor, Memphis Business Journal

Wings n' More
Company

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David Boyd, the owner of D'bo's, defines the allure of the hot wing.

"It's a universal product. It has no race. It has no religion," he said. "It's just the perfect protein."

Boyd attended Morehouse College in Atlanta. And every Friday night, he and his friends would go to a bar for beer and hot wings. Whenever he visited for homecoming and the like, it was beer and hot wings.

Later, Boyd went to work for an oil company in Houston. When he returned to Memphis, he noticed something – no hot wings.

"Keep in mind, the wing had been around for 30 years prior to my even getting started, but it wasn't in the city of Memphis," he said. "It was very prevalent in Atlanta, but once I returned back to Memphis and realized we didn't have that option, my wife [Leticia] and I set out to make it work."

For a year and half, the couple hosted wing parties at their house on the weekends. When the crowd kept growing, they knew they were ready.

Ready to sauce

The first D'bo's opened in 1990 on Kirby Parkway. It served three sauces – mild, hot, and "suicide." The restaurant now offers 13 sauces.

D'bo's eventually grew to five locations. It currently has two. Along the way, Boyd made some changes.

In 2013, he introduced the burger concept The Checkered Cow, which has since been incorporated into the D'bo's brand. Later, he started offering seafood boils at the Elvis Presley Blvd. location and now has daiquiris at both stores. In fact, D'bo's, once known as D'bo's Wings n' More, now goes by D'bo's Daquiris, Wings & Seafood.

"I have truly been indoctrinated into [the New Orleans] culture of daiquiris and seafood," Boyd said. "My wife and I both realized that option didn't exist here in the city. So, we brought it here, back in 2019, the whole seafood boil concept and the daiquiris."

Boyd created the Checkered Cow concept to offset the high prices of wings in 2013. He's in a similar situation today, with wing costs suddenly rising.

He sees wings as a luxury as opposed to cheaper costs of traditional chicken places.

"The pandemic affected the labor shortage in the plants," he said. "As a result, they were cutting back, so the supply and demand hit. And here we are. We're absorbing the cost now."

But, in ways both big and small, the pandemic revealed the strength of a place like D'bo's.

"It has been a blessing and it's been a curse," he said. "The blessing has been that we've kept our health. Another piece of the blessing is that sales [were good] because we were already designed for the carry out concept. And with so many restaurants not being prepared for that, it almost just sent our business through the roof because we were there."

It was a curse due to, ironically, the through-the-roof sales. Service suffered. Keeping fully staffed has been so difficult that Boyd closed the stores on Sundays. His restaurants employ about 25.

Future wave

Boyd has seen the future, and it is in franchising.

"Pre-COVID, a lot of people were looking at entrepreneurship. I think America understood now if you want to create wealth and control your own destiny working for yourself, becoming self-employed, is the only answer," he said. "A lot of people are moving in that direction."

Right now, D'bo's has 10 franchises in the works – in Detroit, Chicago, Memphis, Florida, and Atlanta. His son Julian is the director of franchising. His other son, Corey, is director of operations.

It was Boyd's plan all along to have his three sons involved in the business. His eldest son, David, died in a car accident in 2007. Boyd insisted the boys graduate college – both did, from Morehouse – and explore their own paths first.

Another wave of the future that Boyd is looking into is technology. D'bo's is releasing its newest app some time this week, and they've introduced kiosks. The kiosks allow

the customer to place and pay for their order, therefore skipping the line.

But, Boyd is not done prognosticating.

"I've worked my butt off and now it's time for the second generation," he said. "They're very excited to take the reins and run with it. So I'm looking forward to the next chapter. On an island drinking umbrella drinks."

T H E L I S T

Memphis-Based Restaurant Chains

Ranked by Total restaurant locations

Rank	Rank	Total Restaurant Locations
1	Lennys Grill & Subs	79
2	Gus's World Famous Fried Chicken	33
3	Dixie Queen	18

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