

Events & Announcements

New Website Helps Diners Find Black-Owned Restaurants

By Lisa Fitch
Our Weekly News Los Angeles Contributor

More than 2,000 Black-owned eateries are featured on the new internet-based restaurant locator eat-blackowned.com, which launched June 21 intending to support Black-owned restaurants.

“There’s only one thing that everyone in this world has in common: we all love great tasting food,” creator Edward L. Dillard said. “We have soul food, vegan, BBQ, Caribbean, seafood and more listed on the site.”

“I believe that if people have a place where they can find all the minority-owned restaurants in this country, more of us will start to support these small businesses,” Dillard said.

Increasing Black dollar circulation

“Ninety-three cents of every dollar spent by Black consumers produces no economic benefit for the Black community, as the dollar only circulates in the community for six hours,” he adds.

A professional truck driver for a company out of New Jersey, Dillard has been on the road for 15 years, and travels across the country four or five days of the week.

“I didn’t like the direction of the country,” he said in a recent phone interview. “I wanted to do more to support Black-owned businesses, but I was always gone. I don’t spend money on clothes, accessories or shoes. The majority of my money was going to food.”

“I decided to spend it in different restaurants,” he added, noting that the internet was of little help. “The problem was only the major cities and only real popular restaurants would come up in my search. The really small ones wouldn’t come up.” There already are some existing websites promoting Black-owned businesses in general, but they don’t have a lot of restaurant listings.

Dillard was inspired.

Have a vision and go forward

“I had a vision in mind but didn’t have the experience in designing a website,” he said. “Luckily, there’s Google and YouTube. They pretty much teach you everything! I realized there was a small chance that I might be able to make this happen.”

Dillard spent nearly



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five months conducting research for his project, collecting the names and addresses of more than 2,000 restaurants in the U.S. Then, he completed the website design.

“It took me a long time to design a website,” Dillard said. “What surprised me is that I got the job done.”

Working as a one-man show, Dillard then collected the restaurant pictures and website links to complete the project for launch. So far, the site includes 94 restaurants in New York, but only 35 within a 25-mile radius of downtown LA.

Fostering culinary inclusion

“African-Americans make up only eight percent of restaurant owners and managers in the U.S.,” said Warren Luckett, co-founder of BRW in a recent Forbes feature. “Our mission is to provide a platform that calls for inclusion in the industry and exposes and elevates black-owned businesses.”

Visit <https://labrw.com> for a list of participating BRW restaurants.

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“Access to capital,” explained Veronica Hendrix, who participated in a panel discussion on food at a recent LA chapter meeting of the National Association of Black Journalists. “It takes a lot to start a restaurant, in terms of finding a location; working with the leasing company agreement; and overhead costs.”

“I think that’s why so many of them are choosing alternative ways of creating a presence in the community,” Hendrix added. “Food trucks, pop ups, becoming personal chefs, cooking for small groups—just looking for alternative ways of raising capital.”

Setting realistic goals

“A lot of banks initially look at them as a risk until they’re proven,” Hendrix said.

Nearly 60 percent of restaurants fail within their first three years, according to recent stud-

ies of business start-ups. Restaurateurs have to set realistic goals; conduct market research and analysis; and have an original concept with good food.

“I love talking about food,” said Hendrix, who currently writes a blog called “Collard Greens and Caviar”—a take on her wide range of food tastes, from down-south soul food to European delicacies.

“Social media has been huge for me,” Hendrix said. “Through social media, I’ve created a sense of food family.”

The panel—which also included Noelle Carter, who formerly worked in

the LA Times test kitchen; and Mona Holmes, writer for Eater Los Angeles—agreed that food journalists are not taken very seriously, even though food is something we deal with every day, preparing it, or eating it, or both.

“Food is very personal,” Hendrix said. “It can create a lot of memories and evoke feelings.”

Attracting regular customers

The panel agreed that almost nothing beats homemade, although many restaurants seek to replicate the looks,

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