

# HOW TO START A NEW FOOD AND BEVERAGE BUSINESS IN FLORIDA AND GROW YOUR BRAND.

Starting a new business can be very daunting, as there are so many things to learn and so many things that need to be done to ensure that you start off on the best foot. There is a great deal of information available on the internet and also by contacting state and county agencies, but my goal is to compile the information that I gathered through starting my own businesses so that I can help you to navigate through the process. My goal is also to help you to learn how to build a solid foundation - which increases your chances of running a successful business - and how to build your brand. In this article I will be focusing on the mobile food and beverage businesses, however, the initial stages do apply to all formats of businesses.



## What you should do first



When forming your new food and beverage business, the first step would be to figure out what your true vision is for the business, as in: Why are you starting this business? What are your goals and objectives? What will motivate you to continue even when times get tough (as it often does with new businesses)?

When you've dug deep inside and figured out the 'why', then you can further develop the 'who', the 'what', and the 'how'. The 'who' pertains to who will be running the new business, what type of staffing

would you need, what attributes would these team members need to have - e.g., a chef, a baker, a mixologist, etc., and are they connected to your vision/have belief in the vision. The 'what' is the general information about your business such as your products and services, etc. The 'how' is where you determine the format of your business i.e., if you will have a physical location or be mobile, and will you plan on having other locations later. Determining the format of the business is important because it will determine the steps that you take while setting up the business. After you have figured out the why, the who, the what, and the how, you can then develop a thorough business plan.

## Gaining knowledge

To learn about a new business startup, there are several programs offered through counties and the state. One such program is [Broward Score](#). These programs are usually free or low cost and are aimed at helping you to learn how to start, develop, and grow businesses. These programs help you with anything from finding resources for your business to developing a business plan. You also get to network with other entrepreneurs as well. Each workshop is different so you would have to decide which ones work best for you and your business.

Other ways to gain knowledge include finding resources from websites such as the [U.S. Small Business Administration \(SBA\)](#), learning from [experts in the area of new business development and branding](#), business administration courses, and/or marketing certificates/degrees offered at colleges such as [FIU – Department of Marketing and Logistics](#).

## The Legalities

After you figure out the purpose of your business and learn some more about starting a business, the next thing to do is determine the name of your business and the [type of business structure](#) that you want to register as (i.e., [Limited Liability Company - LLC](#), [Corporation](#), [Partnership](#), or [Sole Proprietorship](#)). When you are ready to register your business, you will find that there are several companies online, such as [Legal Zoom](#) and [IncFile](#), that offer a full-service registration that includes getting you an [EIN](#) and providing [Registered Agent service](#). However, I found that those paths cost a good deal more than if you did all the steps (included in this article) yourself. To register your new business in Florida, you would go to [Sunbiz.org](#) and perform a [record search](#) to ensure that the name you want is available. Once you have determined that your preferred name is available, you can proceed by going to the [registration page on Sunbiz](#) and following all the steps indicated in order to complete registration of your new business and pay the applicable fees. You will receive the physical copy of your [Articles Of Incorporation](#) in the mail within a few weeks.

After registering on Sunbiz, the next step is good old IRS... yes, you definitely want to do this step so that you can file and pay your taxes when your new business starts making bank. To [apply for an EIN](#), you go to IRS.gov and follow the instructions. Once completed, you will receive your EIN in the mail in a few weeks.

It is also a great idea to get the assistance of a lawyer or an online legal company such as [Rocket Lawyer](#) to draft [necessary business documents, contracts, and agreements](#) (e.g., an Operating Agreement) based on your type of business.

As a Florida business, you also want to register with the [Department of Revenue](#) to get a [Resale Tax Certificate](#) and therefore file [Sales and Use Taxes](#) monthly or quarterly based on the type of business. This allows you to collect sales taxes on behalf of the state with the benefit to you being that you can purchase certain items and services tax-free, once they are going to be resold to customers and the taxes are paid by customers.

## You thought legalities were finished, but not quite yet...



Food and beverage businesses should also register with, and get permits from, [Department of Agriculture](#). For a mobile food and beverage business, you can also go a step further and get a [Temporary Event Vendor License from the Department of Business and Professional Regulations \(DBPR\)](#) which enables you to be a vendor at various events (e.g.



Farmer's Markets, Food Truck events, City and County Parks and Recreations events, etc.) for the selected period that you pay for – up to one year. You can also choose to become a [registered vendor](#) with each county.

Another very important thing, that is an absolute must, is business [Commercial General Liability Insurance](#). You can contact insurance brokers such as [Cover Wallet](#), or go directly to business insurance companies such as [Hiscox](#). There are many insurance brokers and insurance companies, however, I named those two because of the great experience I had with both.

## Starting to represent yourself as a legitimate business

Once you have registered with Sunbiz and the IRS, you can take those documents to your preferred bank and open a new business account. Having a business account for your business is a whole lot better than using a personal account because business accounts usually come with benefits that will help you to run your business more efficiently e.g. end of year spending/expense reports for taxes, check cashing benefits, reports, etc. A business account may also put you in the position to be able to get loans with that bank. It is also always best practice to separate all your business expenses from your personal expenses by using business bank accounts and business credit cards.

## Building Brand Awareness and Marketing your company



To continue to make the business more official you need to set-up an email address for your business, as well as social media accounts ([Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), etc.), a website, and a [Google My Business](#) account. Doing all these things will get brand development started, but these will also be the channels used for building brand awareness and marketing the business extensively.

You can also start to build brand awareness by purchasing business cards, flyers, and ad space in papers or on billboards, but the easiest methods with the farthest reach are ads on [Google Ads](#), [YouTube](#), Instagram, Facebook. Using the latter (online) methods also allows you to receive [insights and analytics data](#) that will be extremely useful for the continued growth of your business, as this data can be used to make major business decisions.

Another part of branding is acquiring merchandise that will represent your brand e.g. banners, cups, plates, hats, shirts, etc. Anything that you can stick your logo on and believe will be a big hit with customers. Sourcing branded items can be costly when purchased in the US, so I say, 'don't snooze on China'. That is where you will be able to get high-quality custom products but at a lower cost. For B2B purchases with companies in China, you can utilize [Alibaba](#).

## Starting to run your business – POS systems

Since the focus of this article is on mobile businesses, by this point you would have already established the how of the mobile business – as in, are you using a food truck, food cart, food trailer, a tent, a canopy, etc. You can now start learning how to use a Point of Sale system such as [Square](#) that can help you with everything from accepting payments, sending estimates and invoices, an online store, accepting bookings, and POS devices and accompaniments. I suggest you go with the most cost-effective devices initially e.g. using your own table and downloading the POS application, then, later on, you can purchase the cash registers, printers, etc.



## Working with family and friends

If you are in the position to be able to get support and assistance from your friends and family, please use it. This will go a very long way when things start to get tough in the beginning stages of running a new business. This can help with free or cheap labor and also helps with building brand awareness through word-of-mouth.



## Finale

This article is by no means all-encompassing and there are several other steps that may be needed based on the specifics of your food and beverage business e.g. food handlers permits, getting a commissary, catering licenses, etc. Starting a new business can be very challenging, and although there is a plethora of information available, that information can be useless if you don't know how to apply it. The key is to find people that can help you through the process, whether it is an organization that teaches business startup, someone who has done it successfully, or experts that specialize in new business startups and brand development.