

NO. 10

CONSUMER SURVEY: DINERS WEIGH IN ON HEALTHY MENUS

# ESR

*Ideas and Insights for*

*Full-Service Restaurants*

Build a Better  
Beer Program

Top 10 States  
for Growth

Social Media  
Spots Culinary  
Trends

Private-Label  
Wines

## MAKING AN INDELIBLE MARC



Chef Marcus Samuelsson brings multi-cultural cooking to Harlem and serves American hospitality in Europe.



## Taking it to the Streets

**T**ucked neatly among the soaring trees of Woodinville, the Barking Frog restaurant is a prized—though sometimes hidden—gem in northwest Washington.

While the upscale restaurant has earned considerable and consistent acclaim over its 13 years in operation, veteran chef Bobby Moore wondered how the restaurant could generate additional traffic and expand its reach. His ultimate solution seemed an unconventional one: Launch a food truck.

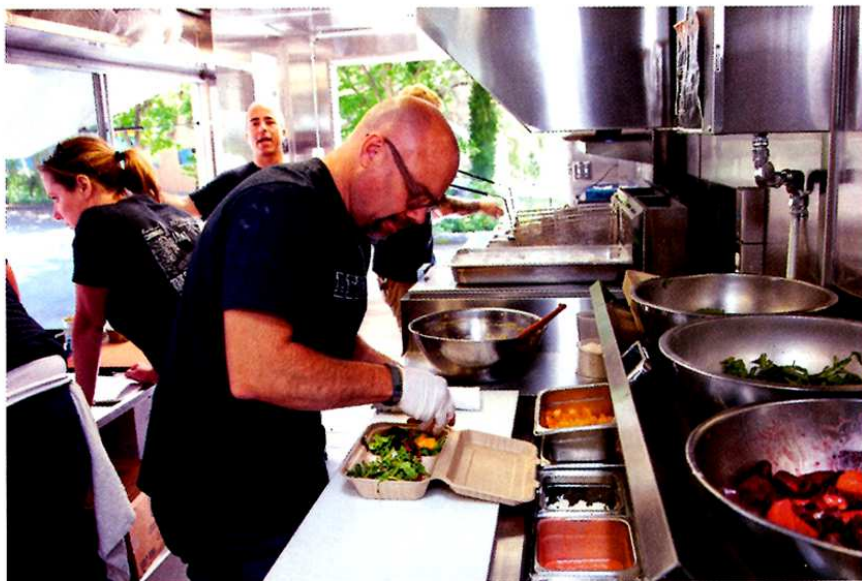
Moore traveled the West Coast gaining a deeper understanding of food truck businesses and operations. As he evaluated the potential synergy between his brick-and-mortar restaurant and a food truck, Moore began relishing the prospects.

“I thought having a food truck would not only give our brand a fresh edge and push us into the limelight, it would also allow us to capitalize on off-site catering opportunities,” Moore says.

In May 2013, the Barking Frog Mobile Kitchen hit the streets, a 26-foot restaurant-on-wheels featuring two full-sized ovens and deep fryers, a 36-inch grill, an under-counter freezer, and everything needed to rule the road.

“This was a massive investment, especially since we wanted the biggest, baddest restaurant on the road,” Moore says of the truck, affectionately nicknamed “The Road Toad.”

While many restaurants once looked at food trucks as an encroaching, pesky enemy—a thought some retain—a growing number of full-service restaurateurs have embraced the possibilities and joined the street-food ranks.



**AN ESTABLISHED RESTAURANT IN WOODINVILLE, WASHINGTON, THE BARKING FROG TOOK AN UNCONVENTIONAL APPROACH TO EXPANSION: LAUNCHING A FOOD TRUCK.**

For many, a food truck’s most direct benefit is heightened revenue.

Agave Grill, an upscale casual restaurant in downtown Hartford, Connecticut, has been serving its modern Mexican cuisine for the last 10 years. About five years ago, Agave incorporated a food-cart program to fulfill the mounting number of off-premise requests.

While the food cart served its basic purpose, Agave leaders noted the cart’s limitations in production and reach, recognition that spurred an investment in the Agave Canteen food truck, which debuted last fall. Now, Agave is booking weddings, rehearsal dinners, and other private events, while also hitting farmers’ markets and street corners with a significant impact to the restaurant’s top line.

“We’re doing a number of things today we couldn’t dream of before,” Agave Grill

managing partner Al Ferranti says.

Similarly, the Barking Frog Mobile Kitchen serves its inventive dishes, including seared sea scallops and braised short ribs, at local festivals, breweries, and concerts—in addition to manning daily lunch spots in the Seattle metro area. Recently, Moore says the Barking Frog has landed “bigger fish,” such as weddings, corporate events, and fundraisers.

“In the peak season, we’re operating seven days a week,” Moore says.

### Mobile Messaging

Other full-service restaurants with food trucks celebrate the expanded marketing capabilities provided by mobile units.

In April 2013, then-two-year-old Cambridge, Massachusetts, eatery Area Four launched its A4 Truck. As Area Four does not do any direct advertising, the



A4 Truck became a roving billboard for the restaurant and provided the wood-fired pizza concept direct, playful interaction with consumers.

“Whenever you have the ability to connect with guests one-on-one and show them what you’re about, that’s a positive,” Area Four co-owner Michael Krupp says, adding that the A4 Truck also jumpstarted the A4 brand, which has since added A4 Pizza and A4 Coffee to its roster.

Calling Agave Canteen “an exhibition kitchen on wheels,” Ferranti says the truck extends the Agave Grill brand and generates increased interest in the Agave name.

“When I’m in the truck, I don’t even mind sitting in rush-hour traffic,” Ferranti jokes.

Having the truck also allows Ferranti an opportunity to bring Agave’s flavorful dishes to diners in Hartford’s surrounding bedroom communities.

“We can’t pick up and move our brick-and-mortar restaurant to reach the populous suburbs around us, but here’s a way we can capture that clientele regardless,” Ferranti says.

Similarly, Moore understands that Seattle residents, blessed with a number of great neighborhood dining options, often reject the idea of traveling to “the country” for a meal. With the Barking Frog now hitting Seattle’s streets, Moore says familiarity with the restaurant has increased.

“The truck has helped us further establish the restaurant as a destination spot, and there’s absolutely no question that people have visited our restaurant after first learning about us from the truck,” Moore says.

With a food truck, a full-service restaurant can also leverage consumers’ sense of culinary adventure to test