

CULINARY/FOODWAY WORKGROUP

Definition of Culinary/Foodway

- 'The world's greatest Taste' – Louisiana is the capital for food
- Farming, producers, processors, distribution/shipping, supermarkets, food stands, farmer's markets, culinary institutions
- Non-profits root is educational and their focus is to sustain cultural aspects with organizations such as farmer's markets. Commercial tends to focus more on pricing, marketing and competition.
- Divided regions depend on what is being produced. Some regions grow sugar cane, others rice and crawfish and sweet potatoes.
- Major stakeholders include four major groups
 - Chef's/Restaurants
 - Processing
 - Agriculture
 - CULTURE – can never leave this out

Strengths of Culinary/Foodway

- INDIGENOUS
- Food is a huge positive for the state of Louisiana and history makes it more distinct.
- Our culture begins at an early age and food recipes are handed down through tradition.
- Diversity is key. Every major city in the United States has a New Orleans style restaurant that doesn't compare to the real thing.
- This diversity could only take place in Louisiana because of history. French, Spanish, Italian, German and African influences have made our food what it is today.
- We really have a great 'family' tree of restaurants, especially in New Orleans.
- One problem is the division of the state. North Louisiana and South Louisiana are like two different states created from different cultural and historical influences.

Competition

- Chain restaurants and fast food are pushing out local businesses
- Local products should be purchased by state agencies and used more often throughout the state
- Should be required to look in-state before out-of-state
- Restaurant business is very easy to succeed in, but it is just as easy to fail
- Louisiana Crawfish versus Chinese Crawfish
- Improve image of state because food is fun and everybody fits in
- Outside imitators are all across the country and it makes it hard to stand out.
- Don't have an income base here to sustain our own products
- Why is processing of LA's products being done elsewhere?
- We are our own competition. Culinary education is needed in more locations and needs to focus more on cultural than commercial and institutional elements.
- Focus on what we are already doing
- Other states and cities are a threat. Products are being exported as institutionalized

goods to areas such as Florida and Nevada.

- The state needs to ante up with incentives and subsidies for business to come here. The state is not consistent on advertising on what we have to offer.

Barriers

- We have an amazing fame that we are associated with, but products cross out of our border and we buy them back for more from out-of-state processing plants.
- There is a lack of educational value at all levels.
- More open-door policy with others in industry (work/cooperative)
- Need to benefit from involvement of other segments (ex. Music)
- Food safety and regulations are constantly increasing and tougher to abide by. They are also inconsistent across cities, parishes and state.
- Labor costs are steadily increasing
- Research and technical support are not substantial
- FINANCING is always a barrier. Financial institutions need to be more involved.
- Louisiana Grown, Louisiana Processed
- Incentives for new organizations: Get in business, stay in business
- Local involvement – cultivate talent pool
- It's not what you know it's who you know. Politics make a huge impact in the state of Louisiana.
- The industry needs to be more appealing to children. (Ex. Farming)
- Louisiana is one of the most incarcerated states in the country.

Infrastructure for Economic Capitalization

- There is a very strong social infrastructure among culinary groups.
- Food Policy Councils are in place in other states and we should consider it in Louisiana.
- State of Louisiana investing in commercial kitchens that provide assistance to smaller businesses.
- Louisiana Rest. Assoc. – strong group for everyone who is a part of the organization
- Universities in Mississippi have programs that provide a college that will guide the public in writing and preparing business plans.
- Have LED create a general overview of resources to use in beginning a culinary venture.
- Before jumping in culinary business, need education on sanitary regulation and other regulatory procedures for restaurants.
- Create some type of fast-food chain that promotes Louisiana food.
- Louisiana Section in grocery stores. Let the state sponsor a concept, not an individual.
- Internet is a great way to begin a small business. Grants and technologies are available that are seldom taken advantage of.

Infrastructure Regarding the Workforce

- Benefit to this state is that people who are born in Louisiana stay in Louisiana. If we can educate them here, they will stay and work.
- Educational system in Louisiana is continuously a problem.
- The employer becomes counselor to employees, almost a parent.

- Less focus on production end of the food business.
- There is not an understanding of economics and marketing to new business owners or prospects. There are also people that are going into the restaurant industry that do not belong in an actual restaurant. They are better served in the production or distribution sector of the culinary industry.
- Financial resources are continuing to come up as a problem.
- Graduates are leaving for areas such as Texas and Florida rather than staying in Louisiana to work in culinary organizations.
- Interaction between professionals and students would make a large impact, individuals such as restaurant owners, executive chefs and managers.
- The cost of living is low here and that is attractive to business owners, but in turn, the salaries are low. There are large numbers of Europeans in the industry here.
- Public schools do not have culinary education at all. It is something that can not only teach children our culture and ways, but also create an interested work force at an early age.
- Formalize resources at organizations such as universities for businesses and culinary students to use.

General overview

- Public and private partnership is a key point for Louisiana's culinary institutes.
- Authenticity of our products is important. We have to tell people why Louisiana's products are better and what is the added value in using them.
- Culture. We need to celebrate our traditions and assimilate new ones in our lives.
- Education at every level. Not just in school, but cultural education and traditional history education throughout the state.
- Location is everything. Address the separation between north and south.
- We need to raise the standard pay in Louisiana to keep people here in the food industry.
- There is an underutilized labor pool in Louisiana. Children and young adults think that working at fast-food restaurants is as far as a restaurant career may go.
- Louisiana doesn't take advantage of the resources that we have here in the state.
- A Worldwide reputation for restaurants and venues is here. We need to put more emphases on the culinary and hospitality venues.
- Restaurant failure rate is not based on lack of knowledge of food; it is based on a lack of knowledge of business principles.

Culinary/Foodway Workgroup Summary

KEY POINTS:

- Celebrate all our cultures and assimilate new ones
- Traditional/Family/Values/Cost of Living/Original Culture
- Education on all levels and making information accessible...marketing assistance & government assistance
- Funding—getting financial institutions and government to assist and promote
- Positioning our culinary/foodway in the minds of potential consumers...”Food Capitol of the World”, “The World’s Authentic Food Heaven”, “The World’s Food Capitol” Marketing
- Elimination of governmental barriers
- Market state-uniqueness of locations
- Location is everything in the state; difference between North and South Louisiana
- Success is attributed to locales; one of major industries in state—tourism
- Education
- Dollars & cents—have to raise pay in this industry in the state
- Underutilized talent pool
- Restaurant/chefs/local food success story—limited to New Orleans and South
- State has informal networks—that area is primary source of information for partnerships
- State does not make good use of existing educational resources

OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIES FOR GROWING THE SEGMENT:

- Setup the map within state to connect all facets of culinary with education, financial, media, trains, bayous, Cajun art; and eat your way through from festival to festival, museum to museum, plantation to slave quarters to battlefields, and continue through the nightlife tours of everything from churches, cemeteries, and riverways.
- Continue with education and connect past to present—connect to culture, techniques, history, math, art, etc.
- Funding
- Cultivating unique manufacturing and distribution businesses
- Family tours
- Investing more dollars into festivals and other events throughout the state
- State needs to be involved as a torch-bearer; not be too directly involved in business
- Education = more success; train people on business principles; utilize tools given to you
- Provide more for employees in the industry (salaries, benefits, etc.) to avoid losing them to other states
- Publicize Louisiana success stories; name recognition (branding) and advertising—publicize LA’s food diversity
- Food Policy Council—like Oklahoma, Connecticut, etc.
- Foster informal collaborations—help teach, grow networks
- Build up Delgado/CIA South—investment, research and development, incubators