

BEHIND THE TICKET



SOUTHERN INDIANA'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR
INDEPENDENT RESTAURANTS & FOOD TRUCKS

SEPT 2026 / ISSUE 01

HOW MUCH ARE YOU THROWING AWAY?

ZERO
WASTE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

FREE

**Customizable
Waste Log Download**

STOP FEEDING THE TRASH CAN

A practical 7-day waste audit.

BRING SLOW-DAY CUSTOMERS BACK

Turn a simple comeback card into another visit.

FOOTBALL IS A SALES SEASON

Five ideas to promote before kickoff.

WE WANT TO FEATURE YOU

The local spotlight is free.



Behind The Plate

Random Fill-Ups: Good Food, Good People and an Evansville Success Story

By Jason Dicken

Some businesses are special because of more than what they serve. Random Fill-Ups is one of them.

Chef Phillips started the Evansville business in 2019 after preparing meals for neighbors and coworkers. With encouragement from his wife, Andina, and support from his family, he turned his passion for cooking into a bright blue food trailer serving the community.

The trailer helped Random Fill-Ups reach customers when the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional restaurants. Customers followed its location on social media and sometimes arrived before Chef Phillips had finished setting up.

Today, Random Fill-Ups serves scratch-made barbecue and comfort food. Favorites include smoky brisket, pulled pork, wings, catfish, hand-breaded chicken nuggets and loaded fries. Popular sides include barbecue baked beans, candied yams, collard greens and smoked macaroni and cheese. Creative specials and Chef Phillips' signature Random Sauce keep the menu interesting.

For Chef Phillips and Andina, the business is also about family and the future. Chef Phillips wants to build something his children and grandchildren can continue for generations.

Random Fill-Ups now has a permanent home inside Main Street Food & Beverage at 900 Main Street in downtown Evansville. Its signature blue trailer remains on the road for community events, workplace lunches, private parties and catering.

We are proud of what Chef Phillips, Andina and their family have accomplished. Stop by, bring your family and support a local Evansville business serving great food with heart. Come hungry—you'll be glad you did.

VISIT • FOLLOW • ORDER

Visit

Random Fill-Ups

Inside Main Street Food & Beverage

900 Main Street, Evansville, IN 47708

Follow

Find Random Fill-Ups on Facebook for specials, events and trailer locations.

Order

randomfillupsfoodtruck.com

Call or text: (812) 777-6716

Hours, locations and menu selections may change. Check online before visiting.



THE FALL RESTAURANT RESET

Summer is winding down, football is back, school is in session, and customer habits are changing again. Before holiday season arrives, spend one focused hour on the parts of the business that get overlooked in the daily rush.



01 REVIEW MENU PRICING

Have ingredient costs moved since your last price check? A few cents here and a dollar there can quietly erase margin.



02 STUDY YOUR SLOWEST DAY

Build a reason to visit - trivia, family night, a limited special or local partnership - without training guests to wait for coupons.



03 AUDIT RECURRING EXPENSES

Software, internet, pest control, trash, insurance and delivery services deserve a fresh look. Small increases compound.

04 READ YOUR PROCESSING STATEMENT

Costs and pricing can change over time. Do not assume a rate negotiated years ago is still competitive.

05 PLAN THE HOLIDAYS NOW

Catering, gift cards, parties, employee meals and special menus need a runway. November is too late to start planning



Feature Article

The 7-Day Waste-Control Challenge

DON'T JUST WATCH FOOD COST. WATCH WASTE.

Food Waste Adds Up. Small Changes Do, Too.

A study of 114 restaurants across 12 countries found that restaurants reduced food waste by an average of 26% within one year of taking action. The opportunity starts with noticing what gets thrown away: oversized portions, forgotten ingredients, and batches that never sell. Take the 7-Day Food Waste Challenge to discover where your restaurant can waste less and save more.

Run a simple 7-Day Waste Challenge. For one week, record significant food that gets thrown away and why. The goal is not blame - it is pattern recognition

- **Days 1-2: WHAT IS BEING THROWN AWAY**
 - Inspect kitchen and dish-area trash cans after each shift.
 - Watch how many napkins, utensils, sauce packets, and takeout items are ending up in the trash can.
- **Days 3-4: CHECK PREP TECHNIQUES**
 - Watch employees cut vegetables, trim meats, slice cheese, and prepare proteins.
 - Make sure employees use the correct scoops, ladles, spoodles, cups, and scales.
- **Day 5: STORAGE, LABELING, AND ROTATION**
 - Confirm that employees are using the oldest product first.
 - Adjust a prep amount, par level, portion tool, storage method, or ordering quantity.
- **Days 6-7: PRODUCTION, ORDERING, NON-FOOD WASTE**
 - Adjust par levels for products repeatedly left over or discarded.
 - Ask employees for one waste-reduction idea based on what they noticed during the week.



Free Waste Log



\$10 A DAY IN WASTE = \$3,650 A YEAR

**Sometimes the easiest dollar to make
is the dollar you stop throwing away**

14 Waste Control Ideas

- **Count how many tubs are open.** Several partly used containers of the same ingredient suggest staff cannot find existing stock.
- **Watch a complete shift's trash.** Put separate labeled containers at prep, cooking, and dishwashing stations. Record what gets discarded and why before emptying them.
- **Put a dollar value on discarded food.** Start with your ten most expensive ingredients. Fix the biggest financial losses first.
- **Ask employees what they throw away repeatedly.** Cooks and dishwashers often know the problem already. Make honest reporting useful, not punishable.
- **Weigh selected delivered products.** Check actual net weight against the billed amount, accounting for packaging. Investigate recurring shortages.
- **Inspect produce below the top layer.** Open cases and check the bottom for crushed, moldy, or deteriorating product before accepting them.
- **Check the bottom of all "empty" sauce buckets.** Scrape out what remains and weigh it. You may be throwing away several usable portions. For example, check sauce containers, sour cream tubs, and ranch containers,
- **Audit automatic takeout extras.** Stop putting large handfuls of condiments in every bag. Provide an appropriate quantity based on the order and guest preference.
- **Reward the best waste discovery.** Recognize employees who expose a recurring loss and help fix it. Rewarding low-reported waste alone can encourage people to hide it.
- **Hold a portion guessing contest.** Have employees serve what they think is the correct portion, then weigh each one. Use the results for friendly coaching.
- **Put a price on the waste bucket.** Show employees the ingredient cost of one shift's discarded food. Dollars make the problem easier to understand.
- **Check the scoop, not just the cook.** An oversized scoop can make every employee consistently serve too much.
- **Buy ugly ingredients for invisible jobs.** Sound, irregular produce may work perfectly in purées or sauces. Compare its usable yield and prep time.
- **Compare two cooks' trim piles.** Have each prepare the same quantity of produce. Differences can reveal an easy training opportunity.



Beyond the Menu

Fresh marketing ideas to help your business stand out, connect and grow.

Social Media

LET YOUR CUSTOMERS SETTLE IT

Ranch or blue cheese? Crispy fries or soft fries? Pineapple on pizza—yes or absolutely not?

Pick a friendly food debate that fits your menu. Post a photo with this caption: “We’re settling this today: [Option A] or [Option B]? Pick your side in the comments!”

Reply with personality, then share the winning choice the next day. Keep it simple—you’re starting a conversation, not making a sales pitch.



Bring 'Em Back

PUT A COMEBACK CARD IN THE BAG

Give customers a small card with their receipt or takeout order: “Dinner’s covered next Tuesday. Bring this card back for a free side with any entrée.”

Choose a slower day, an affordable item, and a clear expiration date. Include any limits on the card so the offer is easy for customers and staff to understand.

Collect the cards when redeemed to see how many return visits the offer brings in.

Guerrilla Marketing



TAKE YOUR LUNCH FOR A WALK

Make an oversized cardboard version of your signature burger, pizza slice, or taco. Add your restaurant’s name and a simple message: “Your lunch is two blocks away.”

Have a willing team member carry it through a nearby area during lunch hour, where permitted. Make it fun enough that people stop, laugh, and take a picture.

The goal: turn a homemade prop into a walking conversation starter.

SEPTEMBER OPPORTUNITY

FOOTBALL SEASON IS HERE



GAME-DAY FAMILY PACKS

Offer a family-sized takeout package for the hours before kickoff.

PICK-THE-SCORE

Invite social predictions for a gift-card prize.

LIMITED ITEMS

Create a seasonal burger, pizza, shake or wing sauce.

TEXT BEFORE THE GAME

Use an opt-in list while guests are still deciding.

WEAR YOUR TEAM COLORS

Invite customers to wear their team’s colors on game day. Anyone dressed for the game receives a free drink or small side with an entrée purchase. Take photos—with permission—and share them on social media

HUMOR & FACTS

- What do you call a fake noodle?
An impasta.

FACT

- A Michelin star comes from the same Michelin company that makes tires.

- What did the waiter say to the rude lemon?
You're being very sour.

FACT

- Background music can affect how quickly customers eat.

Back Of The House

A FEW THOUGHTS FROM JASON

If you've been in the restaurant business for any length of time, you already know how quickly a day can get away from you.

You walk through the door with a plan, and before long you're dealing with a late delivery, a call-off, an equipment problem, and three other things you never saw coming. Meanwhile, the smaller issues—the ones quietly costing you money—are easy to miss.

That's why I wanted to start Behind The Ticket.

After more than 20 years in and around restaurants, I've learned that improving a business usually isn't about discovering one giant solution. More often, it's about noticing the small things: food being overportioned, products being overordered, an expense that hasn't been reviewed, or a slow night that needs a better idea.

My goal each month is simple: share a few practical ideas that independent restaurant and food truck owners can actually use.

If one idea helps you save money, bring in a few more customers, or make the week run a little smoother, then this newsletter has done its job.

— Jason



Think you have the best rate?

Great, let's verify.

THE FULL-FEATURED RESTAURANT POS THAT'S ACTUALLY FREE.

Built in a working restaurant—not a boardroom. Cobblestone POS gives you one connected system for running your restaurant. The register, **branded online ordering, kitchen displays, delivery management, inventory, employee scheduling, loyalty, marketing, digital menu boards, real-time reporting and more** are included for \$0 per month.

NO MONTHLY SOFTWARE FEES

NO LONG-TERM CONTRACTS

UNLIMITED TERMINALS

SETUP INCLUDED

MEET DAISY, YOUR BUILT-IN AI ASSISTANT

Daisy helps with the work that follows you home. Ask her to create marketing campaigns, prepare social posts, build schedules, monitor inventory, identify overstaffing, or explain your sales in plain English—all without another subscription or separate app.

TURN WALK-INS INTO REGULARS

Cobblestone Perks lets customers earn points in-store or online, redeem rewards at checkout, and receive automatic text and email updates. It's fully connected to your customer records, marketing, and reporting.

HOW CAN IT BE FREE?

Cobblestone earns a small margin when payments are processed through DaisyPay. You receive straightforward payment processing and a complete restaurant-management system without another monthly software bill.

Think you already have a great rate? Let's verify it. On **\$50,000** in monthly card sales, a half-percentage-point reduction could save approximately **\$3,000 per year.***

LET'S REVIEW YOUR STATEMENT—FREE.

We'll explain what you're currently paying and show you what Cobblestone could provide. No pressure and no obligation.

You earned it. Keep more of it.

COBBLESTONE RESTAURANT SOLUTIONS
cobblestonepos.com | 812-205-3322

*Estimated savings assume unchanged sales volume and other fees. Actual savings will vary.



The graphic features the Cobblestone Restaurant Solutions logo at the top left, which includes a stylized 'C' inside a semi-circle. Below the logo is the text 'COBBLESTONE — RESTAURANT SOLUTIONS —'. To the right of the logo is a photograph of a restaurant interior with a digital menu board displaying various food items and prices. The main headline reads 'You earned it. Keep more of it.' in a large, bold font. Below this, a paragraph asks 'When did you last review your credit card processing? Check it every year.' and states 'On \$50,000 in monthly card sales, a half-point lower rate could save \$3,000 a year. A full point could save \$6,000.' At the bottom left, there is an icon of a computer monitor and the text 'FREE POS' in large, bold letters, followed by 'Online ordering, delivery management, inventory, scheduling & more—all included.' To the right of this is an icon of a gift box. At the very bottom, a yellow button with a right-pointing arrow contains the text 'Let's review your statement for FREE.' Below the button, in small text, it says 'Savings assume unchanged sales and other fees. Actual savings vary.'

COBBLESTONE
— RESTAURANT SOLUTIONS —

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Keep more of it.**

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