

## **FINAL CLIENT REPORT**

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# **SIMPLY SOULFUL CAFE**



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## **Simply Soulful Cafe**

Lillian Rambus  
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Dear Ms. Rambus,

Our team has completed the deliverables written in our contract. The following client report details the deliverables from our three work areas. This report includes an internal and external analysis of Simply Soulful Cafe's current situation, along with our recommendations of operational improvements to support Simply Soulful Cafe's expansion and new commissary kitchen business. Our student team and advisors believe that these recommendations will improve the internal management and result in a better workflow for both Simply Soulful Cafe and the commissary kitchen.

Thank you for allowing our student team to work with you and learn more about the food industry through Simply Soulful Cafe's collaboration. We have learned a lot from your experience, and we appreciate you giving us your time every week for meetings and site visits for the past few months. We wish you the best of luck and hope to hear about the future success of Simply Soulful Cafe and the new commissary kitchen business.

Sincerely,

The Student Consulting Team:

Alta Tung, Cydney Tokuhara, Ekin Njotoatmodjo, Sunbin Heo, Tammy Ng

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Simply Soulful Cafe is a Black and woman-owned restaurant that provides a variety of Southern Soul food. Currently located at 2909-B E Madison St, Simply Soulful Cafe is relocating to the main street of the 23rd Ave and Jackson St and renovating the old location into a prep kitchen and renting it out as a commissary kitchen. Simply Soulful Cafe has expressed struggles in internal management and is concerned that Simply Soulful Cafe lacks the knowledge and infrastructure to expand.

Through site visits, employee interviews, Clover sales representative interviews, and secondary industry research, the student team has determined the most important internal and external factors currently affecting Simply Soulful Cafe and the new commissary kitchen business.

Internal: The team found concerns with Simply Soulful Cafe's lack of an inventory management system, internal communication, as well as financial documentation. We also found concern for the commissary kitchen as Simply Soulful Cafe is unfamiliar with booking systems that customers can use for reservations.

External: The main factors concerning Simply Soulful Cafe are global supply chain disruption that makes it difficult for the client to obtain some ingredients. In addition, the rising inflation rate contributes to the rise of ingredients costs.

The student team's recommendation for effective inventory management and employee communication revolves around four steps:

- Leveraging the current POS system by implementing Clover apps such as Mission Control and Cojilio

- Contacting Tabor100 to obtain detailed financial documents
- Working with Performance Foodservice for a consistent ingredient delivery schedule
- Creating a seasonal menu while streamlining under-performing menu for easy coordination with the cafe's inventory supplies

The team is optimistic that implementing these recommendations will help Simply Soulful Cafe establish inventory management efficiency, communication excellence, and financial accountability following the relocation.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PROJECT OVERVIEW</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>CLIENT OVERVIEW</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>BUSINESS CHALLENGE</b>	<b>9</b>
Purpose and Scope	9
Problems and Opportunities	9
<b>DELIVERABLES</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>WORK AREA #1: RESEARCH ANALYSIS</b>	<b>12</b>
Description of Work Area	12
External Analysis	12
PESTLE (Appendix 1.1)	12
Economic	13
Sociocultural	13
Porter's Five Forces (Appendix 1.2)	14
Barriers To Entry	14
Competitors	14
Substitutes	15
Buyer Bargaining Power	15
Seller Bargaining Power	15
Competitor Analysis	15
Simply Soulful Cafe	15
Commissary Kitchen	16
Internal Analysis	16
Resource Management Analysis	16
SWOT Analysis (Appendix 1.5)	18
Simply Soulful Cafe	18
Strengths	18

Weaknesses	19
Opportunities	21
Threats	22
Commissary Kitchen	23
Strengths	23
Weaknesses	23
Opportunities	23
Threats	23
Financial Analysis	24
Online Presence Assessment	25
Cybersecurity Assessment	26
Software Updates	26
Passwords	27
Data	27
Social Media	27
General	27
WORK AREA #2: Cafe Operational Management Refinement	28
Description of Work Area	28
Research Methodology	28
Recommendations (Appendix 2.1)	29
1. Increase Clover POS use through Clover App Market	29
KPI: Decreased Inventory Stockout Rates	31
2. Engage with free financial advising service	32
KPI: Higher Net Profit Margin	34
3. Engage with a reliable distributor to create a consistent schedule on ingredients delivery	34
KPI: Decreased Inventory Stockout Rate	36
KPI: Lower Unit Price Per Ingredients	36
4. Identify best sellers and offer seasonal food items for easier supply coordination	36
KPI: Increase Customer Retention Rate and Customer Acquisition Rate	37
<b>WORK AREA #3: Commissary Kitchen Management</b>	<b>38</b>
Description of Work Area	38
Research Methodology	38

Recommendations	39
Commissary Kitchen Booking System	39
KPI: Increase in Customer Acquisition Rate and Customer Retention Rate	40
<b>IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE</b>	<b>41</b>
90-Day Plan (Appendix 3.2)	41
Clover Kiosk: Mission Control	41
Financial Advising Consultation: Tabor 100	41
Distributor: Performance Food Service	41
180-Day Plan (Appendix 3.3)	42
Streamline and Cut-Down Underperforming Menu Items	42
Seasonal Menu Planning	42
Quarterly Financial Comparison and Growth Analysis	42
Update Demand Forecast to Distributor	43
1-Year Plan (Appendix 3.4)	43
Clover Kiosk: Cojilio	43
Open Commissary Kitchen	43
Quarterly Financial Report Analysis, Fiscal Year Report, and Growth Analysis	44
Calculate Seasonal Factor and Re-Update Demand Forecast to Distributor	44
Potential Permanent Menu	44
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>47</b>
1.1 PESTLE Analysis	47
Political	47
Economic	47
Sociocultural	48
Technology	49
Legal	49
Environmental	50
1.2 Porter's Five Forces	50
Barriers To Entry	50
Competitors	50
Substitutes	51

Buyer Bargaining Power	51
Seller Bargaining Power	51
1.3 Competitor Analysis	51
1.4 Commissary Kitchen Rental Prices	52
1.5 SWOT Analysis	52
2.1 Recommendation Hierarchy Diagram	54
2.2 Financial Advising Topics	54
3.1 Overall Implementation Plan	54
3.2 90-Day Plan Details	55
3.3 180-Day Plan Details	55
3.4 1-Year Plan Details	56
<b><u>WORKS CITED</u></b>	<b>57</b>

# Simply Soulful Cafe Final Client Report

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

### CLIENT OVERVIEW

Simply Soulful Cafe is a Black and women-owned restaurant that aims to provide a Southern experience and outstanding food to its customers. The business was founded in 2014 by Barbara Collins and is now managed and operated by Lillian Rambus.

#### **Vision**

Simply Soulful Cafe's vision is to be recognized by its customers and critics as an exceptional, Black-owned Soul food business.

#### **Core Values**

According to Simply Soulful Cafe's employee handbook, Simply Soulful Cafe's core values are:

- Respect One Another
- Provide Exemplary Service
- Expert Quality Food
- Trust and Honesty
- A Courteous and Friendly Environment

Simply Soulful Cafe's mission is to maintain happy employees and satisfied customers; Simply Soulful Cafe is more family-oriented than a business. Currently, Simply Soulful Cafe targets customers of all demographics, but the majority of its customers are African-American. Simply

Soulful Cafe earns its revenue through food and drinks served at the cafe (both onsite dining and online delivery), as well as wholesale pies sent to farmer's markets.

## BUSINESS CHALLENGE

### **Purpose and Scope**

Simply Soulful Cafe will be moving from the current location on 2909-B E Madison St to 23rd Ave and Jackson St, which is about twice bigger than the previous location, and in the middle of a historically black neighborhood street. The current location will be renovated into a commissary kitchen, where other food businesses will be able to make food items without needing to own their own space, as well as being used as a prep kitchen for the restaurant. Following the restaurant's relocation, Simply Soulful Cafe is looking to improve its internal management operations, including inventory management, kitchen efficiency, and communication. Simply Soulful Cafe is specifically looking for strategies that utilize Clover, which is the current point-of-sale system. By leveraging Clover and its applications, Simply Soulful Cafe wants to be able to keep track of its inventory while keeping both the prep kitchen and the restaurant on the same page.

The key question is: what operational improvements can we implement to support Simply Soulful Cafe expansion and the new commissary kitchen business?

### **Problems and Opportunities**

Simply Soulful Cafe is prone to inventory stockouts, due to miscommunication along with fluctuations in food costs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which makes it difficult to predict

what inventory is needed for the week. Simply Soulful Cafe also has difficulty keeping track of expenses, which makes it tough to identify how costs are impacting profitability.

The opportunities that we addressed in this project are based around Simply Soulful Cafe's expansion and making sure that the business is prepared to handle the amount of incoming traffic along with the amount of maintenance that comes with expansion. Our team primarily looked into how restaurants of similar sizes manage their business and customer acquisition strategies. By researching the restaurant industry, we hope that Simply Soulful Cafe can be more efficient than and competitive with peers and can scale up smoothly. Our customer acquisition strategies will allow Simply Soulful Cafe to maintain the high demand that comes with a brand new location as well as to grow its regular customer base.

## DELIVERABLES

The deliverables developed during the duration of this project are as follows:

1. Work Area #1
  - a. External Analysis (PESTLE, Porter's 5 Forces, Competitors)
  - b. Internal Analysis and SWOT Analysis
  - c. Financial Analysis
  - d. Online Presence Assessment
  - e. Cybersecurity Assessment
2. Work Area #2
  - a. Internal Management Recommendations
    - i. Inventory Management Plan
    - ii. Internal Communication Recommendations

- iii. Financial Analysis Opportunities

- 3. Work Area #3

- a. Commissary Kitchen Internal Use

- i. Communication Recommendations

- ii. Booking System Recommendations

# **RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **WORK AREA #1: RESEARCH ANALYSIS**

### **Description of Work Area**

The goal of Work Area #1 is to analyze the business issues/opportunities and internal factors that affect Simply Soulful Cafe. In order to accomplish this, we analyzed the business's strategy by examining Simply Soulful Cafe's vision and mission, completing a full industry analysis, analyzing Simply Soulful Cafe's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and analyzing financial statements. To gain a full-scale understanding of the external environment, we also conducted additional research on the food and beverage industry as a whole based on the current situation with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

### **External Analysis**

We completed an industry-wide analysis of competitive factors and trends. Through our PESTLE analysis and Porter's Five Forces analysis of the restaurant industry, we can understand the external factors that affect Simply Soulful Cafe.

#### **PESTLE (Appendix 1.1)**

The analysis of the external business environment guides us to the most important influences and key findings that affect the food industry and impact Simply Soulful Cafe's expansion. The main takeaway from our PESTLE analysis is that there are sales growth opportunities for Simply Soulful Cafe in the future as the pandemic recovers. Mitigation measures should be taken into

account as Simply Soulful Cafe expands to mitigate food inflation and avoid ingredient shortages.

### *Economic*

The USDA has projected a 3.5-4.5% increase in food prices for the year 2022 (Trading Economics, US Department of Agriculture). This has a direct effect on the restaurant business, leading to an increase in ingredient prices. As the pandemic subsides with mandates lifting, the National Restaurant Association projects a phenomenon called the “post-pandemic boom,” which may see a 19.7% increase in sales and customer traffic for the restaurant industry (National Restaurant Association, Food Technology Magazine). During the height of the pandemic, the food industry experienced the effects of global supply chain issues, especially ingredient shortages. The cost of goods obtained during shortages is also significantly more expensive than normal times.

### *Sociocultural*

According to a study conducted by OnePoll and Eventbrite, 60% of Americans responded that they would wait in a long line for food to try something new (New York Post, 2022). Seasonal menus create exclusivity and curiosity, and it would attract people to come to Simply Soulful Cafe and bring more people to the restaurant. In addition, following the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, many consumers have expressed support for local and minority-owned businesses in order to help more people achieve greater economic and social mobility.

### *Porter's Five Forces (Appendix 1.2)*

We conducted an analysis of Porter's Five Forces to get an understanding of the opportunities and threats surrounding Simply Soulful Cafe. The main takeaway from our analysis is that Simply Soulful Cafe needs to create operational efficiency similar to surrounding competitors by communicating via Clover kiosks, implementing an easy booking system for the commissary kitchen, and working with a food distributor to successfully expand Simply Soulful Cafe and open up the new commissary kitchen business. What our observations mean for Simply Soulful Cafe is that Simply Soulful Cafe will have to be unique and perform better than other restaurants in terms of food quality and service to beat the competition and drive traffic to the restaurant.

### *Barriers To Entry*

In comparison to other industries, the restaurant business has comparatively low and few entry barriers. In certain locations, the entry barriers depend on foot traffic and consumer demographics, making it slightly difficult to enter the industry when competitors have already established their presence.

### *Competitors*

Competition is fierce and high in the food industry as there are a large variety of restaurants in Seattle. Competition for commissary kitchens is moderate compared to restaurant businesses as there are only a few commissary kitchen rental spaces available with professional kitchen equipment.

### *Substitutes*

There is a high threat of substitutes in the restaurant industry as customer preferences tend to shift over time and there is an abundance of restaurants in the Greater Seattle area.

### *Buyer Bargaining Power*

The overall trend in the restaurant industry shows a high buyer's bargaining power. With an abundance of restaurants and substitutes, customers are rather sensitive to price changes, which means that they have the ability to influence restaurants to keep prices low.

### *Seller Bargaining Power*

The restaurant industry has low bargaining power as restaurants can't determine their prices freely due to their buyers and suppliers. A change in price will heavily affect the demand in a business environment where there is a lot of competition.

### *Competitor Analysis*

#### *Simply Soulful Cafe*

We conducted an analysis of Simply Soulful Cafe's competitors (Jackson's Catfish Corners, Angel City and Deli, Fish Guys, and Oaky's Tex-Mex) to gain an understanding of potential opportunities and differentiation for Simply Soulful Cafe going forward (**Appendix 1.3**). Restaurants in the Seattle area face an increasingly competitive landscape. With the booming trend of new restaurants opening, owners need to create competitive advantages with both their recipe offerings and restaurant atmosphere. In terms of pricing, Simply Soulful Cafe has a competitive sales price relative to similar restaurants. Nevertheless, Simply Soulful Cafe needs to

further create operational efficiency to better serve customers in a fast-casual dining experience that has become a staple of the modern restaurant business model.

### *Commissary Kitchen*

We conducted an analysis of similar commissary kitchen businesses around Seattle. The largest competitor in the commissary kitchen industry is the Seattle Commissary Kitchen. That being said, more people are interested in renting a commissary kitchen that expands our client's commissary kitchen business. The competitor's analysis for the commissary kitchen is conducted in order to gain an understanding of potential opportunities to model the Simply Soulful Cafe commissary kitchen. Our main takeaway from this analysis is that a commissary kitchen is a business idea that is experiencing a high growth trajectory complementary to rising online-food industries. Since the target market of commissary kitchens are primarily food entrepreneurs, the price for commissary kitchens is highly sensitive for future clients (**Appendix 1.4**). Fierce competition in the commissary kitchen industry is attributed to two factors: cheap rental prices to maintain low fixed costs and professional kitchen equipment.

## **Internal Analysis**

### *A. Resource Management Analysis*

#### **I. Tangible**

##### **a) Financial Resources**

Simply Soulful Cafe has received grants from Vulcan Inc. and the government under the COVID-19 relief strategy throughout the pandemic to support the operation of the business and renovation of the new location.

b) Physical Resources

Simply Soulful Cafe expansion to the 23rd Ave and Jackson St relocates the business to a strategic location that is exposed to greater market and accessibility. The cafe has also invested in new kitchenware that should better support operations.

c) Technological Resources

Simply Soulful Cafe utilizes Clover as the POS management system. The Clover system has helped management for recording transactions and financial reports. The Clover system can also provide insights into customer demographics and high-performing products. The restaurant also has a website that serves as a marketing medium to post the menu along with the capability to order from delivery services. In addition, Simply Soulful Cafe also has several social media to support operational and marketing functions such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, etc.

d) Brand Trademark

The brand logo for Simply Soulful Cafe has been registered for trademark. The trademark means the logo cannot be used by others for commercial purposes and stops potential issues from happening.

e) Recipes

Simply Soulful Cafe has been using family recipes for the food. The recipes define the competitive advantages of its food relative to others.

II. Intangible

a) Human Capital

Simply Soulful Cafe is a family-owned, black-run business. There are six employees: two co-owners and four full-time workers. All team members are aligned in one goal of sharing an authentic Southern Soul food experience in Seattle.

b) Goodwill/Reputation

Simply Soulful Cafe has a good reputation, uplifting the community with a vision to help represent the African-American community as a minority business. This can be seen through articles showcasing Simply Soulful Cafe as a Black and woman-owned business (Guo, 2021). Simply Soulful Cafe was offered a lease of the new location at 23rd Ave and Jackson St in the main district of the community due to its values and food.

*B. SWOT Analysis (Appendix 1.5)*

SWOT was done for both the restaurant and commissary kitchen based on primary and secondary research.

*Simply Soulful Cafe*

*Strengths*

*(1) High brand value as a goodwill restaurant*

The Simply Soulful Cafe brand possesses goodwill among the community. Trust and reliability are two factors that contribute to the brand's ability to gain substantial grants and investment from Vulcan Real Estate to fund the expansion

to 23rd Ave and Jackson St.

*(2) High level of customer loyalty*

From Simply Soulful Cafe's Clover POS system, the sales transaction history shows that the same customers come back frequently, around once or twice per week. This means that customer loyalty is a strength for Simply Soulful Cafe; Simply Soulful Cafe should continue maintaining customer loyalty by providing outstanding food service.

*(3) Strong unique southern (localized) taste*

While the Seattle Area is known for a huge variety of restaurant choices, there is a lack of authentic Soul food restaurants. Simply Soulful Cafe is one of the small numbers of restaurants that provides a strong Soul food presence in the Seattle Greater Area.

*(4) High rating on Yelp: 4.5/5 in comparison to direct competitors*

Simply Soulful Cafe is one of the best-rated restaurants on Yelp. Having a 4.5/5 star rating with more than 200 reviews gives them an advantage over other similar restaurants that only have an average of 3.5/5 rating with only 30-50 reviews (Yelp, 2022). This helps the restaurant build attraction as trends in 2022 show that people tend to choose restaurants that have better reviews (Mintel, 2022).

*Weaknesses*

*(1) Inventory and Supply Chain Vulnerabilities*

The research has shown a lack of supply chain planning as well as a lack of demand forecasting. These challenges are highlighted by an inventory system that keeps no safety stocks, without accounting for any supply chain lead time and

delivery period. The kitchen also possesses inadequate physical resources to store safety stocks, with a lack of kitchen storage and space. This system generates frequent inventory stockouts. The main weakness of the current inventory and supply chain management lies in a system that cannot handle demand variances, such as inflation and global supply chain issues.

*(2) Inefficient Restaurant Management*

Primary research of site visits and owner/employee interviews has shown that Simply Soulful Cafe is unable to keep up with demand, caused by a lack of storage and short business hours. The cafe operates with a late opening time (10 AM on Sat-Sun & 12 PM) on Thurs-Fri and early closing hours (5 PM on Sat-Sun & 7 PM on Thurs-Fri). The short opening hours cut down the potential revenue streams that the business can get.

*(3) Poor Internal Communication*

Internal communication is key to a smooth and fast service experience. However, Simply Soulful Cafe lacks communication in the ingredient ordering process along with inventory outages. The current system is a whiteboard where each employee writes down what is missing, hence employees are often unaware of the stock of crucial ingredients, which affects customer orders.

*(4) Slow Customer Service*

According to reviews from Yelp, employee interviews, and site visits, Simply Soulful Cafe lacks a consistent food service time. There are complaints about the long food service which is a result of poor communication, inventory problems, and inefficient workflow.

*(5) Limited Menu Options*

With the increasing trend of conscious and healthy eating, food variety is key to being able to accommodate diverse customers (Mintel, 2022). However, Simply Soulful Cafe's current menu lacks vegetarian options, food allergies warnings, and food that accommodates other dietary restrictions.

*(6) Uses non-sustainable utensils*

The trend in 2022 shows that customers have grown more eco-friendly and Simply Soulful Cafe still needs to adapt to the use of sustainable food packaging.

*(7) Lack of Social Media Presence*

According to Mintel's 2022 Consumer Trends in the Food and Drink Industry, Social Media plays a number one role in marketing strategy. With Simply Soulful Cafe's low social media engagement (ex. months between Instagram posts), the restaurant lacks the attraction of new customers outside of the restaurant's current customers.

*Opportunities*

*(1) Higher customer volume in the new location*

In moving to 23rd Ave and Jackson St, Simply Soulful Cafe stands in the main street of Central District which is considered to be the most crowded area and is located in the middle of a historically black neighborhood street. With more people and a strategic location, there will be more attraction towards the restaurant.

*(2) Increase demand to experience food and something new; Rebirth of Dining-In*

According to Mintel's 2022 Consumer Trends in Food and Drink Industry, the

aftermath of COVID-19 and dining at home this past year had consumers wanting to experience more out-of-home dining experiences. The shift in consumer preferences for restaurants should subsequently increase the demand for the 2022 fiscal year.

*(3) Increase demand in food e-commerce*

The rise of e-commerce platforms and delivery services has also shifted buyer's consumption patterns. According to research by Upserve, the growth rate for online food ordering and restaurant delivery has steadily hovered around 20% for each of the last five years. In addition, the delivery revenue is expected to grow to more than \$220 billion by 2025-- around 40% of total restaurant sales.

*(4) The rise of demand for fast-casual food service*

The growing demographic of young professionals has also shaped the consumer preference for fast and casual foodservice compared to the conventional dining system. Simply Soulful Cafe is in the process of switching restaurant locations and wants to focus on a shift to fast-casual experience with the transition.

*Threats*

*(1) Different cultural trends and food preferences in the new location*

While the location in 23rd Ave and Jackson St has been known as a black community, there are a variety of cultures that shape consumer preferences. The existence of many restaurants with different cuisines might take away the market share that Simply Soulful Cafe had prior to the expansion.

*(2) Rising costs: Rent hikes above 7.5%, workers' salaries, ingredients expenses*

Moving to a more exclusive location means an increase in rent cost. The new

location will employ more capital in kitchen sets and equipment, increasing the fixed cost of operating the business as a whole. Simply Soulful is planning to add more staff to support the expansion; which subsequently increases variable costs.

*(3) Competitors have already established a position in the new location*

In addition, the location in the 23rd Ave and Jackson St neighborhood has been populated with establishments. As such, these establishments have a “first-mover advantage” over Simply Soulful Cafe.

### *Commissary Kitchen*

#### *Strengths*

Simply Soulful Cafe’s commissary kitchen already has a set of spaces that can be rented out to small businesses, and Simply Soulful Cafe is trying to uplift the local community while pricing lower than other commissary kitchens.

#### *Weaknesses*

Simply Soulful Cafe's kitchen has inadequate kitchenware and equipment to support various cooking needs for possible customers who want to rent it out. Simply Soulful Cafe has no previous experience in running a commissary kitchen rental service, and there is no certain system in place to rent it out to customers. There is a lack of differentiation from other kitchens, which have various cooking tools for the commissary kitchen. There is also the uncertainty of the demand of renting out the kitchen for Simply Soulful Cafe’s constant income.

#### *Opportunities*

Commissary kitchens have a growing demand from online food sellers to rent out a kitchen to showcase and sell food. It is more cost-efficient for small food businesses to rent a commissary

kitchen instead of having a retail space. Commissary kitchens save lots of money in rent expenses for small businesses and they do not have to upkeep retail space licenses.

### *Threats*

Since commissary kitchens are mostly a temporary contract-based business, there is a lack of long-term customer retention. Hence, in the absence of regular clients, Simply Soulful Cafe may find difficulty maintaining a stable revenue stream. A lot of time may have to be spent on customer acquisition, which can be tough while operating a restaurant.

## **Financial Analysis**

Based on our financial analysis, the cafe operates on a loss projection, due to an increase in expenditures in preparation for the expansion and an issue with inventory management as a result of the pandemic's unpredictable demand. Simply Soulful Cafe spends the most on wholesalers like Costco, and grocery stores like Safeway, according to its bank account from 2021. This is a variable expense that can be reduced because Simply Soulful Cafe spends more months than others due to inaccurate estimates.

We see a bright future for Simply Soulful Cafe with the comeback of the restaurant business post-pandemic and the opening of the new location. According to projections, Simply Soulful Cafe's revenue will double after a year of operation, while expenses will grow by 30%. Given the limited record of the balance sheet and no additional information regarding the restaurant's assets, liabilities, and equities, we anticipated that the post-pandemic scenario would be similar to the pre-pandemic projection because that is the "normal" situation of a restaurant business. In addition, the gross profit margin ratio is predicted to rise 70%, which is considered a healthy ratio for many types of businesses including restaurants.

Nevertheless, due to unnecessary spending resulting from inefficient inventory management, Simply Soulful Cafe's projected financials show that the business has low net profit and occasional losses on a monthly basis. We hope Simply Soulful Cafe to cut down unnecessary costs through our internal management recommendations as it relocates and expands to the new location, which would result in increased sales and net profit.

### **Online Presence Assessment**

Simply Soulful Cafe's online presence lies in three main parts: its website, delivery services (GrubHub, DoorDash), and social media (Yelp, Instagram, Facebook).

Simply Soulful Cafe's website is regularly updated and is mobile-friendly. The website focuses on promoting online orders through a food gallery, contact information, and ordering function. The order page is integrated with DoorDash, automatically updating Simply Soulful Cafe's availability, with online orders transferring directly to DoorDash.

Simply Soulful Cafe's presence on Yelp, Grubhub, and Doordash is well managed, with regular updates and feedback from customers. This is the cafe's main strength regarding its online presence, as potential customers are easily influenced by the feedback and score the restaurant gets from previous customers. A comparison between Simply Soulful Cafe and its direct competitor Jackson's Catfish Corner can be seen in **Table 1.1**. From the table, we gather that while reviews are quite similar, Simply Soulful Cafe has a competitive advantage against the competitor in providing delivery services to customers.

**Table 1.1: Yelp and DoorDash Comparison**

Sites	Simply Soulful Cafe	Jackson's Catfish Corner
Yelp	4.5/5 Stars (339 reviews)	4.5/5 Stars (39 reviews)
DoorDash	4.6/5 stars (496 reviews)	No food delivery services

On the other hand, Simply Soulful Cafe still lacks social media presence in comparison to its competitors. As of March 1st, 2022, Simply Soulful Cafe's Instagram profile is no longer on the platform. Jackson's Catfish Corner Instagram profile has around 11.7k followers with an average engagement rate of 10% on their posts. Simply Soulful Cafe's Facebook page with 3.8k followers, 3.7k likes, and 2.6k having visited the restaurant. As of writing, Simply Soulful Cafe's last update on Facebook was in February 2022.

Simply Soulful Cafe's online presence is competent, but the restaurant has a lot of room to grow in this department. Simply Soulful Cafe's online presence can be increased through being more active on Instagram and Facebook. Utilizing these platforms will allow Simply Soulful Cafe to acquire new customers who primarily use social media to make decisions for what to eat. Simply Soulful Cafe will be able to reach an audience that has not been introduced to the restaurant to reach its maximum potential.

## **Cybersecurity Assessment**

### *Software Updates*

The laptops' operating systems and browsers are not updated to the most current version. Network routers are regularly updated, as everything is handled by Comcast. Simply Soulful Cafe does not have any endpoint protection and is not using a verified cloud provider.

### *Passwords*

Every device has a password, and each password is individual to each person, so the client is not aware of the strength of each password. Passwords are not being shared, and two-factor authentication is being used in Clover.

### *Data*

Simply Soulful Cafe does not keep sensitive information. There has never been a data breach, and the business does not have a plan of action for breaches. The website is linked to Clover, but there are no Terms of Use policies that users agree to. The business does collect info only for people who are subscribed to Simply Soulful Cafe's newsletter, which is not currently sent out. Simply Soulful Cafe is unsure if this data is backed up.

### *Social Media*

Simply Soulful Cafe has Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. There are no policies that govern or train employees, as only two employees have access. All social media sites link to a named company email. Financial information is not collected, as although you can order food through the website, it is all done through DoorDash. There is no personal information on any site.

### *General*

Simply Soulful Cafe does not have an accurate inventory of IT assets and does not have an IT administrator. New employees are not trained in IT and there is no plan in case of a hack.

## WORK AREA #2: Cafe Operational Management Refinement

### **Description of Work Area**

The goal of this work area is to leverage the current system in managing inventory, people, and internal documents for the new location. We conducted a preliminary assessment of the existing operation management system from the ordering system, inventory management system, check-out procedures, and kitchen workflow. We have also analyzed Simply Soulful Cafe's Clover account, a POS platform that the client has been using to record transactions and orders. The existing instrument and framework became the base for our recommendations-- which we try to upgrade and build up from to better support the café operations; particularly post the expansion plan.

### **Research Methodology**

The research aims to dissect the root cause of the operational management inefficiencies in the cafe. To do so, we utilize qualitative research methods to gain an in-depth understanding of the Clover System and the existing applications that can be used to support the basic function. While the cafe does not possess consolidated financial statements, we managed to get hold of the Profit-Loss Statement over the past few years and also the expansion projection made by Simply Soulful Cafe's accountant. Nevertheless, the restaurant industry has experienced a blowback due to the course of the COVID-19 pandemic such that we are advised to not utilize accounting ratios from the 2019-2021 anomaly period for the decision-making process. In analyzing the financial documents, we had the privilege to conduct informative interviews with Carrie Callaway, a Financial Advisor from KeyBank, and Angelica Doty, a Small Business Development Manager

from Seattle Credit Union. In terms of defining good operations and management systems, we use our external research and competitor analysis. We reached out to several restaurant business owners to ask for insights regarding their overall operational workflow. In addition, we have also visited nearby competitors to compare and contrast business practices with the current system that Simply Soulful Cafe currently employs. The set of observations cement our understanding of the variance of strategies in improving operational excellence in the cafe.

## **Recommendations (Appendix 2.1)**

The recommendations below are listed in order of relevance for Simply Soulful Cafe to address concerns about being unable to meet demand owing to slow internal management with the incoming expansion.

### ***1. Increase Clover POS use through Clover App Market***


Simply Soulful Cafe currently operates under a system with frequent stockouts and is struggling with communication in daily business operations. Due to the current manual reporting system regarding low-inventory ingredients, Simply Soulful Cafe is not optimizing the number of customers served or revenue. As Simply Soulful Cafe relocates to a bigger location, an efficient inventory management system is needed to reach and serve more customers in order to cover the cost of expansion.

Simply Soulful Cafe's current use of Clover isn't being utilized to its full potential. The cafe has only purchased the classic service plan and has not explored the Clover App Market for other Clover Apps. To have one single source of control without implementing a new system and spending time on validating inventory records and data, we recommend Simply Soulful Cafe leverage the Clover POS system by purchasing apps that would result in more efficient inventory

management and enhanced internal communication. This will require Simply Soulful Cafe to acquire another Clover kiosk and put a kiosk in both locations, connecting the two of them together.

One app that will be especially useful in managing Simply Soulful Cafe inventory and enhancing internal communication between the two locations where the company will be operating is the Mission Control app. The Mission Control app provides real-time inventory updates with each sale, as well as a visual representation of sales and inventory information across two locations. We also looked into and analyzed various inventory management apps like Shopventory and Restaurant365, which could be useful in addressing inventory management and internal communication issues. The first step we recommend Simply Soulful Cafe take in regards to this recommendation is to contact Clover sales representatives for step-by-step instructions on information regarding Mission Control. A full comparison of these Clover apps can be seen in **Table 2.1:**

**Table 2.1: Clover Inventory App Comparison**

	 <b>Mission Control</b>	<i>Shopventory</i>	<b>Restaurant365</b>
<b>Price</b>	\$14.99/month, with a \$9.99/month added cost for each added kiosk	Starts at \$79/month	\$289/month and per location
<b>Description</b>	Multi-store management with detailed reporting dashboard	Premium inventory management and business analytics solution for Clover	Complete restaurant management solution

<b>Capabilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-store management with detailed reporting dashboard</li> <li>• Edit inventory, manage employees, view sales analytics</li> <li>• Can make changes with Web version</li> <li>• Use Clover to view inventory locations and receive incoming inventory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical inventory and stock analysis, active/inactive products, recipe and ingredient tracking, scan-to-count cycle times</li> <li>• Barcode scanning smartphone app, multi-location and warehouse controls, bundle and component management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accounting, Inventory, Scheduling, Dashboards &amp; reporting</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Info</b>	RECOMMENDED by Small Business Development Manager from Seattle Credit Union (Angelica Doty)		Need Restaurant365 account to use the app

### *KPI: Decreased Inventory Stockout Rates*

An efficient ordering system, structured inventory management, and supply chain process provided by a better POS system should lead to a decreased inventory stockout rate. The reliable data gathered from the refined POS system should enable the cafe to make a rigid forecasting system that is catered to the real-time observation of customer demands. An increased POS function should also intensify the information flow between the commissary prep kitchen and the restaurant to better communicate materials availability and ingredient demand.

## ***2. Engage with free financial advising service***

Simply Soulful Cafe is currently looking to lower its expenses and wants to cut unnecessary costs. However, Simply Soulful Cafe is currently struggling to identify these costs, due to a lack of readily available and relevant financial information. This information includes a balance sheet, specific data on what costs are incurred, and specific data on what exactly is being purchased for the business. To alleviate these financial stresses, we recommend Simply Soulful Cafe seek one of these financial advising consultation services, all of which are free of charge for the business.



There are many advantages for Simply Soulful Cafe to have a deep financial understanding. The main point Simply Soulful Cafe needs to consider is its expansion. Simply Soulful Cafe is on the precipice of the grand opening, and with scaling up, comes an increased number of all of the previous costs, in addition to new costs associated with relocation, such as marketing expenses and hiring new employees. Multiplying the number of unnecessary costs for the business will amount to lower profits, and for an expanding business, having enough money to keep up with the new demand should be a priority.



Simply Soulful Cafe is hoping to steadily grow with the expansion to 23rd Ave and Jackson St. However, this expansion, if not done carefully, can overwhelm Simply Soulful Cafe with the number of costs that can appear in the future. This can lead to Simply Soulful Cafe wanting to seek financing to help with additional costs. Angelica Doty, the Small Business Development Manager from Seattle Credit Union told our team that financing is the most common venture that small businesses seek to help with expansion, and mentioned that this is something small businesses often forget when thinking about an expansion plan. Simply Soulful Cafe, if needing financing, may find it difficult to secure it without an accurate projection and history of its costs. Banks and financial institutions will want to know what exactly Simply Soulful Cafe needs the

money for, how they will get the money back, and when they will get the money back based on financial projections.

It is important to have these documents ready when the time comes, and Simply Soulful Cafe will always benefit from having a better understanding of the business's financial standing. These financial documents will not only give them the information Simply Soulful Cafe needs to identify costs, but also make sure financing can be secured in the future. We have researched four financial advising consultation services: Tabor 100, SBDC, SCORE, and Genuity B2B. Our recommendation is to contact Tabor 100, which specializes in African-American small businesses, along with having a prior working relationship with Simply Soulful Cafe. We have also included a list of topics Simply Soulful Cafe can dive deeper into when consulting with a financial advisor from the aforementioned services in the appendix (**Appendix 2.2**). A full comparison of these financial advising consulting services can be seen in **Table 2.2**:

**Table 2.2: Financial Advising Consultation Services Comparison**

	Description	Benefits
	Non-profit based out of Tukwila, primarily based around business development for African-American owned businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free of charge</li> <li>• Local organization</li> <li>• African-American focused</li> <li>• Prior relationship with Simply Soulful Cafe</li> <li>• Black Business Equity Fund</li> </ul>
	Washington Small Business Development Center, government agency, network of 30 experts advisors from Washington to help entrepreneurs and small business owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free of charge</li> <li>• Washington based but connected with national organizations</li> <li>• Partner with U.S Small Business Administration (SBA)</li> <li>• Working in tandem with WSU</li> <li>• Advisors usually co-located with economic development specialists from community colleges,</li> </ul>

		economic development agencies
	National network of free small business volunteer mentors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free of charge</li> <li>• Has previously worked with similar businesses in CBDC program</li> <li>• Partner with SBA</li> <li>• Over 10,000 different mentors</li> <li>• Many online resources, webinars, and courses on demand</li> </ul>
	Seattle based consulting firm, customized management solutions that focus on expanding profit margins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seattle based</li> <li>• Is part of the CBDC program with Simply Soulful Cafe</li> <li>• Smaller company, might be more personalized</li> </ul>

*KPI: Higher Net Profit Margin*

With improved financial recording, the client can obtain both descriptive and predictive analysis of the business performance that is supported with data. Information such as expense breakdown, periodical performance tracking, and growth trajectories can be used for the basis of accurate decision making– which can translate to higher profit margins.


### ***3. Engage with a reliable distributor to create a consistent schedule on ingredients delivery***

To improve inventory management and supply chain performance, we recommend Simply Soulful Cafe engage with a reliable distributor. Simply Soulful Cafe is currently experiencing a high frequency of ingredient stockouts. There is currently no rigid workflow and planning in regard to supply chain management. The current system relies on manual record, in which the kitchen staff writes down ingredients on a whiteboard if they are about to run out. There is no designation as to who is in charge of the inventory system– and it relies on observers of the whiteboard to notice which ingredients are running out. The cafe will also find the need to

reduce menu options in times when ingredients are not ordered– which directly affects customer satisfaction and increases shortage costs.

Scheduling a fixed order quantity within a fixed scheduled delivery time should create a discipline in the ordering process, where the cafe will have the capability to define factual demand forecasts, safety stock levels, and reorder quantities. A regular distributor will provide the cafe with better time management, create consistency and reliability, and streamline the inventory management process. We have researched four distributors that Simply Soulful Cafe can connect with: US Foods, Sysco, Gordon Food Service, and Performance Foodservice. Based on the industry-wide analysis, we recommend engaging with Performance Foodservice as a distributor, due to the relatively favorable rate in pricing, quality, and customer service. The next step Simply Soulful Cafe should take is to assign one or two people to lead inventory management and submit the [‘Become a Customer’](#) form on the Performance Foodservice website to contact them. A full comparison of the distributors can be seen in **Table 2.3**:

**Table 2.3: Suppliers Comparison**

				
Product Quality	3.3	3.5	3.8	4
Price	3.7	3.4	3.6	4
Customer Service	3.4	3.5	3.7	4.3

The three indexes below are qualitatively measured out of 5 points taken from company ratings from employees (*Comparably competitors | comparably*). Based on the existing top food suppliers in the United States, we recommend Simply Soulful Cafe to take on Performance Food Service due to better product quality and better price.

#### *KPI: Decreased Inventory Stockout Rate*

Engaging with a distributor creates a discipline in inventory management and supply chain management planning. With a rigid forecasting method, the certainty of delivery order quantities, regular delivery scheduling, and utilization of safety stocks; ideally the probability of stockouts occurring should be reduced.

#### *KPI: Lower Unit Price Per Ingredients*

An efficient, bulk ordering system organized by distribution contracts enables more efficient time and cost management due to better forecasting and wholesale discount. Research shows that bulk-order usually reduces cost by nearly 25% compared to normal retail prices (Consumers Can Save 25% by Shopping in Bulk, but Is It Always Worth It? | MagnifyMoney, 2021). In addition, the cafe can calculate optimal order quantity systems based on the datasets gathered from the POS to further minimize fixed delivery costs.

#### ***4. Identify best sellers and offer seasonal food items for easier supply coordination***

To improve inventory management and supply performance, we recommend Simply Soulful Cafe create seasonal menu items. Based on what menu items have been sold the most, the business should identify and keep top-selling menu items while cutting lower-selling items. It would help the business to have better inventory management based on the inventory of top-selling menu items and reduce inventory costs on lower-selling items. Also, having a seasonal menu would decrease expenses on inventory as ingredients will be cheaper when in season.

People are willing to try new food, especially when it comes to limited-edition menu items, and having a seasonal menu would provoke the interest of new customers. It will also increase

Simply Soulful Cafe's customer retention rate, as when the seasonal menu items change, there will always be a reason for customers to come back and try it out. Creating the seasonal menu would be beneficial not only to solve the problem of inventory management but also to bring new opportunities for the business. Simply Soulful Cafe should identify top-selling items to prepare for the implementation of seasonal menu items.

*KPI: Increase Customer Retention Rate and Customer Acquisition Rate*

The rationale behind making a seasonal menu is aligned to the concept of creating “artificial scarcity”. In short, seasonal products that are time-limited generate curiosity among the consumers, making the menu more appealing to people. Also, for customers who enjoy the food items, the exclusivity generated by the seasonal menu creates a motivation to revisit the cafe. As such, customer retention rate should be the determinant of the recommendation efficacy. The current Clover POS system provides a dataset to examine the customer retention rate. In addition, seasonal menus can be an opportunity to reintroduce new products. If a seasonal menu has a high demand, the cafe should consider adopting it as a permanent product offering.

## WORK AREA #3: Commissary Kitchen Management

### **Description of Work Area**

The goal of this work area is to create an efficient customer booking system and usage for the commissary kitchen. After the expansion, the old location in Madison St will be used as a commissary kitchen that will be rented out on an hourly basis. The commissary kitchen will also be used by Simply Soulful Cafe to prepare food before being delivered to the 23rd Ave and Jackson St location. The purpose of the work area is to establish a workflow and booking system for the commissary kitchen business operation. The scheduling system will support client and insurance verification features. In addition, a digitized system will help block booking time and customer-owner communication.

### **Research Methodology**




In determining the feasibility and structure for the new commissary kitchen business, we performed primary research by conducting a product-knowledge interview of potential clover add-ins applications with Angelica Doty, the Small Business Management Advisor from Seattle Credit Union who had experience in handling Clover for small businesses. We conducted additional research with an aim to compare the various technologies (Clover extensions or apps) to be used as a tool for the commissary kitchen booking system and promotion., we benchmarked commissary kitchen systems by utilizing the public information and consulted with a Clover expert for integration with the current Clover system.

## Recommendations

### Commissary Kitchen Booking System

In opening a new Commissary Kitchen, Simply Soulful Cafe will need to establish a simplified booking system. From our research, we determined the following booking systems, Cojilio, a Simply Soulful Cafe Extension, and the Food Corridor for Simply Soulful Cafe to consider. We recommend using Cojilio as it'll be connected directly to Clover, allows scheduling, mobile payments, and push notifications for clients. In taking this step, Simply Soulful Cafe will need to contact the free Clover sales representative to assist with implementation. A full comparison of the booking systems can be seen in **Table 3.1**:

**Table 3.1: Commissary Kitchen Booking System**

	Description	Benefits
	Booking system typically used for salons and beauty businesses, fully integrated to Clover, with features to make booking more efficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$29 per month</li><li>• Allows for scheduling, mobile payments, push notifications</li><li>• Has a mobile app for iOS and Android for customers to book</li></ul>
 Website Extension	Simply Soulful will have to create an additional part of the running website to offer the commissary kitchen rental.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One website for all businesses, better control</li><li>• Additional promotion of Simply Soulful Cafe</li><li>• Can add any features needed</li><li>• No additional cost other than website extension building</li></ul>
	Cloud-based shared kitchen management software, that helps to handle clients and kitchen schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Features with automated billing, storage unit management, performance metrics, and</li></ul>

	booking on a centralized platform	customizable rates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to gain insights to total revenue, last trends, a number of active clients, booking hours</li> <li>• Price start from \$9 - \$199 per month</li> </ul>
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*KPI: Increase in Customer Acquisition Rate and Customer Retention Rate*

For brand new business ventures, one of the key issues to address is how to generate and retain customers. A successful commissary kitchen business should provide an ease in booking system as well as adequate kitchenware to support the businesses. Installing the application will provide the business with a proper booking system that allows clients to have a seamless experience.

# **IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE**

To see the overall view of the timeline, refer to **Appendix 3.1**.

## **90-Day Plan (Appendix 3.2)**

### *Clover Kiosk: Mission Control*

Simply Soulful Cafe should contact a Clover sales representative for comprehensive information on Mission Control and implementation assistance within the first month. Prior to opening the new location, Simply Soulful Cafe should purchase a new Clover kiosk and have a Clover representative set up Mission Control and connect the two kiosks to one another.

### *Financial Advising Consultation: Tabor 100*

Simply Soulful Cafe should schedule a consultation from Tabor 100 to refine bookkeeping and reporting. At the end of the 3-month of the implementation process, Simply Soulful Cafe should ideally possess refined financial reports: an income statement, a balance sheet, and cash flow statements. The quarterly financial report would provide a descriptive analysis of the cafe's overall performance post the implementation timeframe. In addition, the cafe can also perform a monthly ratio analysis over the three months to get an insight into the growth trajectory.

### *Distributor: Performance Food Service*

Simply Soulful Cafe should begin reaching out to Performance Foodservice to discuss the beginning steps of the partnership within the first 90 days. Simply Soulful Cafe should execute a contract with Performance Foodservice and provide a demand forecast based on the assumptions

of increased sales revenue in the new location, as well as look into Clover's past sales transactions to arrange ingredient deliveries.

### **180-Day Plan (Appendix 3.3)**

#### *Streamline and Cut-Down Underperforming Menu Items*

Simply Soulful Cafe has to identify top and low selling menu items based on Clover data and keep top-selling menu items while cutting down underperforming menu items. It is more efficient for Simply Soulful Cafe to coordinate with best-selling menu items which are the main revenue source. Cutting underperforming menu items also helps with lowering inventory waste and saves money on non-best seller ingredients that Simply Soulful Cafe does not use often.

#### *Seasonal Menu Planning*

After the first 180 days, once Simply Soulful Cafe begins to familiarize itself with expansion, the restaurant should begin crafting seasonal menus and figuring out the variations of seasonal menus that the cafe will offer, as well as the launching timeline for each set of menus. The seasonal menu must be scheduled in order to develop a marketing plan and anticipate inventory needs for each new menu introduced.

#### *Quarterly Financial Comparison and Growth Analysis*

By this time, Simply Soulful Cafe should have its second quarter of financial reports. Apart from the descriptive analysis on the overall cafe performance, Simply Soulful Cafe can also gain insights by comparing the quarterly ratio. Predictive analysis and assessment of growth can also be performed by comparing the two quarterly reports.

### *Update Demand Forecast to Distributor*

After a few months of operation, Simply Soulful Cafe should have obtained a real-time observation of the actual demand of the menus. While the first few months of forecast in the new location may put more weight on intuition, assumption, and projection, the forecast moving forward should be updated based on the observed value gained in the previous months. Subsequently, Simply Soulful Cafe should notify the distributor about the changes in order to readjust the delivery quantities for each ingredient needed.

## **1-Year Plan (Appendix 3.4)**

### *Clover Kiosk: Cojilio*

Prior to the opening of the Commissary Kitchen, Simply Soulful Cafe should come in contact with the Clover Sales Representative to gather information, purchase, and get implementation assistance of the Cojilio app. This should be done two weeks before the opening of the Commissary Kitchen for smooth business operations.

### *Open Commissary Kitchen*

Simply Soulful Cafe plans to use the old location as both a prep kitchen for the restaurant on 23rd Ave and Jackson St and a commissary kitchen for small food businesses to rent out. We advise Simply Soulful Cafe to focus solely on the prep kitchen aspect of the location for at least the first six months of operation after relocation. This will allow enough time for Simply Soulful Cafe to understand how the dual location system operates and how often the prep kitchen is needed. Opening the commissary kitchen at this point will be ideal, as Simply Soulful Cafe will

have a practiced routine of its operations and will be able to take the time to make the commissary kitchen the priority.

### *Quarterly Financial Report Analysis, Fiscal Year Report, and Growth Analysis*

Simply Soulful Cafe should construct an annual financial report using data from the first 12 months. The fiscal year report would provide an overview of the cafe's overall performance in a one-year time frame. Simply Soulful Cafe can also create a monthly or quarterly ratio analysis to examine the growth trend.

### *Calculate Seasonal Factor and Re-Update Demand Forecast to Distributor*

By this time, Simply Soulful Cafe will have data for 12 months of operations. This data not only provides values to update the forecast but also projects the seasonal factor of each menu. Accounting for seasonal factors would improve the forecasting methods and mitigate the risk of either ingredients stockout or waste. In addition, Simply Soulful Cafe can adjust the ingredient planning to the distributor so that the correct quantity of ingredients will be obtained at the right time. Re-doing the steps on a quarterly and annual basis would help Simply Soulful Cafe smooth out the variance between demand forecast and actual demand in the future.

### *Potential Permanent Menu*

If a particular seasonal menu item helps acquire new customers and generates higher revenue than normal for Simply Soulful Cafe, the restaurant should consider keeping the seasonal menu item as a part of the permanent menu. Simply Soulful Cafe should continue creating new seasonal menus that invoke new customers, based on the analysis of the customer acquisition rate, found by looking at the restaurant's transaction history on Clover.

# CONCLUSION

To conclude, our research analysis points out the necessity for Simply Soulful Cafe to improve its internal management system in order to ensure a smooth expansion to 23rd Ave and Jackson St. The first step to do so includes enhancing the existing Clover POS system with apps such as Mission Control to accommodate inventory management and internal communication features. Simply Soulful Cafe should also utilize financial advisor consultation to refine the financial reporting process. A consolidated and accurate financial statement would provide information regarding the trajectory of the cafe's performance as well as a predictive tool to estimate future business projections. In addition, the follow-up steps to improve the inventory management and stockouts problem would be to engage with a reliable distributor to create a discipline in re-order quantity and delivery schedule. The consulting team believes that the steps mentioned above should be done by the 90-day benchmark upon receiving this report.

The next point of focus that needs to be solved in the 180 days benchmark is to construct a business plan for the new commissary kitchen, particularly related to the booking system. To do so, Simply Soulful Cafe can again utilize an add-in to Clover, such as Cojilio, which provides a client-friendly interface to organize and manage the booking system of the commissary kitchen. Furthermore, the cafe should now possess consolidated financial statements that enable them to track actual growth by comparing either financial ratio. Another step that can be done is to start planning seasonal menus to attract customer curiosity, as well as to streamline underperforming products for the menu. By this time, we have also believed that the cafe should sufficiently gain actual data to update the demand forecast and adjust the replenishment order quantity for the distributor. A one-year plan would involve updating the financial analysis to better understand

the performance insight and compare trends. The cafe should also have datasets to smooth the demand forecast; which subsequently reduces the probability of stockouts.

The student consulting team acknowledges that some of the steps might require adjustments against the current system that has been employed for years. That being said, an expansion means that the business is faced with both new challenges, opportunities, and threats—particularly in anticipation of demand spike. As such, it is crucial to create a business model and internal management system that can support the new conditions and provide buffers from future threats. We hope our recommendations are effective to assist Simply Soulful Cafe’s expansion and the new commissary kitchen business, as well as creating a groundwork for successful future business endeavors. We look forward to hearing about Simply Soulful Cafe’s future success.

# APPENDIX

## *1.1 PESTLE Analysis*

### *Political*

#### Economic Freedom (Index of Economic Freedom, Ease of Doing Business)

According to the Index of Economy Freedom, the United States is the 25th freest economy in the world (Heritage, 2021). The World Bank's Doing Business project has also shown that the United States is ranked 6th in the world for "ease of doing business" (World Bank, 2021). The United States provides a business-friendly environment for enterprises the size of Simply Soulful Café.

#### Political Regulations (Worldwide Governance Index)

Political turmoil at either local, state, nationwide, or international levels could cause both direct and indirect impacts on the café operations. Such adverse effects might include disruption of the supply chain, consumer and investor behavior, and preemptive statute and regulations.

#### Corruption (Transparency International Corruption Perception Index)

For a budding entrepreneurial business, the practice of corruption and collusion proves to be a barrier to development. Corrupt practices create extra bureaucratic expenses for businesses, erode the brand's credibility, as well as decrease potential investor confidence. The Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International gives a score of 67/100 for the United States. The provision of the American Anti-Corruption Act, as well as the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act; contribute to the relatively low perception of corruption in the United States-- which further protects businesses from the detrimental effect of the practices.

### *Economic*

#### Inflation (Trading Economics, US Department of Agriculture)

In January 2022, the Consumer Price Index reached a record increase of 7.5%; a number unprecedented since 1982. In addition to the current circumstances, the United States Department of Agriculture has also projected a 3.5-4.5% increase in food prices for the year 2022. Both scenarios produce a direct effect on the restaurant business-- which sees a consequent increase in ingredient prices. Therefore, it is inevitable that the cafe will find no option but to increase the sales price of its menu.

#### Post-Pandemic Boom (National Restaurant Association, Food Technology Magazine)

The food industry has suffered devastating drawbacks during the course of the pandemic; with more than 110,000 food businesses in the United States forced to close. The sector has also seen

a decrease of \$240 billion in revenue in 2020, compared to the fiscal year prior to the pandemic. However, as the pandemic subsidies and restrictions mandate is starting to be curtailed, National Restaurant Association projects a phenomenon called “post-pandemic boom”; which it expects a 19.7% increase in sales and customer traffic for the restaurant industry. The implication for the projection will be a necessity to anticipate and manage higher consumer demand in 2022.

### Global Supply Chain Disruption

During the height of the pandemic, the food industry experienced the adverse effects of the Global Supply Chain Issue--particularly in the task of ingredient procurements. The owner of Simply Soulful Cafe, Lillian explains how Simply Soulful Cafe has difficulty obtaining specific ingredients such as chicken wings, butter pads, and buttermilk during shortages. On the other hand, the cost of goods obtained during shortages is also significantly more expensive than in usual times. The research is further extended by referring to secondary data sources obtained from the ProcurementIQ database. Projections can be examined under the business sector of “Cafeteria Management”, in which the nature of the food industry supply is said to experience: “a moderate supply chain risk which raises the probability that services can be disrupted by shortages of inputs or fluctuations in input prices.”

### Government Transfers and Grants (U.S. Small Business Administration)

The American Rescue Plan is a fiscal policy to offset the pandemic recessionary gap, aiming to aid businesses struggling from the pandemic. The legislation established the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF), a government transfer that “provide restaurants with funding equal to their pandemic-related revenue loss up to \$10 million per business and no more than \$5 million per physical location (Small Business Administrator, 2021).

## *Sociocultural*

### Demographic Trends

According to Corrigan’s research data in 2021, 37.5% out of 40 participants aged 29 and younger enjoyed Soul food, however, only 16% ate it regularly. While 30% of the 40 participants aged 30 to 55 ate Soul food regularly, 15% out of 40 participants aged 55 to 85 said they enjoy eating Soul food, yet only 5% out of 40 participants said they ate it regularly (Corrigan, 2021). Simply Soulful Cafe’s current target market is primarily the local community around the location, where the population is mostly Black and other minorities.

### Consumer Trends

According to a study conducted by OnePoll in conjunction with Eventbrite, 60% of respondents said they would wait in a long line for food to try something new (New York Post, 2022). Following the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, many people have expressed support for local and minority-owned businesses in order to help more people achieve greater economic and social mobility.

## *Technology*

### Increasing Trends in Online Food Delivery

Based on the current trajectory, the online food delivery industry is expected to compose 40% of total restaurant sales in 2023. In the past five years itself, the growth of the delivery service that is supported by technological advancements has rapidly increased; booking an annual growth rate of 20% (Dalin-Kaptzan, 2022). As such, it becomes a reasonable strategy and necessity to adapt to the new technological infrastructure--which means generating partnerships with applications such as UberEats, GrubHub, Postmates, and DoorDash.

### POS Management System

Point of Sales System (POS) software has gained an outstanding market share-- projected to book growth of 9.5% annually through 2021-2028 (Grand View Research 2021). POS software such as Toast, Clover, Upserve, and Lightspeed provides an efficient way to do manual tasks such as managing reservations, waiting lists, and inventory management. POS software also provides insight into the prevalent consumer demographics, as well as rough financial estimates.

### Social Media Marketing

According to a recent RecurPost survey, 30% of millennial consumers intentionally avoid restaurants with a low Instagram presence (Rathi, 2022). Customers prefer Instagram, Facebook, and other social media for small restaurant businesses, with TikTok becoming the next social media platform for food bloggers. Food businesses can use social media marketing to engage with customers and develop food trends that encourage more people to visit the restaurant.

## *Legal*

### Liabilities (Food Safety Act, Occupational Safety and Health Act)

Product liability is one of the most common issues in operating a restaurant; which involves spoilage and food poisoning (FDA, 2021). Employee liability is important to be factored in; considering a kitchen working environment that deals with sharp objects and fire. A managerial implication to mitigate liabilities would be to ensure quality control of the food products under the Food Safety Modernization Act to set a safety precaution fulfilling the Occupational Safety and Health Act standard (OSHA, 2017).

### Intellectual Property Rights

The main capital of a restaurant business is its food recipe; as it defines the competitive advantages of its products relative to others. As such, food recipes should be treated as a company secret to preserve the advantage. Nevertheless, operating a business with many staff and customer traffic puts the intellectual property of the recipe in a vulnerable position. It exposes plagiarism and copying behavior by competitors. While intellectual property rights in recipes and food is a rather difficult case to be copyrighted or patented; there are numerous ways

to protect against infringement-- for instance requiring NDA for staff that has direct knowledge (Kauffman, 2019).

### Contract Enforcement

As with every other business, Simply Soulful Café is subject to numerous contractual agreements. From property leases, supplier contracts, and grant agreements, the series of contractual obligations ideally should establish certainty in doing business. That being said, enforcement of such contracts should be put under concern in case future issues arise in the future. Commercial Leases Law usually provides guidelines in drafting contracts and resolving contractual disputes (Harvard Law Clinic).

### *Environmental*

#### Waste Management and Recycling

Improper disposal of food waste can result in rodent infestation and severe health problems. In addition, recycled materials, main plastics, should also be properly disposed of. Seattle municipal law provides a thorough guideline on restaurant waste disposals, as well as prohibition and fines for violations.

#### Eco-Friendly Food Packaging

The growing trend of eco-friendly materials has also shaped the way of doing business. In the case of restaurant services, many have already shifted to using compostable materials for their packaging instead of plastics. Restaurants have also avoided providing single-used utensils, especially straws. The change can be attributed to the growing concern over plastic waste pollutants.

### *1.2 Porter's Five Forces*

#### *Barriers To Entry*

In comparison to other industries, the restaurant business has comparatively low and few entry barriers. Once efficient production and market demand expand, food businesses can use economies of scale to efficiently lower costs by purchasing in bulk. Those who have insufficient startup capital may be challenged by the initial investment of fixed costs such as kitchen equipment. Another challenge that may arise is choosing the right location; entry barriers of locations vary depending on foot traffic and consumer demographics, making it slightly more difficult to enter the industry, especially when competitors have already established their presence.

#### *Competitors*

Competition is fierce and high in the food industry as there are a large variety of restaurants in Seattle. Competition for commissary kitchen is moderate compared to restaurant businesses as

there are only a few commissary kitchen rental spaces available with professional kitchen equipment.

### *Substitutes*

The restaurant industry has a considerably low switching cost. The high degree of changes in consumer preferences and constant new offerings means that there is a weak retention rate between customers and restaurants. Subsequently, the market conditions nurture a high threat of substitute products for the industry as a whole.

### *Buyer Bargaining Power*

The overall trend in the restaurant industry shows a high buyer's bargaining power. The overall trend in the restaurant industry shows a high buyer's bargaining power. The claim is supported by research conducted by Cornell University that examines consumer behavior in restaurant services (Adhikari & Rao, 2013). With the abundance of restaurants and substitutes, customers are rather sensitive to price changes, which means that they have the ability to influence restaurants to keep prices low..

### *Seller Bargaining Power*

The restaurant industry has low bargaining power as restaurants can't determine their prices freely due to their buyers and the suppliers. A change in price will heavily affect the demand in a business environment where there are a lot of competition. The disruption of the Global Supply chain also shows that food suppliers act as a strong price-setter imposing relatively high prices for ingredients in response to the Covid-19 situation which heavily affects restaurants food availability and price (ProcurementIQ, 2022).

### *1.3 Competitor Analysis*

	<b>Simply Soulful Cafe</b>	<b>Jackson's Catfish Corner</b>	<b>Angel City and Deli</b>	<b>Oakys TexMec</b>
Rating (Yelp)	4.5	4.4	4.0	4.4
Price	\$\$	\$\$	\$\$	\$\$
Delivery	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Outdoor Spaces	No (Will Be)	No	No	No
Liquor License	No (Will Be)	No	No	Yes
Online Presence	Yes (Website, Social Media)	Yes (Website, Social Media)	Yes (Website, Social Media)	Yes (Website, Social Media)

### 1.4 Commissary Kitchen Rental Prices

TIME PERIOD	MONTHLY cost based on number of days per week						
	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	6 days	7 days
<b>Morning:</b> any 9-hour shift that <u>starts</u> between 4AM and 12PM)	\$630	\$740	\$850	\$960	\$1,070	\$1,180	\$1,290
<b>Afternoon/Eve:</b> any 9-hour shift that <u>starts</u> between 12PM and 9PM)	\$540	\$620	\$700	\$780	\$860	\$940	\$1,020
<b>Graveyard:</b> any 6-hour shift that <u>starts</u> between 9PM-3AM)	\$350	\$400	\$450	\$500	\$550	\$600	\$650
<b>24/7</b>	\$1,170	\$1,360	\$1,550	\$1,740	\$1,930	\$2,120	\$2,310

### 1.5 SWOT Analysis

SWOT was done for both the cafe and the commissary kitchen based on primary and secondary research. An overview can be found in **Table 1.2** and **1.3** below.

Table 1.2 Cafe SWOT Overview

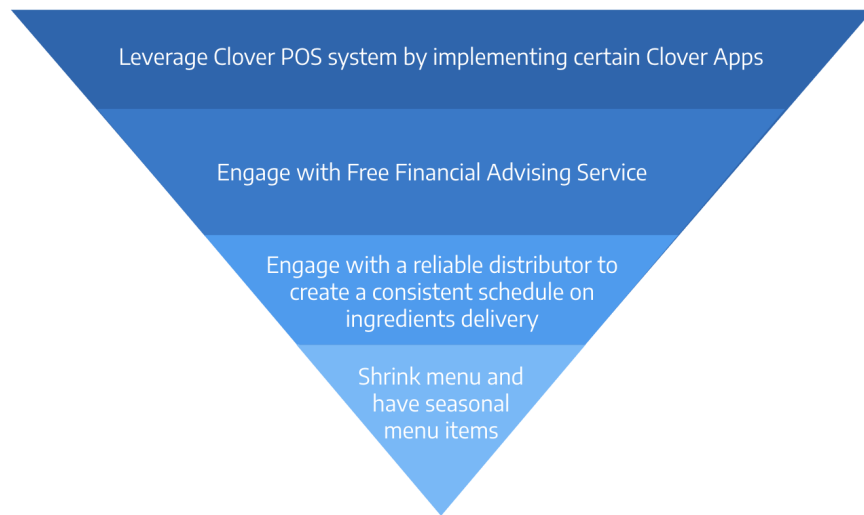
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High brand value as a goodwill restaurant</li> <li>• High level of customer loyalty</li> <li>• Strong unique southern (localized) taste</li> <li>• High rating on Yelp: 4.5/5 in comparison to direct competitors in the old and new location</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate inventory system and supply chain</li> <li>• Short opening hours (in the current location): unable to keep up with the demand</li> <li>• Poor internal communication</li> <li>• Slow customer service</li> <li>• Limited menu options (low variety)</li> <li>• Uses non-sustainable utensils</li> <li>• Lack of Social Media presence</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher customer volume in the new location</li> <li>• Increase demand to experience food and something new</li> <li>• Increase demand in food e-commerce</li> <li>• The rise of demand on fast casual food service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different cultural trend and food preference in the new location</li> <li>• Rising fixed costs: Rent hikes above 7.5%</li> <li>• Competitors (new place) have already established position in the new location</li> </ul>
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Table 1.3 Commissary Kitchen SWOT Overview

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uplifting the local community</li> <li>• Already have a set of space</li> <li>• Community has shown interest to rent</li> <li>• Competitive pricing strategy (priced lower than other commissary kitchens)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate kitchenware and equipment to support various cooking needs</li> <li>• No previous experience in running a commissary kitchen rental service</li> <li>• Lack of differentiation from other kitchens</li> <li>• Demand uncertainty</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing demand from online food sellers to rent out a kitchen to showcase food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No customer retention - for temporarily based</li> </ul>

## 2.1 Recommendation Hierarchy Diagram



## 2.2 Financial Advising Topics

- Creating a balance sheet
- Strategies to identify expenses, how to lower expenses
- Looking for mentor for business expansion, help with financial projections
- Creating business plan, setting goals that Simply Soulful Cafe should try and reach for
- Strategies for restaurants, how to manage inventory, operations during pandemic
- Strategies to increase revenue, customer acquisition, customer retention

## 3.1 Overall Implementation Plan

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12
Contact Clover Representative												
Work with a Distributor												
Update Demand Forecast												
Contact Financial Advisors												
Quarterly Financial Analysis												

Create Seasonal Menu												
Analyze Seasonal Menu												
Open Commissary Kitchen												
Implement Booking System												

### 3.2 90-Day Plan Details

	Month 1				Month 2				Month 3			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Contact Clover Representative												
Implement New Clover Apps												
Clover Kiosk Setup												
Contact Financial Advisor												
Financial Advisor Advising												
Contact Distributor												
Create a deal with Distributor												

### 3.3 180-Day Plan Details

	Month 4				Month 5				Month 6			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Update Demand Forecast to Distributor												
Identify Top and Low Selling Menu												
Quarterly Financial												

Comparison												
Meet Financial Advisor												
Creation of Seasonal Menu												
Growth Analysis												
Implementation of Seasonal Menu												

### 3.4 1-Year Plan Details

	Month 7		Month 8		Month 9		Month 10		Month 11		Month 12	
	1-2	3-4	1-2	3-4	1-2	3-4	1-2	3-4	1-2	3-4	1-2	3-4
Identify Top and Low Selling Menu												
Creation of Seasonal Menu												
Quarterly Financial Comparison												
Update Demand Forecast to Distributor												
Open Commissary Kitchen												
Create and Apply Commissary Kitchen Booking System												
Meet Financial Advisor												
Growth Analysis												
Implementation of Seasonal Menu												
Seasonal Menu Result Analysis												
Implementation of Potential Permanent Menu												

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