# The Untold Story Of Red The Steakhouse

BY MATT PRICE

Red The Steakhouse might not be a name you immediately recognize. But if you've ever been in a Ruth's Chris Steakhouse, you've been walking by the food steakhouse in the city, you undoubtedly have eaten at. The dark, long-set upscale steakhouse has been picking up Certified Angus Beef prime steaks since 2007, and Business Insider has come across some tough times (~400 counts out some of the best beef in the country).

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So what is it that sets Red The Steakhouse apart from the biggest name national steakhouse chain? Is the food really all that good, or is it just another case of South Beach style over substance? We started with Peter Smalley, the company creative force behind Red The Steakhouse, who now serves as chef and co-owner of the South Beach location. He dished on his inspirations, ups, downs, and future of Red The Steakhouse, and made us insanely hungry in the process.

## Red the Steakhouse was born from one of the best restaurants in America

Once upon a time, in a mythical land known as Cleveland, Ohio, there was a restaurant called Mustard. And being before Jonathan Sawyer and Michael Symon made this city a big foodie deal, Mustard was the place to be. Mustard was so good, it was named the best restaurant in America by Esquire magazine (twice!) and was nominated for the James Beard Award (twice!). Mustard was so hot in the kitchen, helmed by Peter Smalley and Jonathan Sawyer.

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After getting some local fame, the chefs decided it was time to set out on their own. An independent steakhouse seemed interesting to make a comeback in the early 2000s. Smalley and Bennett teamed with Moxie owner Brad Friedlander to open the original Red the Steakhouse.

"Steakhouses appeared to be getting tired of aging," Chef and Co-Owner Peter Smalley said. Mustard is an exclusive interview. "So we started talking about opening a steakhouse. But we needed to take some of the principles we had at Moxie and apply it to a steakhouse" Moxie closed in 2010, according to Cleveland.com. But its legacy lives on through Red the Steakhouse.

## The first Red the Steakhouse opened in Beachwood, Ohio in 2003

The Christmas Day 2003, Smalley, Bennett, and Friedlander finally saw their vision come to fruition, when the original Red the Steakhouse opened its doors. The 5,000-square foot restaurant set at 3955 Richmond Road in the Cleveland suburb of Beachwood, Ohio, had according to Peter Smalley, it didn't much resemble the Red we know today.

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"It was kind of a hodgepodge," Smalley told Mashed when speaking of Red's early days. "Every day people were coming in and asking if I could make Italian anything soup, and at the menu decided to morph I thought Red should be an Italian influenced steakhouse, because otherwise we would opposition numbers."

The same, and back, did ideas stemmed from the partners' ventures of all school steakhouse Moxie and Mustard. Smalley, Bennett, and Friedlander had all been in the restaurant business. Smalley, Bennett, and the and family and the fight heavily influenced the offer of Red. And gave the place the signature look that set it apart from the pile of other Midwestern steakhouses.

## Red opened its second location in Miami in 2008, and gave away wine to survive

But unlike Cleveland, Red didn't find instant success. The first eight months were a massive, massive struggle," Smalley said. "In Cleveland, we had a cap, in Miami, nobody cared. We didn't know just to carry open in Cleveland and Boca Raton, in Miami, everything closed, we, who absolutely gave wine bottle away!

The restaurant also didn't have a liquor license when it first opened, and gave away wine with its steak dinners to get people to believe the license was approved. The team was also already overextended, with Bennett still in Ohio, and Chef Peter Smalley, who was the only chef at the restaurant, Smalley says he had single days where Red grossed more money than in all of June 2004.

## After opening in Miami, Red the Steakhouse won a ton of accolades

After the initial struggles in South Beach, Red the Steakhouse finally found its stride. And after the city hosted the Super Bowl in 2010 the world began to take notice. Locally, Red the Steakhouse was named the best steakhouse in Miami by Zagat, and was named the best steakhouse of Miami by a large panel by the Miami New Times, Travelzoo, and Culture Trip. Not to mend a big ticket, running Red the Steakhouse THE best steakhouse is highly competitive Miami, as well as one of South Beach's essential restaurants. The Miami original used Ruth's Chris Steakhouse's Best Steakhouse in Ohio and Boca Tribeca as well.

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But it wasn't just local press that fell in love with Red the Steakhouse. America's esteemed restaurant critic Jonathan Gold, who was the Pulitzer Prize winning critic for the Los Angeles Times, according to the Los Angeles Times, Gold liked Ruth's and had had so the best in the country. Gold was a big fan of Red the Steakhouse, and wrote a rave review of the Miami location. Shortly, mentioning that here only operation in the big cities of American metropolis. (Gold Gastronomer.com)

## Red the Steakhouse serves a full Italian menu alongside steaks

Part of why Red the Steakhouse became such a runaway hit was because it offered a lot on its menu. Sure, it was a steakhouse, but it was also a steakhouse that was unapologetically Italian, overwhelming could be any element, and that's why he's looked for menu with stuff like chicken parmesan, seasoned meatballs, and his trademark "red wine" sauce.

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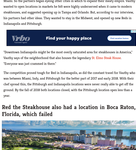
"I felt like in Miami, we were missing a little of that Mom's Italian restaurant, where you can eat big red sauces and just feel like you're at home," Smalley said. "That's why we have red sauce and chicken parm on the menu. I think we have the best chicken parm out there."

The extravagantly menu also includes a hefty lineup of steaks, ranging from the traditional Bolognese with veal and beef cutpart, to lobster-fan classic with fresh Maine lobster and spicy marinara sauce. Healthy even finishes off the meals with traditional Italian, organic, inspired by. The sure to great grandmother made growing up.

## Red South Beach sells more Certified Angus Beef prime than anywhere in the world



When it comes to the world of high end steakhouses, one might think that once you've reached the level of prime beef you're getting the same shelf everywhere. But this is not always the case. Peter Smalley is chef ambassador for Certified Angus Beef, an Ohio-based beef brand that sells its cuts through an extensive, but specification-derived before giving it the seal of approval.

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"Certified Angus Beef is based in Ohio, and their corporate chef and I worked side by side there," Smalley explained to Mashed. "Certified Angus Beef is the biggest or second or second with all CAB prime, that's one thing, that's long and lightness is the deal."

And get prime is Smalley, as Red South Beach is now the largest single purchaser of Certified Angus Beef prime in the world. It has sold over 200,000 lbs/year, and is averaging half million pounds of steak since opening its doors. That figure is thanks to large partnership of Beef's operation, only a 40 or performance and the hard turning 180 on a steakhouse.

## Red's crab and lobster menus are also unlike any steakhouse in America

Another reason Red the Steakhouse has been able to stand out among the glut of contemporary American steakhouses is its impressive, and unctuous lineup, menu of crab and lobster.

"You have to come to experiences and presentation and people who aren't big steak eaters," Red the Steakhouse Chef and Co-owner Peter Smalley told Mashed. "Which means you've gotta up your game on the seafood side."

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The Rockney Blue lobster dish paired with the Certified Angus Beef prime steaks is a large part of why Mary Mazzi ranked the restaurant's surf and turf as the best in America. But crab's cred impressive about both seafood menus are the Alaskan King crab the restaurant flies in when they're in season. While delicious on the plate, the crabs are so big they look a little more like alien invaders when you first see them. If you're squeamish around exoskeletons, you may need to meet your eyes.

## Red the Steakhouse unsuccessfully tried expanding to Indianapolis and Pittsburgh

By the end 2010s, Red the Steakhouse had become a runaway success both in Cleveland and Miami. So the partners began eyeing other cities in which to expand their steady empire. Smalley wanted to open locations in markets he felt were highly underserved when it comes to modern steakhouses, and suggested opening up in Tampa and Orlando. But, according to our interviews, his partners had other ideas. They wanted to stay in the Midwest, and spotted up new digs in Indianapolis and Pittsburgh.

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"Downtown Indianapolis might be the most overly saturated area for steakhouses in America," Smalley says of the neighborhood that does house the legendary St. Elmo Steak House. "Everyone was just crammed in there."

The competition proved tough for Red in Indianapolis, as did the contract issued by Smalley, who was between Miami, Indy, and Pittsburgh for the better part of 2007 and early 2008. With their chef ground this, the Pittsburgh and Indianapolis locations were never really able to get off the ground. By the fall of 2008 both locations closed, with the Pittsburgh location open less than a year.

## Red the Steakhouse also had a location in Boca Raton, Florida, which failed



But also had a short-lived location in Boca Raton, Florida, about an hour north of Miami. The second South Florida original opened in 2012, alongside a short Italian concept called Bocca Italia, which was also owned by the Red Restaurant Group (the Kimmel Partn Beach Boca Tribeca). But the Boca Beach Company original of the Miami Beach left was doomed almost before it started.

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"I thought our real estate broker was horrible, there was no street presence, no access from the street, no parking, no visibility, no anything," Smalley said of the Boca Raton location. He blames a school bus crash on Federal Highway, and a Publix on the other side of the street for the crash in Boca.

Smalley said the Boca market was "bizarre" a transplant of the entire East Coast stuck in a little city between Ft. Lauderdale and Palm Beach. The only dining choice of the older population also caused problems for the Red group. As did Smalley's countless hours driving on traffic-clogged I-95 between Miami Beach and Boca. By late 2014, Red the Steakhouse Boca Raton had closed its doors. Boca Bocca also failed.

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## After expansion caused serious strife, the original Red Restaurant Group declared bankruptcy



By 2108 Red the Steakhouse was riding high, with its second Cleveland outpost in downtown leading the way. Bolstered by Yelp reviews ranked it Cleveland and the Cuyahoga amazing success, Red's location across from Quicken Loans Arena was doing "great numbers," according to Chef and Co-owner Peter Smalley. The Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland Orchestra, and the 2018 Republican National Convention also helped drive revenue.

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But despite that success and solid business in South Beach, the Red Restaurant Group — which included Peter Smalley, Brad Friedlander, and Jonathan Bennett — was overextended. Three steakhouses — continued to lose money. The group, which included Bennett and Friedlander, declared bankruptcy in 2108, selling off the downtown Cleveland location to principal investor Gregg Jones and a collection of partners. The original Red the Steakhouse in Beachwood also shut its doors, leaving South Beach in the hands of Peter Smalley.

## A chance meeting with a Red regular helped Peter Smalley take control of Red South Beach



In August of 2108, facing imminent bankruptcy from his partners, Peter Smalley was in a tough place. Out of his best customers noticed Smalley struggling and asked if they could meet when the Chief Spoke had a day off. The following Sunday afternoon, the pair had a meeting that would ultimately save the restaurant.

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"He comes over and says, 'Do you know what I do?' Smalley recalls. "He told me he did corporate bankruptcy restructuring. He talked for an hour, and ultimately we decided we were going to securite Red from the group and repurpose it moving forward."

That regular was Aaron Ramsey, who navigated a case of troubling legal issues and gained separate ownership of Red South Beach for himself and Peter Smalley. They formed a new restaurant group called Ramsey Hospitality, and creative company Creative Hospitality.

## The original Red the Steakhouse location closed and moved to a larger location



Meanwhile, back in Ohio, the demise of the original Red Restaurant Group didn't mean the end of the road for Red the Steakhouse in Cleveland. Gregg Jones, who'd become principal investor in the group over the years, took ownership of Red in Downtown Cleveland with a collection of partners. That deal came with an agreement that the group would also open a new location in Beachwood, Ohio, to replace the Beachwood original.

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"Greg was always basically involved from the beginning," Chef and Co-owner Peter Smalley said. "Greg was a partner in the Beachwood location, and he was a partner in the Cleveland location, and when Greg came in and bought out the other side of Cleveland, and moved over to 2020 Euclid Avenue, he said, 'I want to be a partner in the Beachwood location, too.' So we had to find a new location for the Beachwood location."

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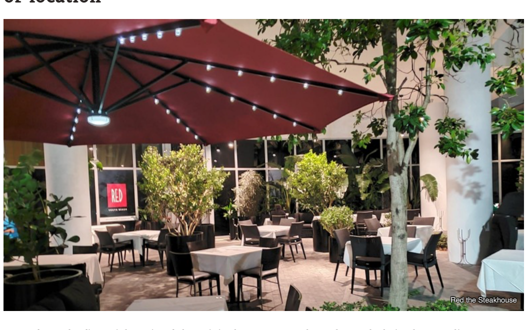
square-foot space."

The result was Red Pinecrest, a bigger, brighter space than previous incarnations of the restaurant. It sits at 200 Park Ave. in Suite 130.

## Red South Beach navigated the pandemic with a change of location



Red the Steakhouse

Free from the financial strain of the original partners, Red South Beach thrived. According to Vauthy, the restaurant posted its two biggest months in history during January and February of 2020. And then, COVID hit. When Miami finally reopened for outdoor dining that summer, Red found itself in a tough spot with no outdoor tables at all.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On July 19, 2020, Peter Vauthy closed the original Red South Beach at 119 Washington Ave., moving just a few blocks away to an outdoor space on South Pointe Drive. The reimagined Red opened on New Year's Eve, with 60 seats on a big, sprawling patio. As of July 2021, construction still continues on Red South Beach's indoor dining room and bar, which Vauthy promises will be even better than the original.

"We're doing our best to survive, and take the menu and put some things on there that are more fun," Vauthy said. "It's given us new life, rebirth, and if we were able to do huge numbers in the old space, we're gonna do it here. And continue to do what Red does best, and redefine what steakhouses are."


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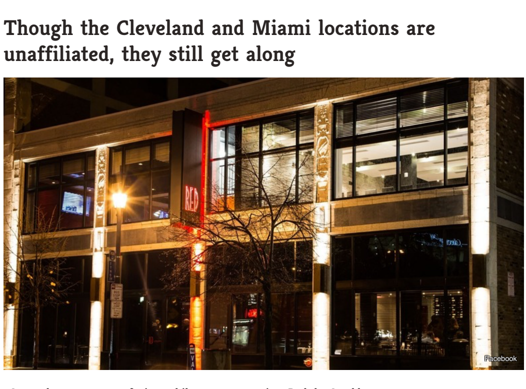
## Though the Cleveland and Miami locations are unaffiliated, they still get along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So, to shore up any confusion, while once upon a time Red the Steakhouse was one company with locations in four cities, today they are separate. The Cleveland locations in downtown and Pinecrest are owned by Gregg Levy and his partners. Red South Beach is a separate entity, owned by Peter Vauthy and Aaron Hammer. Levy retains the intellectual property of Red the Steakhouse, but Vauthy is still able to operate under the Red name.


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"We have a great working relationship," Vauthy told Mashed. "He owns a management company, and he's down here all the time hosting athletes. So it's good for his brand to have South Beach under his umbrella."

Vauthy jokes that he and Levy were the only two who ended up losing money out of the whole Red Restaurant Group venture. But that loss may be very much short term, as in new spaces and under new leadership Red the Steakhouse looks poised to maintain its place among America's best steakhouses.


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# The Untold Truth Of Ted's Montana Grill

YouTube


BY BRENT FURDYK / JAN. 8, 2021 10:52 AM EDT / UPDATED: FEB. 24, 2021 8:53 AM EDT


In 2002, a new restaurant opened its doors in Columbus, Ohio: Ted's Montana Grill, the first of what would eventually grow to a collection of more than 40 restaurants spread throughout the U.S. As the name suggests, Ted's Montana Grill was the brainchild of billionaire media mogul Ted Turner, who envisioned creating a different kind of dining experience for people who love steak.


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The biggest difference between Ted's and a traditional steakhouse chain was that the chain didn't serve beef. Instead, Ted's only served bison, offering bison steaks and burgers as the centerpiece of its menu. By 2003, reported *The New York Times*, that single restaurant had grown to five, and Turner had ambitious plans for the future. "I can see a day when this company has 500 restaurants and a billion-dollar market cap," he told the *Times*.

While there aren't yet *that* many, Ted's locations can be found throughout the U.S., including in Colorado, Massachusetts, Georgia, Florida and, of course Montana. Despite being a familiar brand for nearly two decades, there's much that customers may not realize about this innovative and ambitious restaurant chain. Read on to find out more about the untold truth of Ted's Montana Grill.


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## Ted's Montana Grill was driven by saving a species from extinction

George Frey/Getty Images

Like any business, the primary goal behind Ted's Montana Grill is to turn a profit. However, there's also another key factor underlying the restaurant chain's concept: to save a species that was once in danger of becoming extinct. By serving bison instead of beef, Ted's Montana Grill is actually creating demand for an animal that, noted *Smithsonian Magazine*, had been over-hunted to the brink of extinction.


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According to *Charlotte Magazine*, restaurant namesake and co-owner Ted Turner — one of North America's largest private landowners — had been raising bison on his vast tracts of land for some time. Over time, he increased the size of his herds — initially between 30,000 — to 60,000. By creating a bison-based menu, Ted's created a demand, thus making bison a sought-after and financially feasible commodity that resulted in massive bison repopulation.

While it may seem counterintuitive to save an animal by encouraging people to eat it, Turner saw it differently. "When founding Ted's, my vision was to share my love for bison, an American icon," he said in a 2016 press release. "I wanted my legacy to be successfully preserving this great mammal."


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## Ted Turner partnered with the founder of Longhorn Steakhouse to launch Ted's Montana Grill

Instagram

When he came up with the concept of a restaurant chain specializing in bison as a way of bolstering the species, media mogul Ted Turner turned to George McKerrow. While Turner had built a business empire, he was smart enough to realize he was no expert when it came to the hospitality industry. He would need, he realized, somebody who knew that world inside and out.


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Turner found that person in McKerrow, who had turned a single Atlanta eatery into the Longhorn Steakhouse chain. As McKerrow told *The Atlantan*, he was intrigued by Turner's concept of a restaurant based on sustainably increasing the size of North American bison herds. "It's a little ironic, isn't it? By bringing bison to tables across America, we've actually increased the population several-fold, and we've done so sustainably," McKerrow said.

This aspect of the company's business model, he explained, was particularly appealing. "Being at the helm of a successful enterprise is satisfying by itself, but if you can go to sleep at night knowing that your efforts are actually doing some good in this world, that's the cherry on top," he added.


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## Ted's Montana Grill is just one of Ted Turner's successful business ventures

Mark Mainz/Getty Images

Ted Turner is a legend in the broadcasting industry, transforming the Atlanta UHF station into a media empire. While the concept behind Ted's Montana Grill — a restaurant that serves bison in order to save the species — was bold and innovative, Turner consistently proved to be a visionary throughout his career.


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That was certainly the case with what is arguably his most famous idea: CNN, television's first 24-hour cable news network. The success of CNN led Turner to embark on a massive expansion that included the TBS superstation, TNT, Turner Classic Movies, and Cartoon Network, along with the acquisition of Castle Rock Entertainment and new Line Cinema. Turner wound up ceding control of his media properties after a $7.5 billion merger with what was then known as Time Warner Inc. in 1995. Turner also diversified into sports, at one time owning the Atlanta Braves MLB team and World Championship Wrestling.

In recent years, Turner's main focus has been his privately owned Turner Enterprises, Inc., which manages his various business interests — including Ted's Montana Grill and his own commercial bison herd.


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## How Ted's Montana Grill aimed to create a viable bison industry

George Rose/Getty Images

Becoming Ted Turner's partner in Ted's Montana Grill proved to be something of an education for Longhorn Steakhouse founder George McKerrow. The lessons he learned, however, weren't necessarily in business or hospitality, but in environmental sustainability. "I've certainly come to have profound respect for bison as keystone animals that created ecosystems," said McKerrow in an interview with *Mountain Journal*.


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As McKerrow explained, Turner had been "promoting bison as native animals that ought to be brought back to the landscape and he wanted to use market forces to make it happen." In order to achieve that goal, Turner set out to "create a bison industry." Given that Turner is the second-largest landowner in North America, with millions of acres, he had the ability to allow his herds of bison to roam on his ranches, envisioning bison farming as becoming "the mainstay and financial wherewithal for his family for generations."

Added McKerrow, "Underlying all of this was his love for the animal, not as a commodity but bison as a species nearly wiped out and deserving of a second chance to reclaim a place on the landscape."


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## Ted's Montana Grill's menu underwent a major shakeup in 2018

YouTube

In 2018, Ted's Montana Grill undertook a significant revamp of its menu, following a six-month study to determine what customers thought about the food being offered. The study, Ted's president Kristi Martin told *FSR*, was eye-opening. "We looked at our menu and we thought, my goodness, especially being a truly from-scratch brand, where we do not bring any premade items into the restaurant that are not ingredients into the backdoor ... we really felt like we had a pretty expansive menu with a great deal of variety," she said. "What surprised me was the fact that what people were looking for, we already offered."


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The end result was a radically redesigned menu that added some new items into the mix. Those additions included a salmon burger, "enhanced side dishes" such as sautéed Brussels sprouts and creamed spinach, and a strawberry shortcake described as being "artfully and architecturally prepared."

To promote the new menu, an advertising campaign was mounted to increase overall awareness of Ted's. That campaign, Martin explained, intended to tell the restaurant's story, focusing on its "authenticity, the bison, the local, truly from scratch, no microwaves, no freezers."

## Ted's Montana Grill gave out free sliders to celebrate National Bison Day

YouTube

It may not be common knowledge for those who aren't enmeshed in the world of bison, but the first Saturday in November is officially National Bison Day, the result of a Congressional resolution celebrating the animal.


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To mark this big day for bison, in 2015, Ted's Montana Grill cooked up a special offer for customers: free bison sliders. The sliders were given away to those who made a purchase at Ted's and entered its Facebook contest, where they could win gift cards ranging in value from $25 to $250. Entering the contest also led to a chance to win the grand prize, "Ted's for a Year," valued at $1,000.

"One of our primary goals in founding Ted's Montana Grill 13 years ago was to bolster support for this great mammal," said co-founder Ted Turner, in a statement. "We invite you to enter our contest and dine with us at one of our many national locations on Bison Day to celebrate bison's special place in our country's heritage and its contributions to society."


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## Ted's Montana Grill is active in philanthropy

Instagram

Environmental sustainability has been hooked right into the DNA of Ted's Montana Grill, and the same holds true for philanthropy. Speaking with *Mountain Journal*, Ted's co-founder George McBrayne landed partner Ted Turner for his philosophy that "you can think sustainably, think environmentally, think consciously, and still be in a productive, profitable business."

Turner, in fact, has been widely celebrated for his own personal philanthropy. As the Turner Enterprises bio indicates, he pledged up to $1 billion to the United Nations, while his Turner Foundation has donated more than $200 million to hundreds of charities.

Like its co-founder, Ted's Montana Grill has also given back by teaming up with a variety of different charities. For example, the chain partnered with No Kid Hungry in 2016, offering guests a $5 "thank you gift" to anyone who donates $5 to the charity. Since the partnership began, more than $2 million has been raised for the organization.

## Ted's Montana Grill's business model is built on sustainability and environmentalism

Instagram

Ted Turner has been one of the earliest business figures to lead the charge in protecting the environment. It was way back in 1990, in fact, that he famously spearheaded an environmentally themed children's cartoon called *Captain Planet*, which spun off into his Captain Planet Foundation.

When Turner and partner George McBrayne founded Ted's Montana Grill, the underlying concept was create a collection of restaurants that turned a profit while also contributing to the well-being of the environment. One of the many ways they achieved that is through taking care of the land on which Turner's bison herds grazed.

As McBrayne explained in an interview with *Mountain Journal*, the sustainability measures taken by Ted's Montana Grill have resulted in "millions of tons of waste never having to enter a landfill, billions of gallons of water each year never being wasted, tons of material given new life as recycled products, tons of grease never going down a drain and instead being repurposed, tons of food never being thrown away and feeding people who need it. Doing what's right benefits the bottom line and it cuts down on resource consumption."






## Ted's Montana Grill hired a new corporate chef in 2019

YouTube

After making *Big Gamble* in the Ted's Montana Grill menu in 2018, a new key player was brought onboard the following year. As *RestaurantNews.com* reported, Rich Biondi joined the company as corporate chef.






"Chef Rich brings an extremely high level of creativity and analysis to the position and we have already put his talents to work refreshing menu items and scrutinizing food assets," said Ted's co-founder and CEO George McBrayne, noting that Biondi would be working on such projects as "tweaking our made-from-scratch veggie burger to ensure it is 100 percent vegan and looking at ways to reduce our already low 1.62 percent annual food waste to under one percent."

In a statement, Biondi declared it was "an incredible honor" to be a part of Ted's. "The dedication to freshness and quality is unprecedented, as is the priority to do it all in the most sustainable way possible," he said. "It is an incredible privilege and exciting challenge to work with such extraordinary cuts of meat and superior ingredients, truly a chef's dream."

## A landlord claimed Ted's Montana Grill owed thousands in back rent

YouTube

With dozens of Ted's Montana Grill locations scattered throughout the U.S., not all of them have been success stories. That was apparently the case with Ted's in Boulder, Colorado, which shut down in 2018 after nearly two years in business. "It's been a tough decision," Ted's president and chief operating officer Kristi Martin told *Daily Camera* of the closure. "We've struggled with lower [business] volumes in Boulder. I haven't been able to figure out why."






When the restaurant shuttered, however, a bit of controversy was left behind. As *Daily Camera* reported in December 2020, the restaurant's former landlord had launched a lawsuit, alleging that Ted's owed nearly $85,000 in unpaid rent on the location that opened in 2016 and shut its doors nearly a decade later. According to the suit, Ted's lease came to an end in August 2020. Before that, the building's owner – Orion Properties LLC – claimed that Ted's had broken the terms of the lease "by among other things, failing to pay rent, operating costs, late charges, repair and restoration costs, and other fees and expenses."

## Ted Turner of Ted's Montana Grill shared his bison secrets with Martha Stewart

Getty Images/Billy Hargis

Back in 2009, Martha Stewart paid a two-day visit to Ted Turner's Montana ranch. Television's pre-eminent domestic diva made the trip, she explained in a blog post, in order "to learn from him all about his environmental concerns and his extraordinary efforts in restoring endangered species to the planet."






In a subsequent blog post, the Martha & Snoop's Potluck Dinner Party star wrote about dining with Turner — "al fresco," she reminded — at this ranch. Naturally, bison was on the menu, the same bison raised on Turner's ranch and served to customers of Ted's Montana Grill. The meal, Stewart revealed, was prepared by Turner's private chef, Karen Anetti. "I found the bison to be especially delicious — flavorful, tender, and juicy," she wrote.

According to Stewart, Turner told her that his foray into becoming a bison farmer started back in 1978 when he bought three bisons, "a bull and two cows. Since that time, his herd has grown to more than 50,000 head across the various Turner ranches."

## Ted's Montana Grill marked a major environmental milestone

YouTube

One of the ways in which Ted's Montana Grill contributed to a healthier environment was banning plastic straws. While getting rid of plastic straws has gained traction in recent years, restaurant co-founder Ted Turner was an early adopter. Not long after the opening of the first Ted's in 2003, Turner explained to *The New York Times* why the restaurant was using paper straws instead of plastic ones. "Do you know how hard it is to recycle a plastic straw?" Turner told the *Times*.

According to *Good News Network*, that practice has yielded significant results. After convincing a company to manufacture paper straws (a product that reportedly hadn't been produced in the U.S. since 1970), Ted's had reduced the number of plastic straws ordering up in landfills by "a whopping 80 million pounds per year."

In August 2018, Ted's issued a press release to announce a big milestone: that number had grown to exceed 50 million straws. The release also listed some of the other environmentally friendly innovations that Ted's had undertaken, including "50 percent compostable to go cups and bio-mass cutlery made from cornstarch and tapioca," efforts that resulted in "50 percent less plastic waste than average restaurants."

## Ted's Montana Grill launched a nationwide meat delivery service

YouTube

In 2020, America's restaurant industry was devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic. To adapt to a new reality in which many people reduced their visits to restaurants or stopped dining out altogether, Ted's Montana Grill unveiled an innovative new concept: a nationwide delivery service that would deliver fresh bison directly to customers.

A press release issued in December 2020 announced the launch of Ted's Butcher Shoppe, an online service where customers could order "American bison or premium beef as individual steaks" or "fresh grind" with some of "Ted's proprietary seasoning" accompanying each order.

"Whether you're seeking a special gift for a meat lover or a foodie, planning a delicious holiday meal or simply stocking your freezer, Ted's Butcher Shoppe is the perfect solution," said Ted's CEO George McBrayne in the release. "It's the only meat service that is delivered fresh the very next day, making it even more convenient for those last minute gifts across the country." McBrayne also recommended a shipment of meat as an ideal holiday gift. "The gift of high-quality meat is a special way to show your loved ones you care this holiday season," he added.

## Ted's Montana Grill was hit with controversy for receiving millions in pandemic loans

YouTube

As a way of bolstering the U.S. economy during the 2020 pandemic, the federal government offered Paycheck Protection Loans as a form of stimulus to keep struggling small businesses afloat. However, controversy ensued when reports emerged that millions intended for small and mid-sized eateries were being scooped up by large restaurant chains.

As the *East Bay Times* reported, data about the loans issued by the Small Business Administration revealed that the money handed out hadn't been evenly distributed. As it turned out, the result was "the biggest seats going to a clone of the companies in need," with the majority of the money going to large restaurant chains after the restaurant industry lobbied to make chains eligible for PPP loans.

As it turned out, Ted's Montana Grill was among the high-profile restaurant chains to receive a substantial PPP loan. According to a report in *The New York Times*, Ted's joined such chains as P.F. Chang's, Ruby Tuesday and TGI Fridays to receive the maximum loan of $20 million.


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