THINK MOBILE, ACT LOCAL

THE FUTURE OF MOBILE FOOD IN AMERICA

OFF THE GRID

Off the Grid Mobile Food Trends & Insights Report

December 2018

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THE FUTURE OF MOBILE FOOD IS

The food sector today is becoming increasingly mobile, fragmented and on-demand — a trend that has accelerated across almost every industry for the latter half of the decade.

Faced with rising costs, growing labor shortages and limited real estate, many major cities across the U.S. are grappling with an ever more competitive and unsustainable restaurant industry. Meanwhile, the 24/7 influence of smartphone-enabled technology and the cultural impacts of deindustrialization continue to leave their mark on society in ways we're just beginning to understand. This new economy has spurred the growth of food delivery services and fast-casual dining outposts that provide diners with first-rate food, quickly.

The only constant through this change has been a growing consumer demand for quality, variety and convenience when it comes to what they eat.

Enter mobile food.

Mobile food — namely, trucks, carts and stalls — is where culinary creativity, modular technology and temporary space converge. Less transactional than delivery and more dynamic than a restaurant, mobile food is fueled by diverse, enterprising small business owners who entice diners with exciting options that meet them in the middle.

Mobile food provides policymakers, real estate developers, brands and others with new ways to engage consumers by:

> *Spurring culinary creativity while uplifting (often underrepresented) small business owners;*

> *Transforming underutilized space to drive economic vitality and meaningful connections;*

> *Building community in the places where it's needed most.*

While the growth of mobile food in America isn't showing any signs of stopping — the food truck industry alone is projected to grow by nearly 20% in 2019 — the flexibility demanded by the fast-changing spaces we inhabit stands to have a significant impact on its future trajectory.

In the following report, we examine the ways in which mobile food is making food exciting again, transforming space, and building community and connection — now and in the future.

"MOBILE FOOD MEETS YOU HALFWAY. YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO TO THE RESTAURANT, AND THE RESTAURANT DOESN'T HAVE TO COME TO YOU.

GREG SPANGLER,
EMERGING MOBILE FOOD ENTREPRENEUR,
OWNER, BOLLOCKS TRUCK

WHO WE ARE

EST. 2010 IN SAN FRANCISCO

LEADING THE MOBILE MOVEMENT

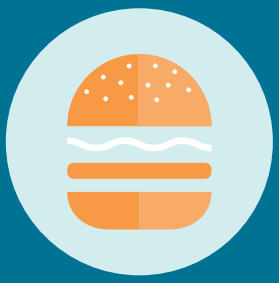
Off the Grid is a mobile events platform that unlocks the value of public and private space through curated food experiences, temporary event production and corporate dining.

With more than 300 diverse mobile food creators on our platform, we empower entrepreneurs to focus on their craft while streamlining the logistical heavy-lifting that goes into hosting temporary events. We've built a full suite of both hardware and software solutions to help us do this in the most efficient way possible.

Off the Grid connects organizations that have a need for flexible food consumption (we call them 'hosts') with those who love creating food (we call them 'creators') in order to create authentic experiences that not only provide a sense of discovery and value, but are rooted in a sense of place.

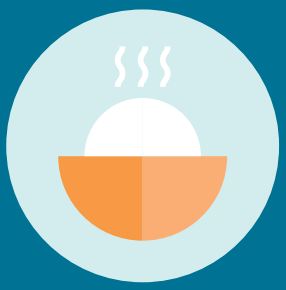
OFF THE GRID BY THE NUMBERS

300+
MOBILE FOOD CREATORS



70
CUISINES REPRESENTED

75,600
MEALS SERVED PER WEEK



3,982
UNIQUE MENU ITEMS

268
FOOD-OBSESSED EMPLOYEES

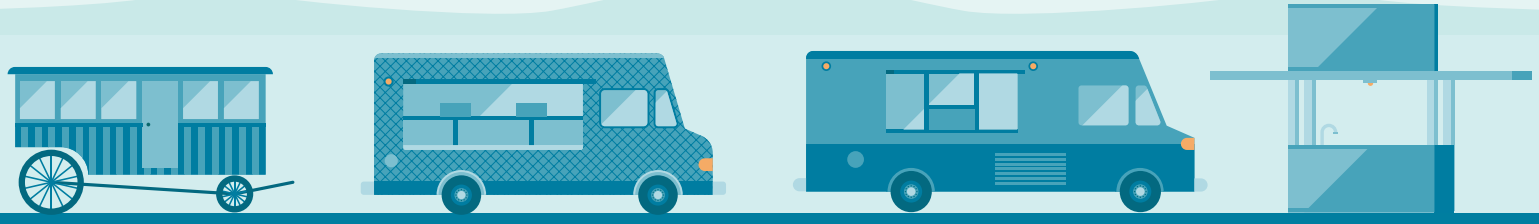
3,300
PUBLIC & PRIVATE EVENTS PER YEAR

“

OFF THE GRID HAS HELPED TO STRENGTHEN THE URBAN FABRIC OF SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOODS AND TRANSFORM OUR PUBLIC SPACES. THEIR UNIQUE MODEL NOT ONLY PROVIDES A PLATFORM FOR SMALL BUSINESSES TO GROW HERE, BUT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER OVER A SHARED LOVE OF FOOD AND COMMUNITY.

JOAQUÍN TORRES,
DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

TIMELINE OF MOBILE FOOD IN AMERICA



1872

Entrepreneur Walter Scott begins selling sandwiches, pies and coffees out of a covered “lunch wagon” outside a local newspaper office in Providence, R.I.

1950-60s

In post WWII America, suburbs grow rapidly in size and scope. Vending trucks — dubbed “roach coaches” — follow the market where restaurants won’t, serving basic hotdogs, pre-made sandwiches and burgers to construction workers and laborers.

1974

A former traffic cop and dishwasher, Mexican-born Raul Martinez converts an old ice cream truck into the nation’s first taco truck and parks it outside of an East Los Angeles bar. By 1995, King Tacos is parlayed into 14 brick and mortar restaurants across Southern California, grossing over $21 million.

2008

A stall in new construction projects leads to a glut of (formerly suburban dwelling) food trucks on the resale market. The recession simultaneously leaves many urban chefs unemployed and restaurateurs spooked by the prospect of opening a brick and mortar business.

Capitalizing on the rise of social media and rapidly changing consumer preferences, Roy Choi’s Kogi BBQ hits the streets of Los Angeles selling Asian-infused tacos. Exceeding $2 million in annual sales in its first year of operations, Kogi is widely credited with revitalizing mobile food vending in America.

2010

With mobile food continuing to capture public imagination from coast to coast, Off the Grid holds its first gathering of mobile food creators at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco. The following year, Smorgasburg launches its first open-air food market, an extension of the Brooklyn Flea, on the Williamsburg waterfront in New York.

2015-2017

With consistently strong demand and an insatiable consumer desire for convenient and diversified food offerings, the mobile food industry continues to grow in urban centers throughout the U.S., reaching $800 million in revenue in 2017.

Meanwhile, buoyed by high rents and soaring labor costs, the number of food halls in the U.S. grows to 118 in 2017 (from 70 in 2015).

TODAY

Rapidly changing cities demand flexibility, and the emerging field of mobile architecture provides planners with new ways to activate public and private space.

Off the Grid’s ‘Cubert’ (a modular pop-up kitchen and retail space) continues to allow creators to serve anywhere they might find hungry people — from office lobbies to public plazas and even wide open fields.

Food Truck Nation; National Food Truck Association
Food Halls are the New Food Truck; Eater, Cushman & Wakefield

THE STATE OF THE MOBILE FOOD INDUSTRY IN AMERICA

THE PAST

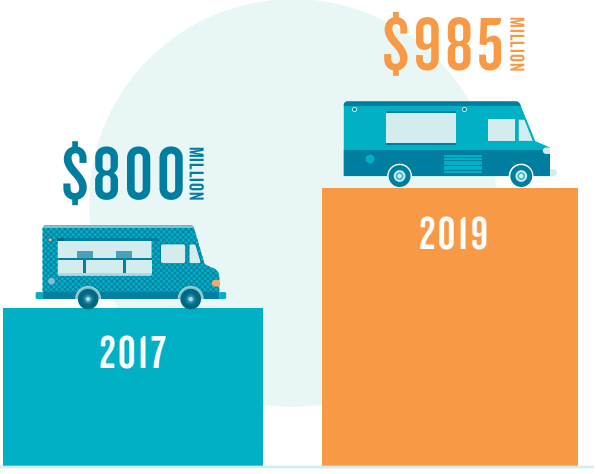
- High-risk, high-investment
- Static and permanent
- Inhibits connection
- Experienced by few
- Repetitive

THE FUTURE

- Less risk, more risk taking
- Flexible and mobile
- Fosters social interaction
- Experienced by many
- Diverse

THE GROWTH OF THE FOOD TRUCK INDUSTRY

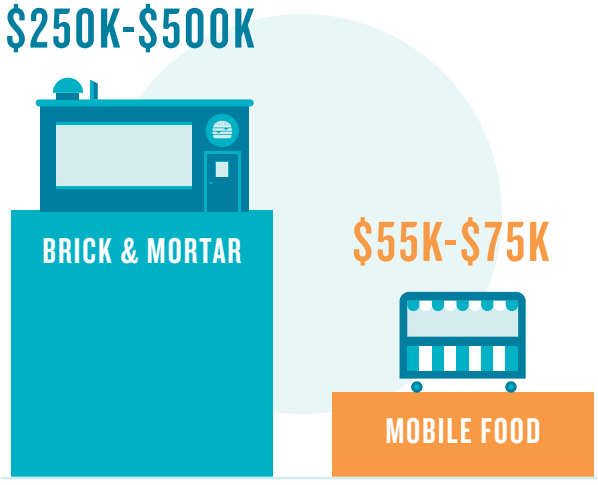
The size of the food truck industry alone is estimated to grow by nearly 20% in 2019.



Mobile Food Services Industry (NAICS 72233); Barnes Reports

MOBILE FOOD VS. BRICK & MORTAR INVESTMENT

The average mobile food business requires a significantly lower upfront investment.



Mobilizing Food Vending - Rights, Communication Technology and Urban Space in the American City; Ginette M. Wessel, UC Berkeley

GOLDEN STATE FOR MOBILE FOOD

California remains the highest grossing state for flourishing mobile food entrepreneurs.

$201 MILLION
market size for mobile food

10-19 EMPLOYEES
employed on average

1,392 ESTABLISHMENTS
(trucks and carts)

Mobile Food Services Industry (NAICS 72233); Barnes Reports

THE HUSTLE

Staff work **12-16 hours** per day on average.

Mobile food businesses are required to undergo an average of **45 individual state / county procedures** to operate.

Food Industries Report; Coloradobiz, National Food Truck Association

LIFE OF THE PARTY

In 2017, **1/3** of all mobile food revenue came from catered events.

12 Mobile Food Trends for the Future; QSRmagazine.com

TOP FIVE FRIENDLIEST CITIES TO OPERATE

These cities make operating as a mobile food vendor easy and accessible.

1. PORTLAND
2. DENVER
3. ORLANDO
4. PHILADELPHIA
5. INDIANAPOLIS

Food Truck Nation; National Food Truck Association

THE VALUE OF MOBILE FOOD

CREATIVITY. CONNECTION. COMMUNITY.

How the Diverse Entrepreneurs at the Heart of the Mobile Food Movement are Driving Innovation, Experimentation and Change

Quick to adapt and unbound by four walls, the enterprising individuals at the helm of the mobile food movement deliver variety and convenience in equal portions.

Thanks to the relative ease of market entry afforded by mobile food, coupled with the ability to serve just about anywhere, these businesses are more agile and less precarious than their fixed counterparts.

Through their innovative and experimental menu offerings, mobile food businesses also serve up a wholly different kind of nourishment: an enhanced understanding across cultural and socio-economic divisions, and a capacity for connection over a shared experience that's larger than any one person.

For these entrepreneurs, food is the ultimate leveler, culinary conventions were made to be broken, and the only constant is change.

INNOVATE OR GET OUT OF THE KITCHEN

Mobile food entrepreneurs are likely to step out of culinary comfort zones.

Say that having a mobile food business allows them to regularly experiment with new and interesting menu items. 34%

Have a "sky is the limit" attitude towards risk taking 26%

Say they don't experiment at all 11%

Off the Grid 2018 Creator Survey
Off the Grid Insights™

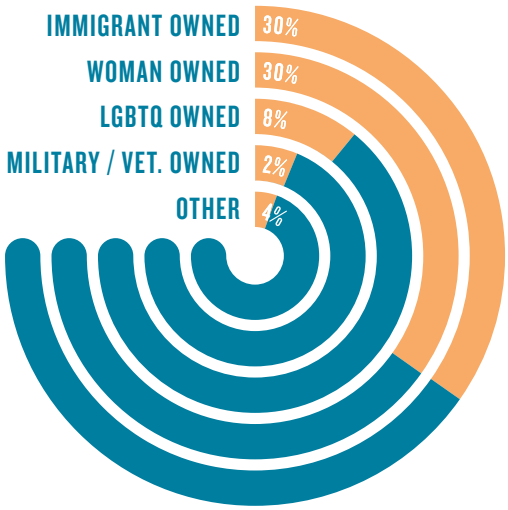
LESS RISK, MORE RISK TAKING

THE MAKEUP OF THE MOBILE FOOD MOVEMENT

To better understand the people who make up the mobile food movement, Off the Grid surveyed its community of third-party creators. Comprising small businesses based in the San Francisco Bay Area — a region known for its robust mobile food community — this data provides a snapshot of the mobile food movement nation wide.

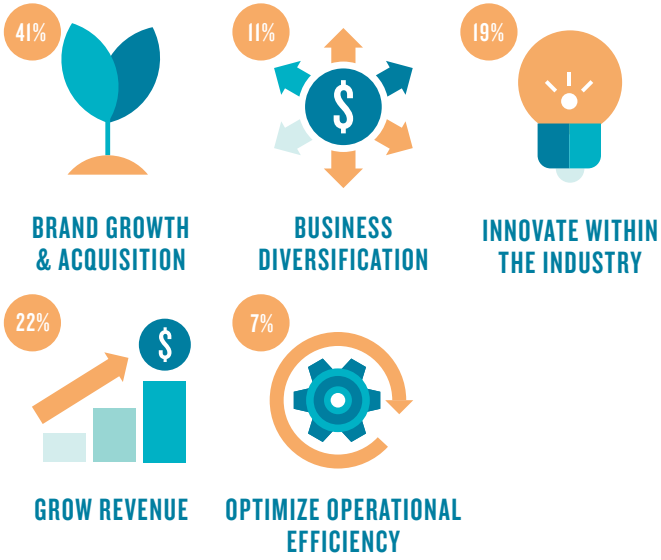
DIVERSITY IN MOTION

Identifiers that are part of their public business persona.



THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Primary business aspirations in the next 2-5 years.



WHY CHOOSE MOBILE?

Reasons cited for launching a mobile food business.

CONCEPT TESTING

31% say launching a mobile food venture is a means to test their business concept before investing in a more permanent location

TREND SETTING

24% view it as an opportunity to stay ahead of changing trends in hospitality and consumer habits

OTHER FACTORS

- Catering and pop-up opportunities increase brand awareness
- More access to customers and clients
- Reaching other neighborhoods

“

THE FOOD TRUCK FELT LIKE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE THOUGHTFULLY SOURCED FOOD IN A CONVENIENT, CASUAL WAY.

SAMANTHA JOHNSTON,
SALES & MARKETING DIRECTOR, JACKRABBIT KITCHEN

THE COMEBACK KID

A retired events and audiovisual professional — and lifelong home cook — following his dream of operating a mobile food business at age 65

GREG SPANGLER

BOLLOCKS TRUCK

When entrepreneur Greg Spangler first decided to enter the food service industry, the choice of food truck was one of practicality. Spangler enrolled in Off the Grid's 2-year mobile food incubator in partnership with Google, Instrucktional, where he cut his teeth as a chef and entrepreneur, and refined his concept — a meatball truck that draws inspiration from global flavors.

"The relative ease of market entry automatically opens up opportunities for people to try stuff that's different," says Spangler.

Mobile food can often provide a second chance at financial independence for those who've left the job market — whether by their own choice or not. And Spangler is no stranger to second chances. As a young man, he watched with admiration as his father, a retired CPA, enrolled in law school at the very same age Spangler is today. "I'm always happiest when I cook. I regret never having the nerve to go out and do that. Now at age sixty-five, I'm at the point in my life where I can."

"FOR ME, RETIREMENT IS IN THE NEXT FIVE TO TEN YEARS. I'D LIKE TO FIND WAYS TO HIRE AT-RISK YOUTH WHO MIGHT NOT HAVE OTHERWISE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY. MY DREAM IS TO BE ABLE TO USE IT AS A VEHICLE FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO ACHIEVE THEIR OWN DREAMS."

TAGLINE
"Adventures in round food"

YEARS IN OPERATION
Launching Winter 2018 / 2019

PROJECTED 2019 REVENUE
$250K-$300K

THE GAME CHANGER

A career investment banker building a delicious (and diversified) mobile food empire on her own terms

MONICA WONG

LITTLE GREEN CYCLO

YEARS IN OPERATION
Eight

FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES
12

PROJECTED REVENUE GROWTH IN 2019
20-25%

FOOTPRINT

- 3 **Food trucks including dessert and boba offshoot, *t.epiphany***
- 3 **24/7 smart vending machines**
- 1 **Brick & mortar in Brisbane, CA**
- 1 **5,000 sq. ft. commissary space**
- * **Grab 'n go items in 20 *Philz Coffee* shops in the Bay Area**

"THERE ARE ALWAYS NEW AVENUES TO EXPLORE IN THE MOBILE FOOD INDUSTRY. WE'RE CONTINUING TO SEARCH FOR BETTER AND MORE EFFICIENT WAYS TO DELIVER FOOD TO OUR CUSTOMERS. IT'S IMPORTANT TO STAY RELEVANT AND SERVE A PURPOSE WITH ANY NEW STRATEGIES WE EMPLOY."

After a career spanning 20 years in finance in New York City, Boston-native Monica Wong found herself in the Bay Area in 2010, a time when food trucks were just starting to become part of the urban landscape. Wong, along with her two business partners, quickly saw a new opportunity to provide fresh, high-quality Vietnamese street food to diners — by making it accessible to anyone, anytime.

What began as a single food truck has since blossomed into a family of mobile, virtual and brick and mortar outposts, all aimed at meeting consumers where they are, with concepts tailored to each unique market. To date, she estimates they've served over 200 special items via their food trucks alone. "The food we produce is what I would serve to my friends and family," says Wong. "We're very careful about the ingredients we select and how they're served."

But for Wong, her success has been measured in her ability to remain authentically herself through it all. "The most amazing thing about operating a business in the Bay Area as an Asian, women-owned, gay business is that you can just be who you are. We've never had to present ourselves as anything else, and we never will."

THE FLEET CAPTAINS

Friends since their high school days in Daly City, CA — and early entrants to the mobile food industry — double down on the movement they helped cultivate, and the streets they call home

EVAN KIDERA & GIL PAYUMO

SEÑOR SISIG

When longtime pals and Bay Area natives Evan Kidera and Gil Payumo first launched their fledgling business, they had one truck, personally manned the grill and line, and employed a single cashier. Today, they oversee a thriving mobile food empire with five trucks in their fleet, a commissary kitchen and a dedicated team of hospitality professionals.

Indeed, it's difficult *not* to feel Señor Sisig's presence in the Bay Area thanks to the legion of loyal fans who line up daily for their inventive, Filipino-Mexican cuisine. "We took a risk with our concept," says Kidera. "We didn't want to sign a 10-year lease and do a remodel on a restaurant. So we gave it a shot and we rode the wave of the industry. Actually, it was a tsunami."

As one of the mobile food community's earliest entrants — and still its largest player — Señor Sisig has persevered through the industry's growing pains while overcoming a myriad of legislative hurdles to cement their place in the Bay Area's dining mosaic. With their public offerings here to stay, Kidera's strategic focus has shifted to the private event space.

YEARS IN OPERATION

Nine

NUMBER OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES

35

PROJECTED REVENUE GROWTH IN 2019

10-20%

"NOW, PEOPLE KNOW OUR BRAND. WE NEED TO LOOK AT OTHER AVENUES, LIKE OUR CATERING BUSINESS. THE CORPORATE SPACE IS REALLY WHERE WE'RE SEEING THE MOST GROWTH."

EVAN KIDERA,
CO-OWNER SEÑOR SISIG

DABBLER

/dab•bler/ *noun*

Dabblers are passionate home cooks and would-be small business owners who view their mobile food venture as a controlled experiment on the open market, an added source of income, or perhaps even a creative outlet from their nine-to-five.

THE RISE OF THE DABBLER

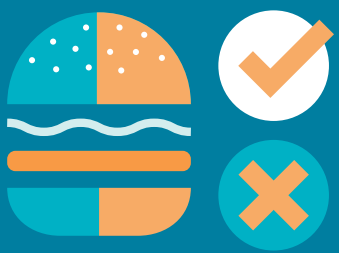
Buoyed by emerging technology and the new gig economy in which having a "side hustle" is the norm, a different breed of mobile food entrepreneur has emerged — the dabbler.

These enterprising individuals recognize that their greatest strength lies in their ability to do exactly what their moniker suggests: to dabble with new menu items, new locations, new service models, new products and new partnerships.

Most importantly, dabblers are equipped to align (and realign) their strategies to changing consumer preferences, seize upon cultural moments, and capture the imagination of the dining public.

FROM UNDERDOG TO FAN-FAVORITE

Helmed by hospitality industry rookies with full-time jobs in unrelated fields, this Nashville-style hot chicken concept brought the heat at Off the Grid markets in 2018.

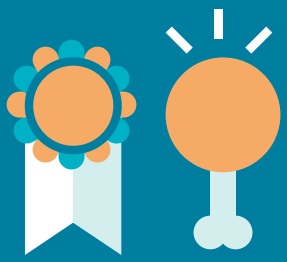


FEBRUARY 7, 2018

First concept tasting at Off the Grid headquarters

FEBRUARY 23, 2018

Acclaimed chef David Chang dedicates an entire episode of his viral Netflix series "Ugly Delicious" to the art of fried chicken



MARCH 18, 2018

Concept debuts at an Off the Grid food experience

9,294 covers spanning 31 events

Highest seller for the 2018 season

ANATOMY OF A DABBLER

EMILY SIMMONS & MAX HARDEN

CAMP TOASTED

THE CONCEPT

A contemporary take on a nostalgic favorite.

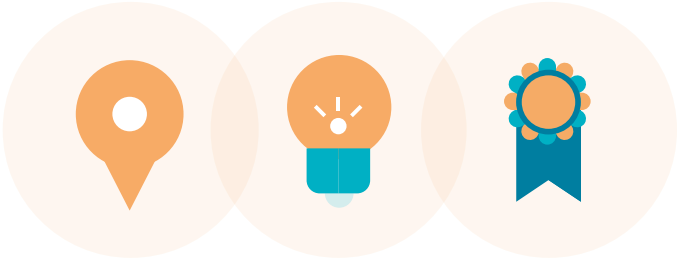
BEST SELLER

"The Full Monty"

Classic graham cracker, marshmallow, milk chocolate and birthday cake.

Launched in May 2018 by Lake Placid, NY natives Emily Simmons and Max Harden, Camp Toasted was born out of a lifelong affair with jet puffed s'mores, a childhood spent ski racing on cold Northeast pitches, and a passion for creating hosted experiences for friends and family.

"Menu experimentation is just the tip of the iceberg for us" says Simmons. "While we're food vendors by definition, we see Camp Toasted as a more holistic hospitality experience. Each step of the way, we've made decisions that allow us to stay asset-light, nimble, creative, and playful. This flexibility has allowed us to grow, test, and overcome the all-too-expected hurdles at our own pace and as our bandwidth allows, given that we keep up at high-performing jobs elsewhere."



"MOBILE FOOD ENTREPRENEURS UNDERSTAND THAT THEIR BUSINESSES ARE DEFINED BY TRANSIENCE, NOVELTY AND UNIQUENESS."

EMILY SIMMONS,
CO-OWNER, CAMP TOASTED

How Mobile Food is Helping Cities, Corporations and Consumers Reimagine Public and Private Space

Sudden and devastating recessions like the one that struck the country in 2008, rapid construction and real estate booms (and subsequent busts) in urban centers, and the social and cultural impacts of deindustrialization all stand to have a significant impact on the spaces we inhabit.

Such fast changing spaces demand flexibility.

Mobile food represents a "lighter, quicker, cheaper" approach to urban design, planning and architecture that capitalizes on the existing assets — and creative energy — of a community, generating novel uses and economic opportunity for spaces in transition.

As a placemaking strategy, shared mobile food experiences help people see anew the potential of everything from parks, waterfronts and plazas, to streets, campuses and vacant buildings.

MAKING PLACES OUT OF SPACES

D BEER

“

NEW AND OLD FOOD VENDORS FREQUENTLY APPEAR IN UNDERUSED AND MARGINAL SPACES OF CITIES SUCH AS PARKING LOTS, ALLEYWAYS, AND STREET CURBS CREATING A HIGHLY VISIBLE FORM OF SOCIAL EXCHANGE... THESE SPACES BECOME REACTIVATED WITH SOCIAL LIFE SPORADICALLY, TRANSFORMING UNDERUTILIZED LAND INTO SPACES OF HIGH SOCIAL ACTIVITY AND ECONOMIC VALUE.

EXERPT FROM MOBILIZING FOOD VENDING: RIGHTS, COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AND URBAN SPACE IN THE AMERICAN CITY,
GINETTE M. WESSEL, UC BERKELEY

FROM CONSTRUCTION ZONE TO HOLIDAY HIDEAWAY

How Mobile Food Can Revitalize Underutilized Space, Drive Foot Traffic, and Support Economic Development in Times of Transition

WINTER WALK IN SAN FRANCISCO

One of San Francisco's busiest and most densely populated areas, the Stockton Street corridor adjacent to Union Square has for the past seven years been an unsightly and congested construction zone during completion of the SFMTA's Central Subway Project.

In 2014, the Union Square Business Improvement District (USBID) along with the late-Mayor Ed Lee sought a way for local merchants and residents to take advantage of the project's yearly construction moratorium from late November through December. In 2017, they commissioned Off the Grid to craft an immersive holiday experience, dubbed "Winter Walk", that would drive benefits for visitors, vendors and existing retailers alike.

With a rotating selection of mobile food, a communal beer garden, cozy seating nooks, fitness classes and live music performances, Winter Walk provided over 1.7 million guests in Union Square with a respite from the bustle of the holidays — and a temporary oasis in the city where none had been before.

MAKING PLACES OUT OF SPACES

94% of respondents surveyed said they'd like to see the space made into a permanent pedestrian plaza every holiday season.

30% cited the food trucks and carts as the most liked aspect of the event.

Union Square Pedestrian Intercept Survey, January 2018

"POSITIVE ACTIVATIONS LIKE MOBILE FOOD VENDORS IN THE PUBLIC REALM HELP CREATE MINI DESTINATIONS AND ADD TO THE VIBRANCY OF COMMUNITIES— ESPECIALLY DENSE DOWNTOWNS. BUSINESSES FEEL IMMEDIATE CLEAN, SAFE AND ENERGETIC IMPACTS."

ROBBIE SILVER,
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & EVENTS, USBID

BREAKING BREAD WHILE BREAKING THE MOLD

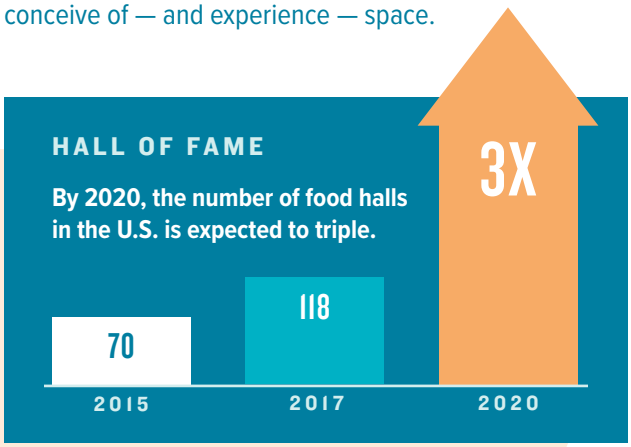
In fast-changing cities across the nation, traditional brick and mortar models have met their younger, hipper and more flexible match

THE RISE OF FOOD HALL STYLE DINING

In recent years, food hall style dining — in which artisanal food vendors and retailers sell products side-by-side — has exploded in urban centers as a cost effective and community-minded way for real estate developers, brands, community groups and others to activate space.

Food halls are under construction in Los Angeles, Chicago and Philadelphia, as well as in smaller cities like Plano, Omaha and Portland, Maine. They're cropping up at the heart of new mixed-use development projects, and in creative temporary applications like the recently announced La Cocina Municipal Marketplace in San Francisco — slated for opening in 2019 (in a vacant post office pegged for future redevelopment).

Whether curbside, inside or outside, new innovations in mobile architecture (including the subfield of avant-garde constructions fashioned from shipping containers, or 'cargotecture'), are likely to propel the food hall dining trend in the future while changing the way we conceive of — and experience — space.



Food Halls are the New Food Truck; Eater, Cushman & Wakefield

"THE VENUE OPERATOR OF A FOOD HALL IS, IN EFFECT, THE MAYOR OF 'TINY TOWN.' THE VENDORS ARE THE CITY SERVICES AND THE CUSTOMER IS THE CITIZENRY. THE MAYOR NEEDS TO KEEP BOTH CONSTITUENCIES HAPPY IF HE OR SHE WANTS TO STAY IN OFFICE."

PHILIP COLICCHIO,
ATTORNEY / FOOD HALL CONSULTANT

MODERN CHURRERIA
Postrique
Postrique
CHURROS TRADICIONAL $9
CONCHA COOKIES
$3.50 EACH
4 FOR $12
DULCE DE LECHE JARS $9
$20.00

MOBILE FOOD SCORES BIG WITH SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS FANS

In an Underutilized Converted Pier, the Only Way to Tackle Placemaking is Head On

49ERS DRAFT PARTY

For the San Francisco 49ers, staying connected and engaged with millions of fans means hosting unique events in unique spaces. The 49ers did just that on NFL Draft Day for several thousand of their most loyal. In April 2018, the 49ers played host to a draft party at the Port of San Francisco's Pier 29 — a landmark building on the waterfront of the San Francisco Bay operated by SF Metro Events. Despite fielding redevelopment proposals in the past, the space remains mostly vacant aside from one-off events that give guests a rare glimpse at the fully-realized potential of the classic waterfront structure.

For all its charm, the challenges of activating this unique venue are plenty: no kitchen, no nearby food options, and no onsite power. In other words — the perfect opportunity for mobile food to touch down.

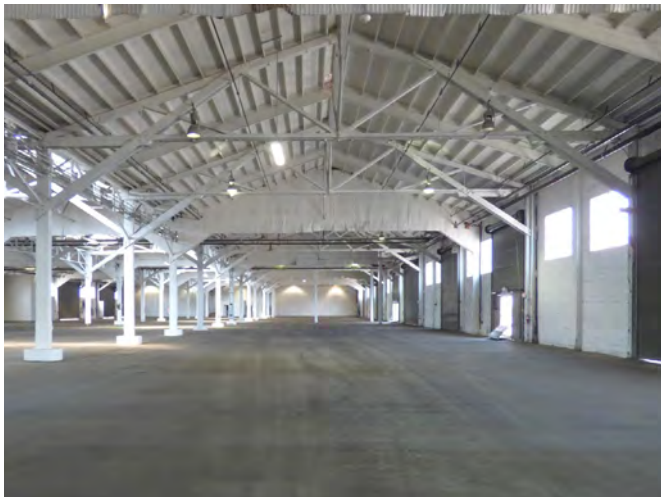
With the help of Off the Grid Catering, the 49ers brought in a fleet of mobile food options that activated the large space while creating intimacy and community. Mobile food's ability to adapt to a constrained venue enabled the 49ers to surprise and delight their fans with a truly unique event experience.

PLAY BY NUMBERS

67,500 sq. ft.

3,300 attendees

12 cuisine types



"PIER 29 IS A UNIQUE EVENT SPACE WITH RAW INFRASTRUCTURE AND AN EXPANSIVE LAYOUT. WHEN OFF THE GRID BROUGHT MOBILE FOOD INSIDE PIER 29, IT BROUGHT OUR 100-YEAR-OLD HISTORIC VENUE TO LIFE."

KIMBERLEY PATTEN,
SALES & MARKETING MANAGER,
SF METRO EVENTS

How Mobile Food Fosters Social Cohesion, Connection and Understanding in Common (and Uncommon) Places

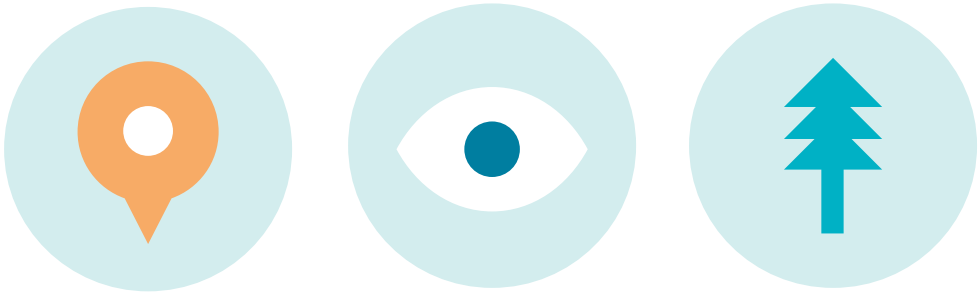
Whether public or private, mobile food experiences go beyond just the culinary offerings itself, providing a spontaneous gathering place where friends, neighbors and strangers can connect.

Creative uses of mobile food can provoke thought, conversation and build community by inserting pockets of the unexpected into the urban fabric.

Indeed, the role of mobile food experiences in society can be likened to that of a "third place" — a term coined by influential sociologist Ray Oldenburg to describe "places outside of home and work where people can congregate and socialize with old friends and new."

A catalyst for activity, vitality and enriching encounters, the real potential of mobile food lies in its capacity to draw people out — out from their homes and offices,

TOP FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE MOBILE FOOD ATTENDANCE



1 PROXIMITY

Convenient access from one's home or office.

2 RESTORATION

The ability to relax and enjoy one's surroundings.

3 DISCOVERY

The ability to find and try new foods.

Off the Grid 2018 Guest Survey
Off the Grid Insights™

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH SHARED EXPERIENCE

“

AL FRESCO DINING IS CONDUCIVE TO BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS...AND THE FOOD TRUCK ATMOSPHERE IS IDEAL FOR BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS. ONE CAN LET THEIR HAIR DOWN, SO TO SPEAK. I'VE CONDUCTED DATES, AS WELL AS JOB INTERVIEWS AT VARIOUS OFF THE GRID GATHERINGS.

ANONYMOUS OFF THE GRID MARKETS GUEST

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY IN THE HEART OF OAKLAND

OFF THE GRID: LAKE MERRITT AT THE OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) has worked to fulfill their role as a "museum of the people" for nearly 50 years, making strategic shifts in their educational initiatives and programming to reflect issues that are important to the Oakland community.

OMCA recognized that mobile food could provide a creative way to advance this mission by offering a spontaneous place for people to gather and connect.

First launched as a pilot in 2012, Off the Grid: Lake Merritt at OMCA is a weekly celebration of creativity, community, and connection held every Friday evening in the heart of Oakland. Conceptualized as a way to expand the museum's reach to the streets, the event acts as a physical bridge to the surrounding community and brings in diverse new audiences with the lure of international mobile food offerings.

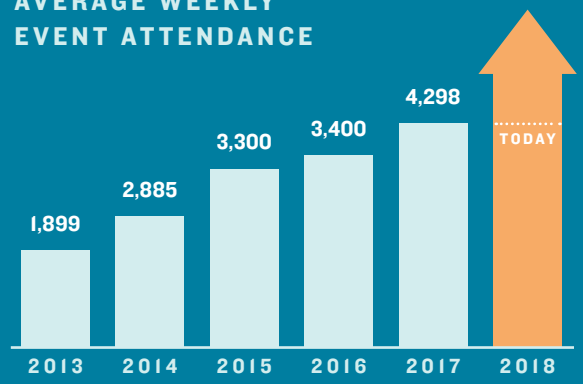
YEARS IN OPERATION

Six

MOBILE FOOD CREATORS

13-20

AVERAGE WEEKLY EVENT ATTENDANCE



"OUR WORK IS ABOUT MAKING A PLACE FOR PEOPLE TO COME TOGETHER AT A TIME WHEN MANY PEOPLE FEEL DISCONNECTED — FROM THE PLACE THEY LIVE, FROM THE PEOPLE THEY CONSIDER FAMILY, OR FROM A PURPOSE THAT FEELS BIGGER THAN THEMSELVES. FRIDAY NIGHTS AT OMCA IS PERHAPS THE BIGGEST GAME-CHANGER FOR THE MUSEUM, WHEN WE ROLL OUT THE WELCOME MAT TO OAKLAND."

LORI FOGARTY, DIRECTOR AND CEO, OMCA

THE TEMPORARY TOWN HALL

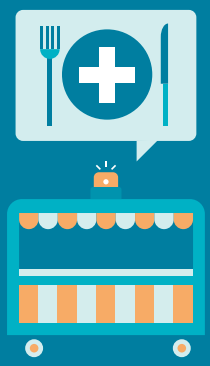
NOURISHING HOPE WITH MOBILE FOOD IN THE FACE OF TRAGEDY

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA FIRE RELIEF EFFORTS

In the fall of 2017, a series of powerful wildfires ravaged Northern California — one of the deadliest firestorms in state history — burning upwards of 245,000 acres throughout Napa, Lake, Sonoma, Mendocino, Butte and Solano Counties, and forcing 90,000 people to evacuate from their homes.

Armed with a vast pool of mobile food creators eager to help, along with the logistical capability to organize and deploy quickly, Off the Grid mobilized its platform to serve meals in the hardest hit communities. With the help of partner organizations on the ground, more than 10,000 meals were served to people in need — including first responders coming off 36-hour shifts, farm workers facing uncertain futures, and displaced community members dwelling in temporary shelters.

With many civic spaces damaged beyond repair, these impromptu mobile food gatherings functioned as a surrogate town hall, a place for people to see their neighbors, commiserate and feel restored.



SERVICE PERIOD
3 weeks

MEALS SERVED
10,169

MOBILE FOOD CREATORS
28

"FOOD TRUCKS CAN BE A REAL CENTER OF A COMMUNITY. ALL OF THE SUDDEN, IT'S LIKE A HURRAH — THERE'S FOOD IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. WE COME TOGETHER FOR LUNCH AND IT FEELS LIKE A COMMUNITY CENTER, AND THAT'S BEEN REALLY IMPORTANT."

SANTA ROSA RESIDENT (OCTOBER 2017)

“THE OFF THE GRID EVENT IN EL CERRITO HAS BECOME A KEY GATHERING PLACE FOR OUR SMALL COMMUNITY. IT BRINGS BOTH RESIDENTS AND VISITORS TO OUR CITY THAT MIGHT NOT OTHERWISE SPEND EXTENDED TIME IN THE AREA. IN ADDITION TO THE ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR NEIGHBORING BUSINESS, THE CITY OF EL CERRITO HAS LEVERAGED THE ATTENDANCE AT OFF THE GRID EVENTS TO ENGAGE CITIZENS ON A NUMBER OF CIVIC ACTIVITIES.

MAYA WILLIAMS,
ASSISTANT TO THE CITY MANAGER,
CITY OF EL CERRITO

THE FUTURE OF MOBILE FOOD

INDUSTRY LEADERS WEIGH IN

MATT COHEN

CEO & FOUNDER, OFF THE GRID

> The consumers of tomorrow will look for quality, variety and authenticity all wrapped in a single experience. Mobile food, more than any other industry, is positioned to rise up and meet this demand.

In 2019, The mobile food industry will be defined by holistic hospitality experiences that go beyond food; new entrepreneurial pathways and flexible vending opportunities will also give cooks direct access to the market and allow them to scale without pain.

PHILIP COLICCHIO

FOUNDER, COLICCHIO CONSULTING

> Placemaking has never been about creating a short term ‘wow factor’ that fades into a sunset, nor will it be in the future. As food and beverage experiences become increasingly mobile, it will be more important than ever to remain grounded in the fundamentals of venue operation, delivering on the consumer’s expectations for quality and consistency in every interaction. This kind of thinking will be key to the honest cultivation of relationships with customers in 2019, and beyond.

EVAN KIDERA

CO-OWNER, SEÑOR SISIG

> The history of mobile food is cyclical. We started out during the 2008 recession and we carved out our path. The past ten years have been a huge boom for the industry, but in a lot of ways it's still in puberty. We have another five to ten years until it becomes something that's really mature. Once that happens it'll be a more even playing field, with legislation that addresses the realities of cities and suburbs. Maybe some of the newer entrants won't have to deal with the pains that we did.

ANTHONY MYINT

CO-FOUNDER, THE PERENNIAL / MISSION CHINESE FOOD
FOUNDER, MISSION STREET FOOD

> Since launching Mission Street Food a decade ago, the mobile food scene has become so widespread and diverse. I think the flexible dining models that launched our own restaurant careers will continue to make food more accessible by lowering costs and other barriers to entry for aspiring chefs. And when food is made accessible, we all benefit — not only by giving chefs the chance to experiment and innovate with their food, but by bringing people together over the common experience of a meal.

SAM MOGANNAM

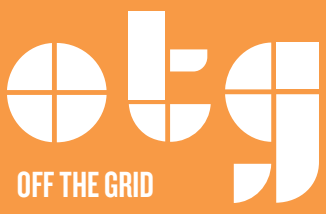
FOUNDING PARTNER,
BI-RITE FAMILY OF BUSINESSES

> Mobile food will play a critical role in our success in 2019. In the past year, we were able to influence the creation of new legislation that allows brick and mortar food service establishments — that normally wouldn't be allowed to have a mobile food facility in front of their business — the opportunity to do so when their building undergoes a mandatory seismic retrofit. This allows businesses like ours to keep staff employed and retain our connection to the community during multiple months of construction. The flexibility that mobile food provides an entrepreneur can be utilized in so many ways to meet the needs of a consumer that wants service wherever they are.

“IN A LOT OF WAYS, I THINK FOOD IS STARTING TO TAKE THE PLACE IN CULTURE THAT ROCK AND ROLL TOOK 30 YEARS AGO.”

JONATHAN GOLD, BELOVED LOS ANGELES-BASED
RESTAURANT CRITIC AND LIFELONG AMBASSADOR
OF MOBILE FOOD IN ALL ITS FORMS (1960-2018)

Off the Grid is a mobile events platform that allows people to connect over a shared love of food and community.



@offthegridsf
offthegrid.com