



The Osage Café

Mission To employ underserved young adults and train them in skills to help them succeed in the culinary industry.

Location 1099 Osage Street Denver, CO 80204 (Mariposa District)

Launch Year 2013

Summary

The Osage Café is a social enterprise café and training program for underserved youth interested in careers in the culinary industry. The Osage Café is a program of Youth Employment Academy (YEA), a nonprofit dedicated to serving young adults in breaking the cycle of generational poverty in Denver by gaining stability through education, arts and technology, and employment training.

Youth in the program first participate in a classroom-based curriculum that covers knife skills, recipe reading, measuring techniques, food safety, sanitation, and nutrition and receive the National Restaurant Association's ServSafe certification. Next, youth complete have the opportunity to complete an internship, building practical front- and back-of-house skills in an on-the-job training setting. Skills covered include serving, point of sales, food prep, line cooking, dishwashing, and superior customer service. Youth learn from an Executive Chef who manages the kitchen, ensures food quality, and offers mentorship to aspiring chefs. At the completion of their internship, Osage Café helps youth find placements in permanent jobs or additional post-secondary training. The Café is certified as a green business by the City of Denver strives to operate sustainably for the environment. It is open to the public Monday-Friday from 8:00-2:00 and serves breakfast and lunch.

Outside of regular operating hours, youth have access to further learning and can access Osage Café's kitchen as a commissary kitchen. The Osage Café will soon extend the scope of its internship training to include preparing grab-and-go items for grocery stores and nonperishable items such as pickles, salsas, and sauces. The Café will also expand programming available to youth who have completed the training program.

Objectives

- 1 Offer youth the foundational knowledge and certification required to succeed in the culinary industry.
- 2 Offer a safe and supportive environment for youth to explore their professional interests and plan their next career steps.
- 3 Provide supplemental income to youth in the internship program.
- 4 Operate a financially and environmentally sustainable café with high-quality and nutritious food offerings.
- 5 Offer cooking and nutrition classes to the Mariposa community.

Neighborhood

The Mariposa District is a mixed-income neighborhood in Central Denver with 1,500 residents.



The Osage Café is in the process of expanding existing programs to incorporate wholesale operations. The Cafe is contracting with multiple partners around the city to provide healthy grab and go food options, including Decatur Fresh and Meow Wolf. Training and internships will be made available in wholesale to train participants on nutrition, packaging, and production.

In 2022, the Cafe is looking to further expand operations and establish the Osage Cafe and Mercado at 1015 Osage. The Cafe and Mercado will include in person dining for breakfast and lunch as well as bring fresh produce, pantry items, household staples, dairy, meat, and more to the Mariposa District. This will be integral in bringing healthy food options to the neighborhood.

Key Partnerships

- Denver Botanic Gardens
- Colorado High School Charter
- Mile High 360
- Meow Wolf

Impact

Short-term Outcomes

- Participants increase employability and labor market competitiveness.
- Participants are stabilized and able to focus on completing training.
- Osage Café makes a profit.
- Community members increase knowledge of healthy cooking and nutrition.

- Participants increase employment skills, including hard skills, soft skills, credentials, and workplace readiness and gain on-the-job experience.
- Participants earn needed income.
- Osage Café is a thriving social enterprise.
- The community is no longer a food desert.

Mid-term Outcomes

- Participants are matched with unsubsidized jobs that provide a career with a livable wage.
- Participants launch their food businesses through Micro-Restaurant Incubator or Business Incubator.
- Osage Café is a sustainable business.
- Community members increase healthy cooking and eating behaviors.

Long-term Outcomes

The Osage Café is an LLC under parent nonprofit Youth Employment Academy (YEA), an affiliate of DHA.

[Osage Café Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)

