

Gary R. Coburn

Restaurant Concept Innovations
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Award-winning restaurant executive, operator, consultant, and expert witness with over 45 years of experience in the restaurant and hospitality industry. Mr. Coburn has helped create, open, operate, reposition, and advise hundreds of restaurant, bar, hospitality, and foodservice concepts throughout the United States ranging from independent restaurants to regional and national brands.

His background includes service as an owner, operator, franchisor, consultant, President, Chief Operating Officer, and General Manager, with extensive experience in restaurant operations, hospitality management, franchising, staffing, training systems, operational safety, commercial kitchen design/build, and concept development.

Mr. Coburn remains actively involved in restaurant operations and concept development through Restaurant Concept Innovations and current projects including Lily's Donuts & Pops and Lily's Donuts & Coffee in Santa Barbara, with additional expansion initiatives planned beyond 2026. His opinions are grounded not only in decades of industry leadership, but also in continued day-to-day operational involvement within the restaurant and hospitality industry.

Mr. Coburn also maintains an active expert witness practice involving restaurant operations, hospitality industry standards, premises safety, staffing and training, foodservice operations, burns and hot beverage incidents, alcohol awareness, and operational safety matters, with engagements in over 70 cases across 14 states involving both plaintiff and defense representation.

Concepts worked for, consulted for, owned, developed, or created include:

<i>Cask 'n Cleaver</i>	<i>Pangea</i>	<i>The Ball Room</i>	<i>Lily's Donuts & Pops</i>
<i>Lord Charlie's</i>	<i>The Ballroom</i>	<i>Slick Willie's</i>	<i>Honolulu Harry's</i>
<i>El Gato Gordo</i>	<i>Juarez Grill</i>	<i>Rodeo</i>	<i>Lahaina Mai Tai Lounge</i>
<i>Pizza Pronto</i>	<i>Dickerson's Club 29</i>	<i>Jake's</i>	<i>Canyon Grill</i>
<i>Safari Bar</i>	<i>Yucatan Liquor Stand</i>	<i>Bobs on the Bay</i>	<i>Campagna</i>
<i>Restaurant</i>	<i>Zepps Atomic Tex Mex</i>	<i>Crabby Bob's Seafood</i>	<i>Huey's Grill & Brewery</i>
<i>Shark Club</i>	<i>Cabo Grill</i>	<i>PizzaRev</i>	<i>Gladstone's Long Beach</i>
<i>Bull Dog Grill</i>	<i>Angel Stadium</i>	<i>Joe's Crab Shack</i>	<i>Pro's Ranch Markets</i>
<i>Stronghouse</i>	<i>In Cahoots</i>	<i>Lily's Donuts & Coffee</i>	

Professional Experience

2020 - Present

Restaurant Concept Innovations, est. 2004 *San Juan Capistrano, CA*

President & Principal

- Partner in the development and operation of the Lily's Donuts & Pops and Lily's Donuts & Coffee concepts in Santa Barbara, with additional expansion initiatives planned beyond 2026.
- Full-service restaurant consulting business focused on developing new concepts, repositioning existing operations, and providing operational support for independent and multi-unit foodservice businesses.
- Services and operational experience include:
 - Operations manuals, policies, and procedures.
 - Restaurant operational systems and training.
 - Equipment design and facility layouts.
 - Menu engineering and product development.
 - Permitting assistance involving Health Departments, City agencies, Alcoholic Beverage Control, and Life Safety agencies.
 - Concept development from vision and planning through opening and day-to-day operations.
- Active expert witness practice involving restaurant and hospitality operations, premises safety, slip/trip/fall incidents, burns and hot beverage incidents, staffing and training, operational safety matters, alcohol awareness, and restaurant business and concept-related disputes.
- As of 2026, expert witness engagements include over 70 cases in 14 states involving both plaintiff and defense representation, with matters historically remaining relatively balanced between plaintiff and defense.

2019 - 2021

Avanti Restaurant Solutions *Costa Mesa, CA*

Chief Operating Officer

- Commercial kitchen design/build and foodservice consulting firm supporting hundreds of restaurant and hospitality projects annually.
- Initially retained as a consultant before assuming the role of Chief Operating Officer and leading operational restructuring initiatives across the organization.
- Developed and implemented a five-year strategic plan focused on market expansion, manufacturer relationships, operational growth, and revenue diversification.
- Project and client experience included national restaurant brands, healthcare facilities, and large-scale foodservice operations, including:
 - Del Taco
 - Qdoba
 - Blaze Pizza

- Dave's Hot Chicken
- Snowflake Campus
- Modoc Medical Center

2018 - 2020

Restaurant Concept Innovations, est. 2004 San Juan Capistrano, CA

President & Principal Consulting Company

- Provided consulting services for restaurant operators, startups, and kitchen equipment contractors involving concept development, operational support, and business planning:
 - Revenue diversification planning.
 - Operational assessments and strategic planning.
 - Assisting clients with business wind-down and transition planning.
 - Development of turnkey opening plans for new restaurant concepts.

2013 - 2018

TriMark USA (formerly RW Smith) Irvine, CA

VP National Accounts & Design Build

- National commercial kitchen design/build and foodservice equipment contractor supporting restaurant, hospitality, entertainment, and institutional foodservice projects throughout the United States.
- Served in an executive leadership role overseeing two business units with combined annual revenues exceeding \$120 million.
- Responsibilities included national accounts management, operational leadership, strategic growth initiatives, large-scale project oversight, and client development.
- Client and project experience included:
 - Cheesecake Factory Worldwide
 - BJ's Restaurants
 - P.F. Chang's
 - Habit Burger
 - Jack in the Box
 - SoFi Stadium, Los Angeles
 - Chase Center / Golden State Warriors, San Francisco

RW Smith Costa Mesa, CA

General Manager, Commercial Kitchen Design/Build Division

- Managed and led the turnaround of the commercial kitchen design/build division into a profitable and award-winning operation prior to the company's transition into TriMark USA.
- Oversaw large-scale hospitality, institutional, healthcare, and government foodservice design/build projects.
- Representative projects and awards included:
 - High Desert Regional Health Center – DBIA National Award of Merit
 - Los Colinas Detention Facility – DBIA Design Excellence Award and Distinction Award
 - Los Angeles College Monarch Center – DBIA National Award of Merit
 - Edson Range and Chappo Dining Facility, Camp Pendleton – Multiple Industry Awards

2011 – 2013

Pro's Ranch Markets

Executive Director of Food Services, *National Locations / Consultant*

- Directed a \$56 million foodservice division for one of the nation's leading Hispanic grocery chains, overseeing taquerías, full-service bakeries, commissaries, and tortilla factories across multiple locations.
- Led nearly 2,000 employees and 170 managers across operations, product development, training, budgeting, marketing, fiscal performance, and concept development.
- Developed a centralized tamale production and distribution operation to improve consistency and operational efficiency.
- Established a bakery commissary system to support and relieve production pressure on in-store bakery operations.
- Transitioned operations from heavily labor-intensive food production toward strategic partnerships with high-quality manufacturers and suppliers.
- Oversaw branding, merchandising, in-store graphics, point-of-sale materials, and weekly promotional advertising initiatives for foodservice departments under his operational leadership.

2004 – 2011

Restaurant Concept Innovations, *Ladera Ranch, CA*

President & Principal Consulting Company

- Provided consulting services for restaurant operators ranging from startup concepts to established multi-unit operations.
- Services included menu concept development, research and development, product selection, plate presentation, opening and operations manuals, training systems, implementation, pre-opening oversight, Front of House and Back of House operations, restaurant accounting, and ongoing operational support.
- Oversaw development and construction of the ground-up 10,000-square-foot Gladstone's Long Beach waterfront location through successful opening and ongoing operations, including FOH and BOH training systems, menu development, and fiscal performance oversight.
- Projects and concepts received industry recognition and awards including "Best Fine Dining" by the California Restaurant Association, the "La Fourchette D'or" Award, and the "Sterling Silver" Award from the Southern California Restaurant Writers.

2009 - 2012

Restaurant Concept Innovations Group Purchasing Organization (RCIGPO), *Ladera Ranch, CA*

Owner

- Created a strategic partnership between the Orange County Restaurant Association and Restaurant Concept Innovations (RCI) to develop a group purchasing organization that enabled participating members to leverage collective buying power and reduce operating costs.

2007 - 2011

Lahaina Restaurant Group, DBA Lahaina Mai Tai Lounge, Maui, HI

Founder and Member

- Created and developed all aspects of the Lahaina Mai Tai Lounge concept for a unique waterfront location on Front Street in Lahaina, Maui.
- Responsibilities included concept development, branding, menu development, operational systems, staffing, training, and overall guest experience design.
- Recognized by the Maui Times as “Best Mai Tai in Maui” and runner-up for “Best New Restaurant in Maui.”

2002 - 2004

Hanalei Bay Restaurant Group (HBRG) Corona, CA

President / Founder

- Part of an investment and restaurant development group involved in the acquisition, development, and expansion of restaurant concepts through investments in Pacific Ocean Restaurants and CBSI.
- Participated in strategic planning and concept expansion initiatives involving the conversion and development of restaurant operations from an existing restaurant base.

2001 - 2002

Crabby Bob’s Seafood, Inc. (CBSI) Oceanside, CA

President

- Led operations and concept development for Crabby Bob’s Seafood, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary formed in connection with the acquisition and operation of restaurant locations associated with Pacific Ocean Restaurants.
- Responsibilities included restaurant operations, concept development, strategic planning, and operational oversight for multiple restaurant concepts.

1998 - 2001

Pacific Ocean Restaurants (POR), Capistrano Beach, CA

President & COO

- Co-founded Pacific Ocean Restaurants in partnership with the former CEO of Chart House to develop, acquire, operate, franchise, license, and reposition restaurant concepts within the quick-service, quick-casual, and casual dining segments of the restaurant industry.
- Responsibilities included restaurant operations, concept development, strategic planning, mergers and acquisitions activity, franchising initiatives, licensing, and operational oversight across multiple restaurant brands and concepts.
- Participated in the development, franchising, licensing, and operational expansion of the Crabby Bob’s Seafood brand in California and Georgia.

1986 - 1998

SUSA, Houston, TX

President & COO

- Executive leadership role for a restaurant management and development company generating more than \$60 million in annual revenues through a combination of fee-based management agreements, concept development, partnership structures, and full ownership operations.
- Helped create, develop, open, and operate more than 20 restaurant and entertainment concepts across multiple markets throughout the United States, including projects from Sacramento to San Diego and Chicago to Tampa.
- Concepts and operations included Joe's Crab Shack (sold to Landry's in 1992), In Cahoots, Huey's American Grill, Crabby Bob's Seafood, and Safari Bar & Restaurant.

1981-1986

Cask n' Cleaver, Rancho Cucamonga, CA

Regional Manager

- Progressed through multiple operational and management positions from Manager in Training to General Manager, District Manager, and Regional Manager within the C&C Organization.
- Developed hands-on operational experience across all aspects of restaurant operations including kitchen operations, food preparation, guest service, bar operations, staffing, training, and multi-unit management.
- Oversaw restaurant operations within an organization operating 32 restaurant locations throughout California, including concepts such as Cask n' Cleaver, Lord Charlie's, and El Gato Gordo.

Organizations

- Former longtime member of Vistage International (formerly TEC International), a peer advisory and executive leadership organization for CEOs, business owners, and senior executives, with participation spanning more than two decades.
- Guest speaker at numerous hospitality industry conventions and events including the National Restaurant Association (NRA) Show and Nightclub & Bar in Las Vegas.
- Former Board Member, Meals on Wheels Orange County.
 - Former Governance Committee Chair.
 - Current Governance Committee Member.
 - Active participant in special projects and strategic initiatives supporting program growth and community outreach.
 - Former SeniorServ Strategic Planning Committee and Food Service Advisory Council member.
- Cash Flow Management Program, Chapman College.
- California TIPS and Responsible Beverage Service (RBS) Certified.
- SEAK Expert Witness Training.