



# TIPS TO START YOUR DRIVE-THRU COFFEE STAND BUSINESS

A Complementary Guide

by Coffee Shop Startups







**There are a variety of drive-thru coffee stand concepts you can choose from. Pick a concept that fits your budget, your available space, and your menu.**





## YOUR GUIDE TO START A DRIVE-THRU COFFEE STAND SUCCESSFULLY

Opening a drive-thru coffee stand can be an excellent business opportunity, no matter where you live. From big cities to smaller towns, suburbs, and rural communities, a drive-thru coffee stand has the potential to be successful.

Demographic studies indicate that busy coffee drinkers want to treat themselves to fast, convenient, low-cost splurges, even in a downward market. So yes, it makes sense to open a drive-thru coffee business.



# Steps For Starting Your Drive-Thru Coffee Stand

## 1. DETERMINE YOUR DRIVE-THRU COFFEE SHOP CONCEPT

What will your drive-thru coffee shop look like? What type of experience will your customers have? Developing your vision and concept of your drive-thru coffee stand will be a significant first step in answering these questions.

If you don't know where to start, consider visiting some local drive-thru coffee stands in your area. Pay attention to their location, coffee, food, and coffee branding. Whether they are "family-friendly" drive-thru coffee stands or bikini barista coffee stands, you can learn a lot from visiting existing drive-thru businesses.

## 2. WRITE A COFFEE SHOP BUSINESS PLAN

Every successful business starts with a plan. Writing a well-written business plan before you begin a drive-thru coffee stand. Your written plan will become the cornerstone of your coffee business planning. It will only serve to help you develop, execute, and launch a coffee stand business the way you envision it to be.

Having a business plan will help you save money from the start, helping you avoid mistakes, and ensuring you cover everything. It will help streamline your efforts and spending.



### 3. DEVELOP YOUR DRIVE-THRU COFFEE SHOP MENU

Your menu will decide how you will ultimately proceed when you start your drive-thru coffee stand. Your menu determines your need for space, coffee equipment, workflow, and how many baristas you plan to hire.

Additionally, your coffee menu may impact your permitting requirements necessary to operate your business.

You also need to determine your target customer as you are developing your coffee shop business plan. Once you determine who your customers are, you can deepen your drive-thru menu options. Muffins, scones, cookies are popular drive-thru coffee stand options. These all go well with espresso-based beverages.

### 4. FIND A PERFECT DRIVE-THRU COFFEE STAND LOCATION

When you start a drive-thru coffee stand business, your location means just about everything to your success.

Common drive-thru coffee stand locations: empty parking lots, gas stations with extra space, empty commercial lots

Finding the right location actually depends on:

- Accessibility
- Thriving traffic
- Healthy customer base
- Monthly costs
- Zoning requirements
- Existing competition

You also want to look at factors that include competition, labor laws, taxes, and zoning requirements.



## 5. YOUR DRIVE-THRU COFFEE SHOP COMPETITION

Sizing up the competition matters. Drive around and look at coffee shops, drive-thru coffee stands, and substitute businesses in your area.

What are these coffee businesses offering, and what can you add to your menu to help differentiate yourself from them?

Ask important questions:

- What is your competition doing right?
- What are they doing wrong?
- Where are their existing customers coming from?
- How can you better capture their attention?
- How can you differentiate yourself?

Figuring out your competition is a critical element to your drive-thru coffee stand success. So, start analyzing your competition earlier in your planning.

## 6. GETTING A DRIVE-THRU COFFEE STAND STRUCTURE

Decide if you are going to build, rent, or buy your drive-thru coffee stand structure. Each option has a significant impact on your overall startup budget, time constraints, and access to available supplies and contractors.

Building a drive-thru stand structure may be the most affordable option. But you will need access to the tools, equipment, and space for the build-out.

You can also choose to buy a drive-thru structure that is new or used. Buying an existing drive-thru stand can speed up the process of opening your coffee business.

Renting out a drive-thru stand is also a common and lower-cost alternative to buying or building out your own stand.





## 7. FIND YOUR COFFEE VENDORS AND PARTNERS

If you have figured out your drive-thru coffee stand menu, you will know which vending partners to seek out to serve your customers best.

For example, if you plan on selling bagels, you will determine who can provide you with a fresh assortment of wholesale bagels regularly. Everything on your menu will require a wholesale source unless you plan on making it yourself.

Consider the following vendor questions:

- Where will you get your coffee from?
- Where will you get your muffins and doughnuts from?
- Which vendor will you get your paper cups, lids, and napkins from?

## 8. CHOOSE YOUR DRIVE-THRU COFFEE SHOP EQUIPMENT

From refrigerators to coffee grinders, your business cannot run without essential coffee equipment. Planning and budget for your coffee equipment purchases early.

There are several major pieces of equipment you will need to open a drive-thru coffee stand:

- Espresso Machine
- Coffee grinders
- Blenders
- Ice-machine
- Refrigerator

Your espresso machine may be the most significant purchase. Choosing the right espresso machine means estimating your space, speed, and capacity to handle customers' busy rush hours.





**Drive-thru coffee stands business startup costs vary depending on size, location, menu, and amenities. Your business concept will determine the overall cost of your drive-thru stand.**





Starting a drive-thru coffee stand can be fun and profitable. Let us help. Learn how to run a coffee business from day one.

Additional reading:

- [Explore other coffee shop concepts here.](#)
- [How much does a coffee shop owner make?](#)



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