Cook Takes To Road With Digital Plan
Sunrise Tortillas maps out food truck strategy using online orders.

Starting a restaurant can be expensive, but so can starting a food truck, where some estimates can run from $28,000 up to $114,000.

To avoid the expense and uncertainty of a traditional food truck, one local entrepreneur has started what she calls a "virtual food truck," specializing in breakfast burritos, using $10,000 of her own money.

"I am a complete efficiency and process geek," said Emily Tellez, 48, who started Sunrise Tortillas in August. "I’ve eliminated all the risks of wasting food."

Rather than hanging out on the street not knowing whether she’ll sell everything she’s made, Tellez has customers place orders through her website, SunriseTortilla.com, by 5 p.m. the day before they want them. She begins preparing the burritos at 3 a.m., making each of them by 6 a.m. weekdays and 8 a.m. Saturdays at prearranged stops in her SUV.

Tellez said she doesn’t know of any other food trucks operating in such a way and the method is certainly different than the typical trucks that have filled L.A. streets in recent years. The L.A. food truck scene has grown from a trendy niche industry to a mainstream business model, with an estimated 3,200 operating in Los Angeles County as of 2014.

Tellez said she has been selling about 300 to 500 burritos a week at $6.75 each and estimates she’ll do $150,000 in sales next year.

"I’m going for the slow done on this," she said. "The growth is much slower probably but the expenses are very manageable.”

Tellez came up with her concept as a way to earn a living while spending more time with her 16-year-old daughter. Before moving to Los Angeles, she owned a restaurant outside of Washington, D.C., where she tested out the burritos as a one-off.

Eventually, Tellez wants to add a brick-and-mortar location serving breakfast and lunch. She hopes the food truck will help her identify the best area as well as attract a partner or investor.

Game Targets New Type Of Programmers
CodeSpark’s Foss aims to speak to young kids on coding language.

In a world where computer skills are becoming increasingly important, Granit Hoxford feels it’s never too early to teach children how to program — even before they can read.

To that end, Hoxford co-founded CodeSpark in December 2014 to teach children as young as 4 the concepts of computer programming with the help of a free, video game-inspired video game called Foss, from which kids solve puzzles and eventually design their own video games. The game uses images in lieu of traditional coding language and players can share their creations with other users.

Hoxford

More than 5 million children in 201 countries have played the game, and, in its success, Hoxford said, can be attributed to being wireless.

"Pre-readers can play and anyone who speaks any language can play," he said.

Hoxford came up with the idea for CodeSpark when he couldn’t find a suitable resource to teach coding to his daughter, who was 6 at the time. The subscription app costs $7.99 a month but is free for teachers and nonprofits, libraries, and schools.

In late September, the Pennsylvania company raised $4.1 million in a second round of seed funding from some of its original investors, Kapor Capital, New Gen Capital, and Ideals, which helped raise $1.35 million last year, as well as newcomers Felton Group, PGA Ventures, and some private investors.

Presidential Endorsement
Dr. Mark Humayun, professor of ophthalmology, biomedical engineering, and cell and molecular biology at JHBS, received an unexpected surprise from President Barack Obama when he was awarded the National Medal of Technology and Innovation last year.

"These sorts of awards, I’ve never really kept as something to look at or get," he said. "I do the work for completely different reasons, (but) when it happens it’s a great thing."

Humayun, who declined to give his age, co-invented a series of retina implants called Argus that help restore sight to the blind — technology he has worked on for 30 years. Nobel meeting Obama was much easier than he expected, especially since he was a list of things not to do for security reasons, such as touching the president.

"We’re so friendly, the first thing he did is give you a big handshake," Humayun said. "It’s just very cordial and warm, but the Secret Service was obviously very much alert.

Checklist
Turning 60 is a major milestone for anyone, but for Ann Marie Mortimer, managing partner at the law firm of Martin & Williams, her birthdate this year has been marked with solemn reflection. Mortimer’s mother died in January, and it encouraged her. In the downtown attorney to reflect on things she’s kept track of all her adventures with photos and in a journal, and said she’s still seeking suggestions for the best duck hunters in Los Angeles.

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