

Captain D's navigates turbulent economy, finds success

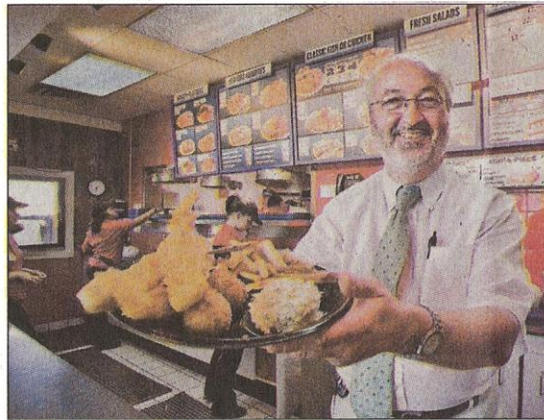
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Some fast food restaurants have struggled while others found ways to succeed in the current economy.

Many of the restaurants had to either find new methods or improve on current ones to attract customers.

"Typically in a down economy, people tend to dine down," Charles Graham, the chief executive officer of Dorfoods, Inc., which owns eight Capt. D's restaurants in the state, said.

By dining down, he referred to how people tend to look for less expensive options. Capt. D's offers a lot of the same food and service as more expensive



RICK CRIDER / Enquirer-Journal

Jeff Graham, manager of Captain D's Seafood in Monroe.

seafood restaurants for a variety of meal options and lesser price, he said.

"I would say that Capt. D's has benefitted from the economy," he said.

The restaurant offers a

variety of meal options and good quality food. Many items are hand cut, hand-made or even made from scratch. They also offer healthy non-fried options,

he said.

"We had a good year, we were up from our prior year," Jeff Graham, the area supervisor for Dorfoods, Inc., said.

Besides the quality of the food, he thinks many people continue to flock to Capt. D's for the friendly service. The Monroe location on Roosevelt Boulevard and some of the company's other locations have gone through recent remodels which involved painted the restaurants in a new color scheme and changing the lighting inside the restaurant, he said.

"Change is good," he said. "When we start changing the colors or the building people notice."

While Capt. D's has seen recent success, other fast food businesses aren't doing as well in the economy.

"It's been a roller coaster ride," Connie Rinehardt, a manager at Pie in the Sky Pizza in Monroe, said.

The Monroe location has been open about a year. The restaurant's Charlotte location has been open much longer and is currently doing a lot better, she said.

"We're advertising a little more (for the Monroe location) and doing whatever we can to cut costs," she said.

The prices at the restaurant are a little higher than what you would expect at more well known pizza establishments, but she feels their pizza is a better quality because of the way it is made, she said.

"As gas prices went up, we've seen less customers," she said.

Arby's at 2101 W. Roosevelt Boulevard has not been affected a lot lately by the economy, Christina Scott, the restaurant's general manager, said.

Like Pie in the Sky Pizza, the restaurant did see a drop in customers when gas prices went up but is still doing pretty good business wise, she said.

"The value menu helped," she said.

The restaurant introduced the value menu, which features items ranging in price from \$1 to \$1.30, about a year ago. The menu helps Arby's better compete with other fast food establishments that offer similar menus, she said.