Daiquiri Shop Startup Guide

What We Wish Every New Daiquiri Shop Owner Knew Before Opening

By The BNC Group

For nearly 50 years, The BNC Group has worked with bars, restaurants, and daiquiri operators throughout Louisiana. We've seen successful stores grow into multi-location operations, and we've seen others struggle because of mistakes that could have been avoided during the planning stage.

This guide shares some of the most important lessons we've learned over the years.

Choosing the Right Location

The location you choose may have a greater impact on your success than any equipment, recipe, or marketing decision you make.

While rental rates and building costs are important, experienced operators know that convenience, visibility, accessibility, and traffic patterns often determine whether a location thrives or struggles.

Before signing a lease, spend time studying the area during different times of the day and week. Pay attention to traffic flow, nearby attractions, residential growth, and seasonal activity patterns.

If Drive-Thru Service Is Permitted, Design Matters

If state and local regulations allow drive-thru alcohol sales, don't simply ask whether a drive-thru is possible. Ask whether it will function efficiently during your busiest periods.

Important considerations include:

- Is the drive-thru easy to enter and exit?
- Can customers easily understand the traffic flow?
- How many vehicles can be staged without backing up into the roadway?
- Is there sufficient room for peak-hour traffic?
- Can vehicles navigate the lane without sharp or awkward turns?

A poorly designed drive-thru can create frustration and lost sales, while a well-designed drive-thru can become one of your greatest competitive advantages.

Understand Traffic Patterns

Not all traffic counts are equal.

Pay attention to the direction vehicles are traveling during your expected peak hours.

Ask yourself:

- Which side of the road carries the most traffic during afternoons and evenings?
- How easy is it for customers to enter your property?
- If there is a median, can drivers traveling in the opposite direction easily access your location?
- Will customers have to travel significantly out of their way to reach you?

Even a high-traffic location can underperform if customers find it inconvenient to access.

Visibility Matters

Many operators focus on traffic counts while overlooking visibility.

A location may have thousands of vehicles passing by every day, but if drivers cannot easily see your building, signage, or drive-thru entrance, those traffic counts may not translate into sales.

Look Beyond Traffic Counts

Some of the most successful daiquiri shops are located near:

- Growing residential neighborhoods
- Apartment developments
- Youth sports complexes
- Ball fields
- Parks
- Lakes and river recreation areas
- Campgrounds
- Boating destinations
- Popular outdoor gathering places

These destinations naturally generate the type of customer traffic that frozen beverage businesses rely on.

Consider Seasonal Traffic

Unlike many businesses, daiquiri shops often experience their highest sales during warmer months.

When evaluating a location, consider how traffic patterns change throughout the year.

Questions to ask include:

- Does this area become busier during spring and summer?

- Are there nearby lakes, rivers, or recreational destinations that attract seasonal visitors?
- Are youth sports tournaments held nearby?
- Does the area host festivals or outdoor events?

A location that benefits from increased warm-weather activity can significantly boost annual sales.

Know Your Competition

Many first-time operators assume they should avoid competitors at all costs. In reality, competition is neither inherently good nor bad. What matters is whether the market can support another daiquiri shop.

Consider:

- How many daiquiri shops already serve the area?
- How far are customers willing to travel for a daiquiri?
- Is the local population growing or declining?
- Are there enough rooftops and traffic generators to support multiple operators?
- What differentiates your concept from existing businesses?

A great location with moderate competition will often outperform a poor location with no competition at all.

Think About the Future

When choosing a location, don't just evaluate today's traffic. Consider where growth is headed.

Look for:

- New residential developments
- Planned commercial growth
- Road improvements
- Expanding school districts
- New recreational facilities

The best location is not always the busiest location today. Often, it's the location that will be busiest five years from now.

The Drive-Thru Advantage

Where permitted by state and local regulations, a drive-thru can be one of the most valuable features of a successful daiquiri shop.

While a drive-thru is not required to operate a profitable business, it can dramatically increase revenue and expand your customer base. In many cases, a properly designed drive-thru can increase sales by 50% to 60% compared to a similar operation without one.

1. The Drive-Thru Has No Personality

Every bar develops its own atmosphere and clientele.

The drive-thru removes that barrier.

Customers can purchase your products without being influenced by the crowd inside the building.

2. Parents Love Convenience

A mother or father with children in the car may not be able to leave their kids unattended while they walk inside to place an order.

Many customers appreciate the ability to pick up properly sealed beverages on their way home, to a gathering, or to another destination without the inconvenience of unloading children from the vehicle and entering the establishment.

3. You'll Reach Customers Who Don't Consider Themselves "Bar Customers"

Many drive-thru customers would never walk into a traditional bar.

The drive-thru broadens your customer base far beyond traditional bar patrons.

4. The Sales Impact Can Be Significant

A properly designed drive-thru can increase overall sales by 50% to 60% compared to a similar operation without one.

Equipment Planning: Think About Volume First

One of the biggest mistakes new operators make is purchasing equipment without accurately estimating demand.

At the end of the day, customers expect frozen daiquiris.

If your machines cannot keep up with demand, customer satisfaction suffers.

When selecting equipment, ask yourself:

- How many flavors will I offer?
- What are my projected peak-hour sales?
- How much product will I sell on weekends?
- Can my equipment recover quickly enough during rush periods?

The right equipment is determined by volume, not simply by startup budget.

Heat Management: The Hidden Challenge

Daiquiri machines generate a tremendous amount of heat.

For serious daiquiri operations with six or more machines, we strongly recommend considering:

Remote Refrigeration Systems

These systems move heat by locating the condensing units outside the building, reducing strain on the air conditioning system. One condensing unit can run up to three dispensers inside.

Water-Cooled Machines

Water-cooled equipment can significantly reduce heat buildup inside the store by using glycol or water to pull heat from the condenser and moving it outside via a cooling tower or chiller.

For dedicated daiquiri shops, this can be one of the most important design decisions you'll make.

Storage Requirements Are Often Underestimated

A successful daiquiri shop requires substantial storage capacity.

Items requiring storage include:

- Cups
- Lids
- Straws
- Napkins
- Frozen drink mixes
- Alcohol
- Cleaning supplies
- Janitorial products

When evaluating locations, always ask:

"Where am I going to put everything?"

Refrigerated Backup Product Is Essential

Successful shops maintain refrigerated backup inventory.

When a machine needs to be refilled, bartenders should have ready-to-use product available immediately.

Benefits include:

- Faster machine recovery
- Improved consistency
- Reduced labor pressure
- Better customer service

Designing an Efficient Mixing Area

Most operators prepare product in five-gallon batches by combining concentrated frozen drink mixes, alcohol, and water.

An efficient mixing area should include:

Large Commercial Three-Compartment Sink

Ideally with drainboards on both sides.

Easy Access to Ingredients

Your alcohol inventory and frozen drink mixes should be located close to the mixing station.

Poor workflow design creates unnecessary labor costs every day.

Marketing That Sells Itself

The most effective marketing often comes from your customers.

Ask yourself:

Will your drinks be worth posting?

A colorful layered drink in a clear cup with swirled flavors, a dome lid, whipped cream, fresh fruit, candy toppings, and eye-catching presentation becomes social media marketing.

When customers post photos to social media, they become your marketing team.

Design your drinks to be photographed.

Quality Ingredients Matter

Your reputation starts with the first sip.

Customers may try a drink once because of marketing.

They return because it tastes great.

At The BNC Group, our BAR Needs Frozen Drink Mixes are developed with a focus on:

- Flavor consistency
- Visual appeal
- Vibrant color
- Reliable performance

Because in the frozen beverage business, drinks need to look as good as they taste.

Why Daiquiri Shops Can Be Extremely Profitable

One of the biggest advantages of the daiquiri business is cost control.

A typical 20-ounce daiquiri often has a total product cost—including the mix, alcohol, cup, lid, and straw—of less than $2.

Depending on the market, that same drink may sell for approximately $7 or more.

Frozen beverage programs offer:

- Better inventory control
- More predictable margins
- Reduced waste
- Consistent customer experience
- Strong profit potential

When properly managed, daiquiri shops can generate attractive margins and strong cash flow.

Licensing & Regulatory Considerations

Alcohol beverage laws vary by state, parish, county, municipality, and licensing authority.

Before opening a daiquiri shop, operators should consult the appropriate regulatory agencies and ensure compliance with all applicable laws regarding alcohol sales, drive-thru service, packaging requirements, zoning, signage, and operating procedures.

Where drive-thru alcohol sales are permitted, operators should ensure that beverages are packaged, sealed, labeled, and sold in accordance with all state and local requirements.

Customers should always be encouraged to consume alcoholic beverages responsibly and only after arriving at their destination.

Final Thoughts

Opening a successful daiquiri shop requires much more than selecting flavors and buying machines.

The most successful operators carefully plan:

- Location
- Equipment
- Storage
- Workflow
- Product quality
- Marketing

The decisions made before opening day often determine long-term success.

The BNC Group has helped operators throughout Louisiana navigate these decisions for decades.

If you're planning to open a daiquiri shop, we're happy to help you avoid costly mistakes and build a profitable operation from day one.