

Catch 27 used Square to grow gross sales by 47% while cutting operating hours in half



Square helps Catch 27 expand despite staff shortages

Restaurateur Stephen Hutson opened Catch 27 to offer diners an alternative to the standard fried seafood fare in St. Augustine, Florida. The name was a nod to the fresh, locally-sourced catch featured at the boat-to-table restaurant and to Florida being the 27th state. As the business took off, Stephen leveraged the best technology he could find to keep the front and back of house running smoothly. “We opened our doors in 2013 and we’ve used Square since day one,” Stephen said.

Catch 27 moved to a larger space in 2015, adding 50 seats to the original 30. Since then, the restaurant has encountered its fair share of obstacles — including evacuations for hurricanes and COVID-19. When the pandemic



Products Used

- ✓ Square for Restaurants
- ✓ Square eGift Cards
- ✓ Square Marketing

forced the restaurant to shut down temporarily, Stephen was already in the process of improving his business operations. He wanted to run his restaurant more efficiently, while keeping customers coming back. But with only a portion of his staff able to return and facing supply chain issues, he had to get creative.

Square for Restaurants helps Catch 27 pivot to a casual upscale model and increase sales

Stephen relied on Square data to help him make informed business decisions. To solve the staffing shortage, he turned to Square reports and its QuickBooks integration. Digging into the numbers, Stephen learned that eliminating most lunches might help the restaurant gain business by focusing on more profitable dinner shifts. "My theory was that the business would consolidate because everyone would come to dinner, and we would do higher gross sales," Stephen noted.

In September of 2020, Stephen upgraded his Square Point of Sale to the more robust Square for Restaurants. "By upgrading, we were saying that we were embracing a more upscale future. With Square for Restaurants, you're catering to the needs of your customer in a more intentional way," Stephen said.

The added functionality in Square for Restaurants helps Catch 27's staff pace meals better, improve the flow of service, and turn tables faster. In addition, tableside service means only half as many servers are now needed. And Catch 27 can minimize mistakes and modify menu items to account for food preferences or allergies. "These functions allow us to know our customers better and improve their experience while growing our bottom line," says Stephen.

Stephen has seen immediate results using Square eGift Cards as well. "We quickly went from having \$0 in active gift cards to just under \$20,000," he explains. Customers have responded positively to the restaurant's email marketing campaigns for holidays, birthdays, and other occasions. "We've had attributable sales of \$2,000 or \$3,000 that have come through from those on top of what my servers do," adds Stephen.

The Square app marketplace, which features a collection of platform partners that can be integrated with Square, also informs Stephen about new technology to improve operations. "The integrations with QuickBooks Online, 7shifts, and BevSpot give me the information I need at a glance without having to speak with anyone, which allows my staff to stay focused on customers or the task at hand," explains Stephen.

With Square for Restaurants

588%

sales increase from 2013 to 2021

4x

annual customer growth from 2013 to 2021

\$20K

in gift card sales via email campaigns

47%

YOY jump in gross sales in 2021

"I was the dishwasher, the cook, the server, everything. And I needed to be more efficient across the board. What drew me to Square was that I could use it tableside. I could do more, and get things done faster. And I was able to save a ton of money that way."

—Stephen Hutson, Owner, Catch 27





Working smarter with Square saves time and fuels customer and staff satisfaction

Partnering with Square has been instrumental to Catch 27's profitability, Stephen says, helping the business grow from just over 14,000 customers and \$320,000 in sales in 2013 to just under 59,000 customers and \$2.2M in sales in 2021.

While many restaurants have struggled as a result of the pandemic, Stephen's decision to modify hours, spurred by data gathered with help from Square, turned out to be a huge win. Even with operating hours reduced by 50 percent, the 2021 gross sales grew by 47 percent year over year. And with sales way up, Stephen has been able to increase employees' pay.

"What we did in 2021 was only done with dinner seven days a week and two lunches. And we outpaced and outperformed 2019 in a really big way. Plus it added quality of life benefits to everyone," concludes Stephen.

As Stephen continues to fine-tune the upscale dining experience he has envisioned, he and his staff know they can count on Square to grow with them and keep their customers hungry for St. Augustine's freshest seafood.

"Our 2021 gross sales were \$2.2M and we grew by 47% year over year; wages accounted for 27% of our gross sales and tip average was 22%. Our operating hours have been reduced by 50%. Our sales are way up and I've been able to hire and pay all of my employees at better and better rates."

—Stephen Hutson, Owner, Catch 27

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