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Monday Business Profile: CJ's Bar-B-Skew

Owners Christopher Politis and Julian Lara shared their special twist on classic BBQ

By [Deborah Bostock-Kelley](#) [Email the author](#) 5:59 am

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What's your favorite menu item at CJ's Bar-B-Skew? [Tell us in the comments.](#)

Combine an authentic oak and pecan wood-burning BBQ restaurant with spicy chipotle, Carolina-style and Memphis sweet BBQ sauces and incorporate skewers and a Mediterranean influence. Add a rotisserie and a dash of burger joint, unique appetizer specialties, and mix thoroughly with a selection of wine and beer from around the world. Finally, throw in a passion for music.

What have you created?

CJ's Bar-B-Skew, 10047 North Dale Mabry Highway, which is a visual and gastronomic experience that's open seven days a week.

The walls are hand-painted by local artist Frank Pizzuro with a mural of music legends from Frank Sinatra and Elvis to Bob Marley and the Beatles. The music pumping from the speakers is custom formulated by local DJ Chang. A Simpsons pinball machine sits in the corner. Display cases overflow with exotic beers.

The employees are called groupies and roadies, while the customer is, of course, the rock star. While they wait for their meal, vinyl 45's are handed out to "rock stars" rather than buzzers or numbers.

And the menu reads like a travel guide. It is, by far, as eclectic as the surroundings.

From BBQ ribs and pulled pork to Mediterranean chicken and Greek veggie skewers to rotisserie chicken, Carolina fried okra, Mexican style grilled corn to a USDA prime burger to Smoked Almonds, Fried Pickle Chips and Canadian Poutine, a mixture of French fries and cheese curds covered in gravy, CJ's Bar-B-Skew strives to be unlike anything you've experienced before.

Owners Christopher Politis, 29 and Julian Lara, 21 are like ying and yang. Politis is the tech, while Lara is the artist.

Opened in September 2011, Patch sat down with the owners before their official grand opening celebration on Feb. 4 to discuss how two friends from childhood decided to reinvent what's expected in a restaurant.

Patch: *Where did the concept for the restaurant come from?*

Politis: Essentially, for about three years, we were building a barbeque concept. The Bar-B-Skew aspect came from wanting to incorporate skewers and Mediterranean influence in our food. We figured music and food were both essential parts of life.

Lara: Music was the first part. I got this place painted the minute we moved in here. Before the name or we even knew what was going to be on the menu. We sat down with Frank (Pizzuro) and gave him a list of names, and a month later, this is what he created.

Patch: *What separates you from other Carrollwood BBQ restaurants?*

Lara: We want to please all the senses. It's not just about having a good meal, it's about getting a 45 and maybe reminiscing about your childhood – seeing an artist on the wall. We really want push positive perception through good food and good music. We want this to be an experience.

We buy all our ingredients from Bearrs Grove (farmers market on Lake Magdalene Blvd) and local sustainable farms. And, we are one of only a few restaurants that still have a wood burning grill.

Politis: We are a local company, and want to support local growth - especially within the Carrollwood area. We want to focus within the community and build outward. We are joining CABA (Carrollwood Area Business Association).

As far as competition, there is nothing really out there like us.

Patch: *What is your favorite menu item?*

Lara: The Mediterranean Chicken Skewer, because it's a typical Greek recipe and it's the food of my childhood.

Politis: If I want to do good old American-style food, we have a combo with our ribs and chicken. Our chicken is so moist and the ribs come right off the bone. But if I want to go back to my roots from Greece, we have a chicken pita that's rolled into pita bread with feta spread and tomatoes and we actually incorporate like they do on the streets of Greece – we put French fries inside of the pita. You take a bite and have all these flavors exploding in your mouth. Awesome!

But there's also our burger. There's an influx of burger joints growing around here, but we believe we truly have the best burger in town. It's a USDA prime burger, the best grade meat the US allows vendors to have. It goes on a brioche bun with the best fresh cheese.

Patch: *Do you have any customer specials?*

Politis: Every day we have different specials.

Lara: Wednesday, you get a burger for \$7.49, up to two patties and all the toppings you want. If you like us on Facebook while you are in here, you'll get a free mini appetizer. We have domestic drafts for \$.99 cents every day.

Politis: If you come in wearing a band shirt, you get a free fountain drink. We always have fun specials going on. The specials are on the website and Facebook.

Patch: So you are considered family-friendly?

Politis: Oh, absolutely. The coolest thing is having the kids come up when they get that 45 and they ask their parents what it is. We tell them it's a brand-new CD. It's fun. Music ties everything together.

We have a passion for food, music and people. We're a melting pot. It's like wine bar meets World of Beer meets BBQ -

Lara: Meets radio station.

Politis: It's the whole skewed aspect of the restaurant. It seems a little bit *everywhere*, but we have it so controlled. The customer has the same experience every time.

Lara: We have something for everyone. It's a funky medley.

CJ's Bar-B-Skew delivers to businesses within 5 miles with a \$50 minimum and offers full-service catering including grill, smoker, tents, music and seating. They plan to soon offer live music and have "CJ's Radio" with original MTV videos displayed on the electronic menu boards.

CJ's Bar-B-Skew is pet-friendly outside, open 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Monday through Friday and 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. on weekends. Though CJ'S Bar-B-Skew accepts credit cards, there is no way to leave a tip. Patch recommends that you bring cash to tip your "groupies." Visit www.cjsbarbskew.com or Facebook to learn more.

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9:32 am on Monday, January 23, 2012

Thanks Christopher! After the interview early afternoon, my family and I went there for dinner that evening. The food is delicious!!!

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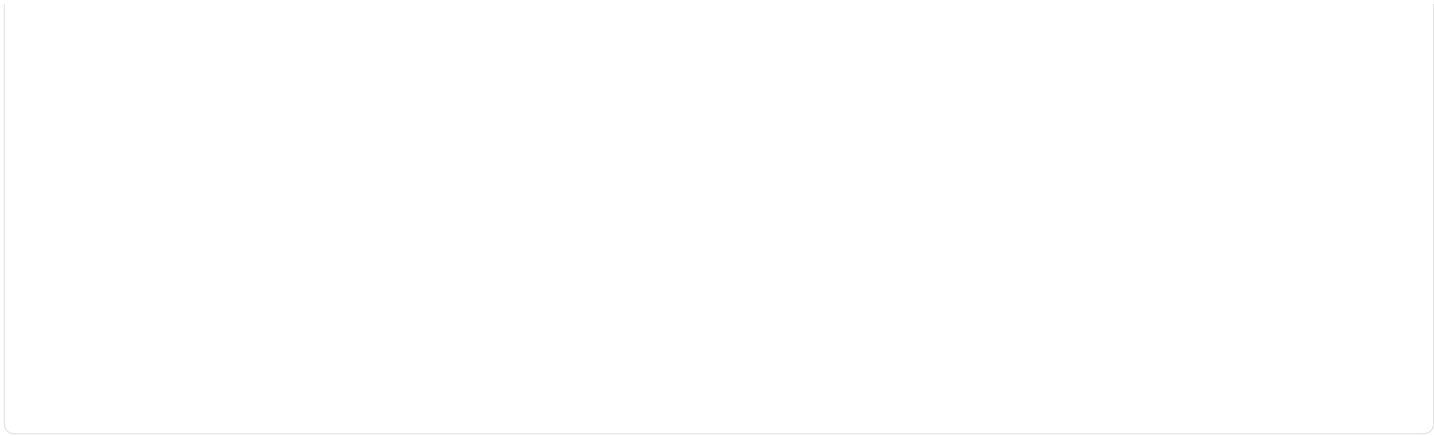
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