

Shone Tran of Chicken Meets Rice on Stepping into Food Entrepreneurship



Takeaways from this episode:

Destiny From a Diagnosis – Shone Tran was able to pull a sense of urgency from tragic news concerning his father. That sense of urgency was the foundational inspiration that got Chicken Meets Rice off the ground.

Starting Small – For Shone Tran, the idea of dropping everything to go all-in on a business idea was not an option. He and his cofounder took small steps to tackle the large task of entrepreneurship.

Best Friends and Business – The origin story of Chicken Meets Rice is one you have to hear and probably still won't believe.

For Shone Tran and his best friend and cofounder, they wouldn't want to navigate the treacherous waters of business with anyone but each other.

There's a saying that goes: "a drunk mind speaks a sober heart." Before co-founding his own fast-casual restaurant company, Shone Tran remembers a fateful evening while out bar hopping in Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood in NYC.

"We walked by this one Asian restaurant, and we went in and probably ordered three or four different things, one of which was Chinese chicken rice," Shone Tran reminisced on the Restaurant Influencers podcast hosted by Shawn P. Walchef of CaliBBQ Media.

"The whole time Jon (Sujarit) and I were, he was telling me about the Thai version of this dish that he grew up eating. And I would tell him about how I always ate the Chinese and Vietnamese versions of this dish growing up all my life. And so we just remember thinking to ourselves, man, this dish would kill it, you know, as a concept back home in the Bay Area."

Remember the "drunk mind" quote mentioned earlier?

That night, the sober heart involved the realization that they had a great idea on their hands. One they could actually execute because they had the magic elixir of first-hand experience, idea starting point, and inebriated courage.

Without any advertising and no marketing, Chicken Meets Rice eventually opened its doors.

"We had literally five people and we opened up." Shone Tran says of their first day. "We thought that we would not even sell 20 boxes that day because we did zero advertising. It was a soft opening. We were going to open at 11:30 a.m. that day

and no joke at 11 there were probably already 30 people in line waiting to see what this new spot is about.”

The excitement garnered from Chicken Meets Rice’s first day was the validation for Tran that he and his best friend made the correct decision to follow up on their conversation after a fun night out in New York.

Now, a partnership with famed 99 Ranch Market in hand, Tran and Chicken Meets Rice is looking forward to growing the awareness and expanding to become a national chain.

“Five years from now,” Shone Tran says, “Chicken Meets Rice will be a national franchise with at least 100 locations across the US.”

That will be quite the story to tell.

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