



Louie's Italian Ice

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After an eight-year career as an educator and 22 years in the U.S. Army, most people would be ready to slow down, but not Jarret McBride Sr. When he returned home from Iraq in 2008, he traded his military gear for an ice cream scoop, using his military earnings to step into the frozen dessert business.

His first venture, a franchise, provided invaluable lessons about the frozen treat industry. By 2012, confident in his experience and vision, Jarret launched Louie's Italian Ice, a brand named in honor of his hometown, St. Louis, and has been delighting the community ever since.

"The Army taught me to keep moving forward, no matter the obstacles," Jarret says. Those same values of resilience, strategic thinking, and adaptability have guided him in business, whether facing the heat of a slow season or the challenges of expanding from a mobile cart to a brick-and-mortar shop.

What began with a tent and two freezers has grown into a bustling Florissant location at 1616 Shackelford Road. Louie's Italian Ice is known for its bright, refreshing Italian ice, creamy gelato, decadent gelati, and fizzy spritzers. Flavors rotate seasonally alongside classics like lemon, cherry, blue raspberry, creamsicle, piña colada, green apple, strawberry, mango, chocolate, and banana — all crafted with freshness and quality in mind.

"Consistency matters," Jarret says. "I want every scoop to taste just as good as the last one."

At Louie's, getting your treat is part of the fun — just pick your style (Italian Ice, Gelato, Gelati, or Spritzer), choose your size, and then dive into a flavor adventure that's as colorful and delicious as St. Louis itself.

Louie's treats are fat-free, cholesterol-free, and dairy-free, and customers can also order online, with convenient delivery service available.

Proudly veteran-owned, Louie's Italian Ice is more than a dessert destination — it's a community partner. Jarret has supported local schools, sports teams, and nonprofits through donations of time, products, or sales proceeds. As a St. Louis native, he sees Louie's not just as a business but as a way to strengthen community pride.

His entrepreneurial milestones speak volumes: moving from event-only sales to a permanent location, building a loyal customer base, and establishing a brand recognized across the metro area.

Jarret's participation in the Airport Minority Advisory Council (AMAC) Runway to Success Supplier Pitch Competition at St. Louis Lambert International Airport (STL) in May was another proud moment. "The pitch competition was stressful, yet exciting and fun at the same time," he says. "I met fellow entrepreneurs and gained a better understanding of how the airport market could be a game changer for my business." With constant foot traffic, a diverse and dedicated client base, and opportunities for repeat customers, the airport offers a unique platform to grow brand recognition, test new flavors, explore partnerships, and even expand to additional locations.

Jarret's focus isn't only on expansion — it's on impact. He hopes to inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs, especially young people in his community, to pursue business ownership. "Small businesses are the heartbeat of our neighborhoods," he says. "When you invest in your community and lift others up, that energy comes back to your business — and it creates opportunities for the next generation to thrive."

Louie's Italian Ice also offers a creative way for schools, PTAs, sports teams, or other organizations to fundraise. Twenty percent of qualifying purchases are donated to participating groups, providing a fun, convenient, and seasonal-friendly boost to local initiatives.

For fellow veterans stepping into entrepreneurship, Jarret offers this advice: "Be patient with yourself. You're going to make mistakes, but you have to want it. Things won't always go as planned — stay the course and fight through."

Looking ahead, Jarret envisions seven to ten Louie's locations across the St. Louis metro area, each delivering the same community-centered spirit and high-quality treats that launched his first shop.

From the battlefield to the dessert counter, Jarret McBride Sr. proves that grit, passion, and purpose can turn a simple frozen treat into a St. Louis success story — and he's serving up success one scoop at a time.