



*Big Mama's*  
**KITCHEN & CATERING**  
A Brand Analysis & Guide

**ADPR 884 Final Project  
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# BRAND QUESTIONNAIRE

## Who We Are...

### WHY DO WE EXIST?

Approaching a half-century ago, Big Mama's Kitchen & Catering (BMK) was launched as a part-time catering service offering biscuits, cakes, and other soul food-inspired classics. Operating out of Patricia "Big Mama" Barron's home kitchen, the family-run business was hyperlocal, heavily reliant upon word-of-mouth, and limited in its output and capacity.

Since these humble beginnings, BMK has become an Omaha staple, and a must-see stop for foodies across the country, serving soul food that aims to nourish the body while strengthening the community.



**Patricia "Big Mama" Barron, Founder,  
Big Mama's Kitchen & Catering**

### OUR PURPOSE.

Today, BMK's purpose is two-fold.

1. Big Mama's Kitchen & Catering serves up family-friendly dining in a rapidly-evolving North Omaha. Here, soul food connects communities, feeds families, and provides a culinary experience unique to the region. Omaha, a city of nearly a half-million people, speaking 102 languages, has an expansive palate, and Big Mama's contributes to the vigorous culinary scene (Department of Health & Human Services, 2021).
2. With the passing of founder, namesake, and matriarch, Patricia Barron, the BMK family is committed to carrying on Big Mama's legacy, the legacy of her mother, Lillie, and her mother before her. For BMK, food is connection, a catalyst for change. "Patricia 'Big Mama' Barron believed that everyone deserves a second chance" ([www.bigmamaskitchen.com/](http://www.bigmamaskitchen.com/)). To honor Big Mama's commitment to second chances, the family established the Patricia "Big Mama" Barron Culinary Scholarship through Metropolitan Community College to provide tuition assistance to students pursuing the culinary arts.

**WHAT IS THE MAIN PROBLEM WE SOLVE FOR CUSTOMERS?**

Big Mama's Kitchen provides classic American soul food "like mama used to make" to residents, tourists, and travelers seeking accessible, convenient, and affordable cuisine. Specializing in soul food and traditional American, BMK is committed to providing customers with homemade food-for the soul.

**OUR ORGANIZATION, IN A NUTSHELL.**

Big Mama's Kitchen & Catering is a woman-owned, family-owned and -operated business specializing in soul food and traditional American cuisine, offering a unique variety of home-cooked appetizers, entrées, and desserts.

Known for our famous oven-fried chicken and sweet potato pie ice cream, Big Mama's Kitchen & Catering is steeped in family, tradition, and community. Our founder's vision of "food as therapy" remains paramount as BMK works to "grow and expand" the legacy of Big Mama and the community she loved.

**HIRING: KEY TRAITS AND TALENTS.**

As a family-owned and -operated business, BMK's early hires consisted of immediate family members. As the company continues to grow, potentially outside the bounds of Nebraska, BMK should aim to employ individuals who value the company and community culture fostered thus far. Specialized training in the culinary traditions of American soul food may also be required for future hires.

**Brand Personality**

- hospitable
- wholesome
- sincere
- community-oriented
- traditional



## HOW DO WE DO IT? KEY SUCCESS FACTORS.

At the heart of BMK's success lies the team's commitment to the roots and traditions of our founder, Patricia "Big Mama" Barron. From BMK's earliest iteration in Barron's home kitchen to the current digs inside North Omaha's most talked-about community project, BMK remains dedicated to serving the food we love to our ever-expanding family of locals, tourists, and foodie followers.

Word-of-mouth marketing is integral to BMK's sustained growth. In 2008, a boon came in the form of a feature on the much-lauded "Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives," the top-rated Food Network phenomenon starring culinary icon Guy Fieri. According to one source, Fieri's features create "a cascade of buzz and public interest that transforms the business in his wake" (Platt, 2021). Indeed, BMK attributes much of its early success to Fieri's spotlight.

Additional coverage (earned media) in more recent years stoked the ongoing BMK buzz. In 2013, the Omaha World-Herald revealed plans for a Big Mama's Kitchen television series. The show, pitched by Food Network, would never come to fruition but the coverage benefited BMK's brand visibility nonetheless (Baker Hansen, 2013). Later, the Travel Channel named Big Mama's Kitchen number 57 on their "Tastiest Place to Chowdown Countdown" and The Sundance Channel's Ludo Bites America featured a BMK pop-up (Baker Hansen, 2013). The exposure from earned media aided the restaurant in edging out competitors.



Crucial to any independent restaurant's success (especially in the age of the internet), reviews also contribute to BMK's popularity. The company currently averages four stars on Yelp, and its website features five-star customer testimonials. "In a 2011 study of Yelp reviews, Harvard Business School's (HBS) Michael Luca found that 'a one-star increase in a restaurant review can lead to a 5 to 9% increase in revenue,' which can result in anywhere from \$50,000-90,000 in additional revenue for a \$1M/year business" (Boyce, n.d.). Moreover, "90% of consumers seek out and read customer reviews prior to visiting or using a business, most of whom trust the reviews just as much as they trust personal recommendations" (Boyce, n.d.). Maintaining its four-star ranking will be imperative to BMK's continued success and future growth.

Thanks to the brand's consistent work in service to the niche soul food market and its image as a traditional, family-centric eatery and caterer, BMK has continued to garner positive earned media coverage (Omaha World-Herald, Omaha Magazine) and customer reviews. If they are able to build on these successes, the BMK brand can continue to earn loyal followers and ardent fans.

## OUR IDEAL CUSTOMERS: INTERESTS, GENDER, AGE, INDUSTRY & PERSONALITY.

- According to a 2014 study by Statista, 22% of consumers in the United States "love to eat" soul food (2014).
- Google Reviews show a primarily male audience, aged 35-50.
- In 2020, the average food away from home household expenditure in the United States was highest among 35-44-year-olds (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021).

While a (statistical) bird's-eye view is helpful in establishing a baseline, it is important to note that habits and appetites can vary strongly by region, city—and even neighborhood.

Audience:  
**The  
Modern  
Family**



Owner and operator Gladys Harrison notes in her audio interview that as BMK evolved, expanded, and changed locations, shifts in the demographics (race, age) and psychographics of diners followed. According to Harrison, BMK's current Highlander location has made the restaurant more attractive to the immediate North Omaha community and African American audiences, as well as residents of varying demographics from across the larger metro area (G. Harrison, personal communication, n.d.).

Because Big Mama's Kitchen & Catering is an independent restaurant, still heavily reliant upon word-of-mouth, their ideal target market lives within the city. Locals can most easily access the restaurant due to proximity, further motivated by quality food at an affordable price.

More specifically, the BMK audience would include primarily those individuals who:

- value tradition and family;
- are attracted to soul food, traditional American, and/or are cuisine-curious;
- prefer unique dining experiences to chain restaurants—the “buy local” set and;
- embrace cultural diversity and community-building.

“Omaha, like all of Nebraska, was settled by immigrants. People of various religions and ethnicities, from Africa, Mexico, and southern, northern, and eastern Europe were included in the first 100 years of immigration; Asian, Latino, and African immigrants and refugees have arrived in the last 50 years. Native Americans immigrated to Nebraska from other locations as well” (Young, n.d.).

What resulted, according to L.E. Young is a “sprawling tapestry of diversity” and the Greater Omaha Chamber projects that minorities will make up 41% of the Greater Omaha population by 2050.

For a minority, woman-run business like BMK, centered on soul food and family tradition, the growingly diverse community reflects a potentially expanding target market.



**Gladys Harrison, Owner & Operator,  
Big Mama's Kitchen & Catering**

# Competition...

## OUR PRIMARY MARKET THREATS.

"Big Mama's Kitchen is located in The Dining Room, a community food hall offering Omahans an opportunity to experience quality culinary choices from local vendors" ([highlanderomaha.com](http://highlanderomaha.com)). Best Burger and Dena's Place (owned and operated by the BMK family) also call The Dining Room home-competitors by way of proximity, though neither serve menu items similar to those of BMK.

Local eateries also featured on "Diners, Drive-Ins & Dives," and therefore likely competition (especially when it comes to out-of-towners and foodies), include Joe Tess Place and California Tacos & More.

According to statistics via Google search, people who search for Big Mama's Kitchen also search for: Cajun Kitchen, Soul Brother Inc, and Emery's Cafe. All three competing restaurants are categorized as "soul food" and stand out as direct competition for audiences specifically seeking a soul food experience.

Potential BMK patrons also searched for:

- Time Out Foods (North Omaha)
- BigWay Chicken & Catfish (South Omaha)
- Smoking Jay's BBQ (Little Bohemia)
- A Taste of New Orleans (Benson)
- Mouth of the South (West Omaha)
- Jojo's Diner (Benson)



# Differentiation...

## WHAT SETS US APART?

A number of factors set BMK apart from the competition, beginning with the company's long-standing reputation for serving authentic, high-quality soul food at a reasonable price. BMK's niche food offerings, paired with the company's commitment to the community, has garnered BMK attention and accolades for decades. From local news outlets to national network programming, BMK is on the map in a big way, and their efforts to reinvest in the North Omaha community further endear them to the public.

According to Adrian Miller, author of the critically acclaimed "Soul Food: The Surprising Story of an American Cuisine, One Plate at a Time":

We're in a generational moment where the early soul-food entrepreneurs are retiring or dying, without anyone ready and willing to continue their culinary legacy. Thanks to successful civil-rights legislation and policy, African Americans can choose to live and eat outside of traditionally black neighborhoods. But few soul-food restaurants have been able to survive the transition from being a neighborhood joint to becoming a destination spot. Even fewer have been able to survive in the suburbs (2016).

Despite this "generational moment," BMK remains—thanks in large part to Harrison and her family's commitment to the legacy of Patricia Barron. Big Mama's Kitchen invites you to stop and dine in, "where every meal is like Sunday dinner." The slogan serves to illustrate the feeling of family and togetherness that soul food often exudes—and the brand of soul that sets Big Mama's Kitchen apart.

## WHAT IS THE MOST UNIQUE THING ABOUT US?

While Omaha is often touted (with little corroborating evidence) as having the most restaurants per capita, it is highly unusual for a Nebraska-based restaurant to receive such substantial national media attention. BMK is uniquely positioned to be the biggest, and the best, soul food in the Middle West.



## WHY DO CUSTOMERS AND EMPLOYEES CHOOSE BIG MAMA'S KITCHEN & CATERING OVER THE COMPETITION?

According to the Food Network, visitors delight in the family atmosphere, and Google Reviews reveal that many choose Big Mama's Kitchen thanks to word-of-mouth recommendations.

Whether it be by way of media influence or community contacts, many customers point to positive reviews as the impetus for choosing BMK. Out-of-town reviewers often make mention of driving long distances, (inspired by television coverage) proving the lasting reach of consistent, positive, and targeted media attention.



## VISUAL ELEMENTS THAT SHOULD BE INTEGRATED BEYOND THE LOGO AND COLOR PALETTE.

Big Mama's Kitchen may want to consider curating a collection of historical photos, family photos, and other ephemera that spotlights their unique history and commitment to North Omaha—and Big Mama's legacy.

Additionally, BMK may benefit from updated, professional food photography to modernize the overall aesthetic of the brand. Updated, standardized assets across all media, web, and menus could provide a more cohesive, polished feel, while still remaining true to the brand.

The Big Idea:

**Serving soul food,  
with purpose.**

# BRAND VISION

## THE BRAND-DEFINED:

According to the renowned brand strategist, David Aaker: brand is more than a phrase (Rencher, 2021). Big Mama's brand was built over generations, and just like her beloved biscuits, the ingredients are simple—yet impossible to imitate.

Big Mama's Kitchen & Catering serves up authentic, family-friendly soul food in a rapidly-evolving North Omaha. But our community—our customer—defies zip codes. Here, at Big Mama's, hot meals make friends out of former strangers and provide a culinary experience that promises to feed both the belly, and the soul.

## OUR CENTRAL THEME:

The brand essence—the big idea—guiding Big Mama's Kitchen & Catering is to **serve soul food, with purpose**. For BMK, the food itself is inextricable from the persona of its visionary and founder, Patricia "Big Mama" Barron. As she did inspire, build, and empower, so too does BMK. It all starts with a hot plate and a shared table. It ends in communion.

### Core Elements

**Neighborhood soul food, for every zip code.** (Your brand as a product.)

**The Modern Family**  
(Your brand as a person.)

**Soul food that stands for something.**  
(Your brand as an organization.)

**Patricia "Big Mama" Barron**  
(Your brand as a symbol.)

### Extended Elements

- American traditional soul food
- Quality, home-cooked ingredients at an affordable price

- Diverse, adventurous, and modern-traditional
- Multi-generational

- Wholesome and ambitious
- Community-inspired

- Empowered by our history, culture, and community
- Nurturing and strengthening connections



## HOW WE KEEP THE BRAND ASPIRATIONAL:

Aspirational brands are more than their celebrity endorsements, their social media likes (and even their national media coverage). Aspirational brands don't simply inspire—they empower their audience, delivering messaging that's more accessible and less larger-than-life (Baranowski & Bemporad, 2014). In doing so, these brands cultivate long-term loyalty and regular engagement. For BMK, that means continuing to engage neighborhood movers, shakers, and community builders.

To keep Big Mama's Kitchen aspirational, the brand should expand the Patricia "Big Mama" Barron Culinary Scholarship and build on existing community partnerships. Not only will formal partnerships grow existing reach, they will serve to reinforce the brand's commitment to fostering connections in and around Omaha. A BMK partnership could look like:

- Cross-promotional activities in community schools. Think: A BMK Show & Tell Series that spotlights Big Mama's success story and the culinary arts field.
- Pop-ups in area business parks. Think: Limited edition "lunch boxes" that introduce BMK's menu to potential catering clients.
- Vendor tables at the Omaha Farmers Market. Think: A venue to increase exposure, foster community connection, and initiate retail (product) sales.

From there: promote, share, connect. To do so effectively, BMK may also consider developing a full-scale social media strategy. While BMK thrives in the lofi, social media can act as another entry point, an introduction to new clientele. With consistent engagement, BMK could create a pipeline from the keyboard to the counter—and the community.

**"My mom didn't just want to own a restaurant. She wanted a place where everybody in the city could come and get together...a place where (people) could get a second chance at working and being productive citizens. And she wanted to help bring some life back to North Omaha."**

- Gladys Harrison  
Owner & Operator

# BRAND STORY

Patricia "Big Mama" Barron made food to feed both the belly and the soul. Rooted in the traditions of classic American soul food, Barron launched Big Mama's Kitchen & Catering to share the recipes she was raised on, with the community she loved. As Omaha's first family-owned and -operated soul food restaurant, BMK continues to live out the legacy of Big Mama, both behind the counter—and in the community.

Patricia "Big Mama" Barron grew up cooking in her grandmother's kitchen, igniting a passion that would come to span four generations (and counting). But, before the Dining Room, there was the US Navy. There was 30-years in corporate America. And culinary school. There was surviving cancer, raising children, and being denied business loans. Big Mama, well, she led a big, full life.

At 62-years-old, driven by a dream, Big Mama made the move to restaurateur, serving dishes every Saturday, right from her home table. As the business grew, a persistent offer from the community led Big Mama to her first commercial kitchen—a school cafeteria-turned Big Mama's big-break. It took only six short months before the Food Network came calling, and a national audience fell in love with Big Mama (and her take on traditional American soul food).

At its core, Big Mama's Kitchen serves to bring people together—to collaborate and commune over the very best soul food in the state. With endless restaurants to choose from, only one is **serving up soul food, with purpose**. At BMK, comfort food and community share top billing. And Big Mama wouldn't have had it any other way.

Big Mama passed away in 2018, but her legacy of feeding people, body and soul, continues on as BMK cultivates American soul food for Omahans, foodies, and friends from around the country. Today, Patricia's daughter, Gladys Harrison, runs the business at its new North Omaha digs. In the Dining Room, patrons gather, where swatches of yellow and open windows serve as a reminder of Big Mama's bright light.

To learn more about the Patricia "Big Mama" Barron Culinary Scholarship, visit [here](#).



**Patricia "Big Mama" Barron, Founder,  
Big Mama's Kitchen & Catering**

# Big Mama's Kitchen & Catering

## MINI-BRAND GUIDE

### MAIN LOGO - DO'S



### MAIN LOGO - DON'TS

AVOID  
UNNECESSARY  
EFFECTS



AVOID USING ANY  
COLORS OUTSIDE  
OF THE BRAND  
GUIDE



AVOID ROTATING  
THE LOGO



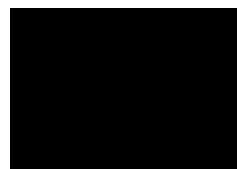
### COLOR PALETTE & TEXTURES



R 253 G 243 B 81  
#FFF402



R 227 G 109 B 54  
#F4651F



R 0 G 0 B 0  
#000000



R 204 G 180 B 145  
#D1B38D

### BRAND FONTS

#### Raleway Heavy - Headings

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPQRSTUVWXYZ

1234567890

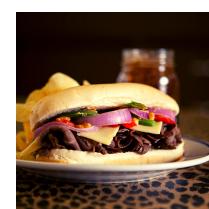
Raleway Regular - Body Copy

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPQRSTUVWXYZ

1234567890

### BRAND PHOTO STYLE



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# ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

1. **Grace Bradford**
  - a. Questionnaire
  - b. Brand Story
  - c. Slides - Copy
2. **Kali Dubas (Quality Assurance)**
  - a. Questionnaire
  - b. Brand Guide
  - c. Slides - Creative
  - d. Copy Editing
3. **Margaret Nongo-Okojokwu**
  - a. References - Compile & Edit
  - b. Presentation - Logistics
4. **Paulo Yu Xi Gao**
  - a. Questionnaire
  - b. Brand Story
5. **Tabby Kube (Team Lead)**
  - a. Questionnaire
  - b. Brand Vision
  - c. Final Report - Placement & Creative
  - d. Copy Editing