

# SURCHEROS SCORES BIG IN COLLEGE TOWNS

*Tallahassee franchisee drives steady growth with plans to expand into Gainesville, FL*

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[Surcheros](#) franchisees Amy and Keith Cooksey know a winning formula when they see one, and their success in

Tallahassee proves it. What began as a single restaurant has quickly grown into a thriving, family-run operation led by the Cooksey family, now joined by the Smith family. Together, the families are expanding with a third Tallahassee location and a new venture into Gainesville, FL, another vibrant college community. Abby and Chris Smith will own and operate both the third Tallahassee location and the Gainesville restaurant, while continuing to partner with the Cookseys on future growth.



"Amy, Keith, and their family exemplify the kind of community-driven, family-led growth we look for in our franchisees," said [Luke Christian](#), Founder and CEO of Surcheros. "Their success in Tallahassee comes from building strong local relationships and delivering fresh, made-to-order meals that offer real value and convenience for students and the broader community."

## Tallahassee, Homegrown Success

As second-generation Tallahassee natives, the Cooksey and Smith families have chosen to grow their business where their roots run deep. While the presence of Florida State University certainly added momentum, it was their connection to the community that laid the foundation for long-term success.

The first location in Midtown (1817 Thomasville Rd., Suite 630) tapped into a high-energy neighborhood filled with young professionals and students, without being directly on campus. The second location at Ocala Corners (800 Ocala Rd., Suite 100) placed them squarely in the heart of a college hub, surrounded by nearly 80,000 students from Florida State University, Tallahassee Community College, and Florida A&M University, which are all within a three-mile radius.

"College markets create a unique combination of steady foot traffic, catering demand, and strong word-of-mouth," added Christian. "Students are drawn to bold flavors, customizable options, and

the ability to order ahead, and Surcheros fits seamlessly into that lifestyle.”

### Building Loyalty Through Community

The growth has been fueled by more than just location. It’s also rooted in relationships. In Tallahassee, the Cooksey and Smith families have built strong connections with local collegiate athletic programs, providing meals for teams across multiple sports, including baseball, football, softball, beach volleyball, and women’s lacrosse.

From post-practice meals to customized team orders on the go, Surcheros has become a trusted partner in fueling student-athletes. In one standout moment, the team even prepared personalized meals for a visiting University of Florida softball team, placing each order directly on players’ bus seats for their trip home.

Beyond athletics, the families have embedded themselves into the everyday rhythm of college-town life by consistently showing up through campus engagement, catering, and neighborhood involvement.

“In just two years, the Tallahassee team has grown from one location to a multi-unit operation with top-performing sales and expansion already underway,” said Christian. “Their success reflects both strong local demand and the impact of a passionate, family-led team. We’re excited to watch them continue to grow and build a lasting legacy.”

### Expanding the Playbook

With strong performance in Tallahassee reinforcing the brand’s success in college environments, the Cooksey and Smith families identified Gainesville, FL as a natural next step.

“Our experience in Tallahassee showed us that success in a college market comes from balancing student engagement with strong community ties,” said Amy Cooksey. “As we expand into Gainesville, FL, we’re bringing those same principles of building connections both on campus and in the broader community from day one.”

Looking to bring Surcheros to your college town? Learn more about franchising opportunities at [www.surcheros.com/franchising](http://www.surcheros.com/franchising).

### About Surcheros Fresh Mex

Luke Christian launched Surcheros in 2007 with a simple formula in mind: combine bold Tex-Mex flavors with the Southern hospitality of his youth.

Each meal is custom made to order. Guests can build burritos, tacos, burrito bowls, quesadillas, salads, and more by choosing from freshly grilled meats and a wide selection of toppings and signature sauces. The family-friendly menu also offers meals for the Lil’ Ones with their kids menu and catering options for groups of 10 or more.□

Surcheros is pleased to serve guests throughout the southeast and looks forward to continued expansion. In 2025, Surcheros earned a spot on Fast Casual's Top 100 Movers & Shakers list, further validating its growing momentum and commitment to excellence.□□

Interested in joining the Surcheros family? Learn more at [www.surcheros.com/franchising](http://www.surcheros.com/franchising).

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