

Help The Little Guy Win

An Interview with Peter Claro, Chief Operating Officer, Jetro/Restaurant Depot

EDITORS' NOTE As Chief Operating Officer, Peter Claro manages and oversees all aspects of the day-to-day operations at Jetro/Restaurant Depot from the New York headquarters. Claro has more than 30 years of experience in the food service and warehousing industry spanning many business units including procurement, supply chain, logistics, marketing, and operations. He is also an accomplished musician and avid sports enthusiast. He and his family support multiple charitable organizations that aid veterans and first responders.



Peter Claro

COMPANY BRIEF Restaurant Depot (restaurantdepot.com) is a wholesale cash and carry food service supplier providing savings, selection, and service, seven days a week. The company has been supplying independent food businesses with quality products from large cash and carry warehouse stores since 1990. Jetro (restaurantdepot.com/jetro) is a wholesale provider of grocery supplies in addition to restaurant and has been in business since the 1970s.

Will you discuss your career journey?

I promise it's not your typical corporate ladder story. I began my career as a professional musician – which, as my father wisely pointed out, meant I'd chosen to stake my future on one of the riskiest industries out there: entertainment. His advice? If you're going to chase your dreams in the most unpredictable business, you should hedge your bets by also working in the most stable one – food. That led me to a role at one of our original locations in Brooklyn, back when we had just four or five stores and no idea what was ahead. What started as a way to make ends meet turned into a passion for serving the small businesses that keep this country running – restaurants, caterers, food trucks, etc. Over time, I worked many roles, learned the business from the ground up, and helped grow something I truly believe in. I've been incredibly fortunate to learn from – and grow with – some of the most dedicated, entrepreneurial people in the business. It's been a wild, rewarding journey, and I still try to approach each day with the same mix of hustle and harmony that first got me through both musical performances and grocery aisles in the warehouses.

How do you describe Jetro/Restaurant Depot's mission and purpose?

At its core, our mission is to help the little guy win. We exist to support independent food businesses – the mom-and-pop restaurants, the corner delis, the folks pouring their heart into their craft. We're here to make sure they get the products they need at prices that help them stay competitive. We provide the tools, products, and pricing needed to compete with larger chains. We believe in empowering entrepreneurs by making quality food and supplies affordable and accessible.

Will you highlight your role and areas of focus?

These days, my role focuses on strategy, operations, and growth – but really, I like to think of myself as part conductor, part problem-solver. I help make sure all the pieces – our teams, our supply chain, our customer service – are playing in harmony.

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Will you provide an overview of Jetro/Restaurant Depot's services and capabilities?

We're a one-stop shop for independent food businesses. Everything from fresh produce and meats to kitchen supplies, paper goods, and cleaning products – if a restaurant needs it, we've got it. No frills, no fluff, just great products at competitive prices. We serve a vast

array of independent businesses nationwide. We offer great pricing, no minimum purchase requirements, open seven days a week, with a self-service model that provides efficiency and transparency.

Where do you see the greatest opportunities for growth for Jetro/Restaurant Depot?

We've got room to grow in a few exciting directions – like expanding geographically to reach underserved markets, digitizing the customer experience, and strengthening our private-label offerings. There's also opportunity in diversifying our product mix to support new food trends and dietary needs, and in continuing to build value-added services that help independent businesses succeed.

What have been the keys to Jetro/Restaurant Depot's industry leadership, and how do you describe the Jetro/Restaurant Depot difference?

We don't overcomplicate things. Our model is simple: good products, fair prices, and no minimums. We've built trust by being dependable. You walk into one of our locations, you know exactly what you're getting – no gimmicks, just value. And let's be honest: we're scrappy. We know our customers are hustling, and we hustle just as hard to support them.

What do you see as Jetro/Restaurant Depot's responsibility to be engaged in the communities it serves?

We're in neighborhoods, not just markets. We see firsthand how our customers shape their communities, and we believe we have a role to play in lifting them up – whether that's through hiring locally, donating food, or simply being a reliable partner. At the end of the day, if we can help a local restaurant keep its doors open, that's a win for everyone.

What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers?

Don't be afraid to take the unexpected path – you never know where an opportunity might lead. Show up, work hard, stay curious, and don't be too proud to roll up your sleeves. Learn every aspect of the business you're in, no matter how small it seems. Relationships and reputation matter – so be dependable and always practice what you preach. Don't wait for the perfect opportunity – work hard at every role, and the right opportunities will find you. Oh, and if you can find a way to laugh while doing it – bonus points. ●