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Offering variety helps restaurants grow in tough year

By [Nathan Skid](#)

Last year was a tough one for Southeast Michigan restaurants.

Some were forced to close their doors; others came out battered. But a handful found ways to generate growth.

David Ritchie, managing partner of the 500-seat **Bastone** complex in Royal Oak, which includes **Bastone Brewery**, **Vinoteca**, **Café Habana**, and **Commune Lounge**, said having four options housed in one location helped it not only weather the downturn but foster growth.

"If a building of this size had only one theme, it would have drowned," Ritchie said. "Diversification is the reason we increased revenue in 2009."

Revenue altogether is up by about 4 percent, even though food sales lagged from a year ago.

"When we look at all the restaurants in the building, food sales were down but net income was up 29 percent and gross profit was up by 7 percent," Ritchie said. "We saw appetizer and dessert sales plummet, but people were buying a second or third drink."

Beer production sales were up 26 percent at the brewery in 2009, offsetting decreased food sales. In 2009, the brewery produced 753 barrels of beer, generating about \$500,000 in sales, up from 599 barrels in 2008. The brewery is projecting beer sales of around \$700,000 on 1,000 barrels for 2010. Liquor sales rose 34 percent in 2009.

The restaurant group also was able to lower labor costs without cutting workers. In fact, it added two supervisors and a salaried manager in 2009.

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