



JesseJay's Latin Inspired Kitchen

Churchton, Maryland

Owners: Jayleen Fonseca & Jesse Ramirez

Years in Business: 5+

Employees: 30

CHALLENGES FACED

Although Jayleen and Jesse possessed over a decade of experience in corporate management and the restaurant industry, respectively, securing funding was their earliest obstacle. The next one, which reared its ugly head just 11 months after JesseJay's opened, was the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, as Jayleen recalls, AAEDC was able to help her overcome both.

Beyond the financial support, AAEDC's comprehensive resources and unmatched connections have been instrumental in our success. I consider the team at AAEDC as true partners, and I'm incredibly grateful for the relationship that we've built over the last five years. ”

Jayleen Fonseca, Owner

ABOUT JESSEJAY'S

Shortly after Jayleen, who had always dreamed of owning her own business, met Jesse, a professional chef, they arrived at a shared vision of opening a restaurant that would serve the delicious foods inspired by their Mexican and Puerto Rican heritages. They began planning how to make it happen in 2018 and, after jumping at the opportunity to purchase a building that had long been the "Swamp Circle Saloon," concluded that the next need was more capital.

HOW AAEDC HELPED

Jayleen was first introduced to AAEDC 2018 by a commercial banker who, although he couldn't approve her loan, saw potential in the venture and thought that it might be a fit for the VOLT Fund. He was proven right a few months later, when Jayleen and Jesse used a \$270,000 loan that same year to build out and purchase equipment for the restaurant, and again in late 2020, when a \$43,557 VOLT loan helped them purchase a food trailer and adapt to a carry-out model during the pandemic. Three years later in 2023 Jayleen seized the opportunity offered by another impactful AAEDC resource, the Inclusive Ventures Program (IVP), and, a few months after completing what she calls a "truly transformative experience," used a third VOLT Fund loan in 2024 for \$40,000 to expand the restaurant by building an all-seasons outdoor pavilion.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Nearly six years after opening their restaurant's doors, Jayleen and Jesse have established it as an award-winning "haven of flavor" whose growth shows no signs of stopping. Jayleen says she's looking forward to continuing to grow the business's sales and profitability, including by offering live music and maximizing the new outdoor pavilion.