



Bear Creek Smokehouse

Premium Smoked Meats Since 1943

Kilgore College SBDC Success Story

May 2012

Bear Creek Smokehouse

Owned and Operated by the Shoults Family

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<http://www.bearcreeksmokehouse.com>

Nestled in the East Texas piney woods of Bear Bottom, four generations of family tradition surrounds Bear Creek Smokehouse. Originating in 1943, Hick and Nellie Shoults have raised and cured their own smoked meats. Since then, the Smokehouse has grown from a backyard venture with 600 birds to one of East Texas' largest facilities producing a wide variety of smoked delights. Bear Creek Smokehouse is one of the oldest stores in the United States, offering products such as ham, peppered pork tenderloins, smoked ribs, pork loins, brisket, a variety of birds and much more! The store also offers a range of soups and beverage mixes, along with chocolate fudge and praline pecan desserts.

Over the years, the Smokehouse has prided itself on never surrendering the quality and taste of the "old-fashioned" way of hickory smoking. They believe their customers keep coming back because of the way they continue to create smoked meats without compromise. Locally, the Bear Creek Smokehouse salesroom presents the Shoults' down-home country atmosphere, accentuated by the family's next generation of traditional values.



Bear Creek Smokehouse's first customers were local grocers who placed orders at the local Agricultural Extension office. Today, their customers reach into the thousands and can order over the phone, by mail, fax or online. With their mouth-watering Bear Creek smoked meats, the company has become a holiday tradition in homes across the nation. Each year the holiday season brings a rush of enticement to the Smokehouse. They thrive on the sense of knowing homes around the country are filled with the irresistible fragrance of slowly smoked hickory embers cut from wood on their farm in Marshall, Texas. With their family pride on the line, Bear Creek Smokehouse takes exceptional care with every order of their old-fashioned family secrets.

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Today, Bear Creek Smokehouse's current product line consists of a variety of smoked meats, soup and drink mixes, confectionary items and more. A few of the items they currently produce include:

Ham

Peppered Pork Tenderloins

Smoked Ribs

Pork Loin

Sausage and Bacon

Brisket

Chopped Barbeque

Turkey

Chicken

Soup Mixes – Potato, Black Bean Chili,
Tortilla and Corn Chowder

Real Texas Seasonings – Chili, Barbecue and
Gumbo Mix

Cheese Ball Mixes

Hot Cocoa and Flavored Tea Mixes

Smoked Jalapeno Cornbread

Homemade Fudge

Bacon Bark

A variety of confectionary items for all seasons of the year



Bear Creek Smokehouse

Bear Creek Smokehouse began working with the Kilgore College SBDC in an attempt to consolidate debt and refinance existing loans, in anticipation of expanding its product line and balancing out seasonal workforce. They are presently working with a local bank to secure financing and hope to be able to move forward with their new product lines and equipment purchases in 2012-2013. Along with this positive impact on cash flow, Bear Creek has been able to secure and increase its current line of credit to meet the needs of this expansion.

Bear Creek Smokehouse is currently in the process of requesting funds from Marshall Economic Development Corporation through a grant proposal. This grant would cover the cost of additional equipment needed to grow their increasing product lines. New equipment means new jobs created for the company. As of March 2012, Bear Creek Smokehouse employed fifty-six (56) workers averaging \$25.94/hour, with 90% of those listing Marshall, TX as their home address. These grant funds would help create and retain more jobs in Harrison County while creating economic impact for the area.



Over the past 69 years, Bear Creek Smokehouse has demonstrated financial stability, project viability, continued job creation, tax base sustainability and the intention to maintain operations within Harrison County. The company is hoping to create new positions, while preserving existing employment opportunities, as well as improve the economic climate of Marshall, Texas. With the inclusion of the new product lines, Bear Creek Smokehouse will be able to reduce seasonality hiring and allow employees to have more opportunities to work each quarter of the year.

Bear Creek Smokehouse intends to create a minimum of nineteen (19) additional jobs over a five year span. The newly created jobs would be considered full time jobs and have an average hourly rate of at least \$10 per hour, well above the federal mandated minimum wage rate. Bear Creek Smokehouse also projects that this increase of nineteen (19) jobs could grow larger due to the expanded product line.

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This expansion includes a newly formed partnership with Red Rock Foods which carries **Nolan Ryan's** branded products. Bear Creek Smokehouse is poised to begin production on:

- Sliced & Chopped Brisket
- BBQ Sandwich
- Pulled Pork & Chicken BBQ
- 3 types of Sausage

Bear Creek Smokehouse has also developed a partnership with Riba Foods to develop a **Bacon Jam**® that will be sold in HEB Foods and other major food markets. This new partnership with Riba Foods will carry a commitment to expand and develop our canning capability and increase our production line. Riba Foods has already begun the process of moving some equipment to our factory to achieve this expansion.

Bear Creek Smokehouse is also in the process of expanding its confectionary line to include multiple seasonal products. This new expansion will allow Bear Creek Smokehouse to expand its product offerings for all major holidays, including Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day, Thanksgiving, Birthdays and all special occasions. Some of the items under development include:

- Melted Snowman Cookies
- Chocolate Dipped Pretzels
- Chocolate Rice Krispie Treats

Bacon Bark® is also a new product line along with other confectionary items that will allow Bear Creek to retain existing employees and create new employment.

Owner, Robbie Shoults said, *"Working with the SBDC has been a great experience. They have helped sustain our company in various ways by showing us how to improve our cash flow, our bottom line and our competitiveness in the market place through resources available to small businesses in East Texas. Brad Bunt and Melanie Northcutt have been a pleasure to work with through this process and have been very attentive to our individual business requirements. I would highly recommend any small business owner to the SBDC staff and let them put their expertise to work for you."* Bear Creek Smokehouse is an established, family owned business with a history and future full of entrepreneurial success. As a Kilgore College SBDC client, we will continue to look for new ways to help them grow their business and create another 69 years of accomplishment for the Shoults Family.