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SUBMARINA COMPANY PROFILE

It all comes down to weather. Warmer weather. Someplace warmer than Reno, Nevada in the winter.

Submarina founders Ron Vickers and Les Warfield and their wives, Maureen and Lynn, thumbed through an atlas one day in 1976 with the idea that there must be a place they could live with a climate closer to that of Puerto Vallarta where the Vickers had just returned from vacation. A month later, the two U.S. Postal Service co-workers and long-time friends took transfers - and accompanying demotions - and moved their families to San Diego.

One of the first things they did in San Diego was to try to find a sub-sandwich shop like they had frequented in Reno. As their search continued without success, they started talking about opening their own shop. How hard could it be? As Les describes it, "We had no experience and no capital, but we figured we'd learn as we went."

Their first lesson was in how to design a building. "We walked around on the site before the construction began, trying to imagine counters and tables – figuring out where to put things," Les said. That first shop opened in Poway in 1977 and is still run by Ron and his wife, Maureen. The second Submarina shop was opened in Escondido in 1979.

There are family stories about fresh produce mixing with the U.S. mail along postal routes while the entrepreneurs tended to both worlds. But the stores were run for the most part by Maureen and Lynn until their husbands were able to quit their mail carrier jobs in the mid-1980s and devote more time to the business.

Submarina has found its niche in producing hearty, great tasting sandwiches made from quality ingredients. The generous helpings of meat and cheese are sliced to customer order. Breads are made from scratch by a professional baker and delivered

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warm each morning. Sandwiches can be made on sliced bread as well as traditional sub rolls. Submarina's menu also includes a variety of soups and salads, chili, chips, and a Kids Meal. Sub salads can be made to order for a lower calorie alternative. Submarina also offers a complete catering menu.

Pre-franchise shops opened in Tierrasanta, San Marcos and Ramona until, in 1988, "We finally talked to an attorney and realized we needed to protect the Submarina name and ensure the quality of the product," said Les.

There are currently 37 Submarina locations in Southern California and stores in Northern California and Las Vegas. Many of the stores are owned or operated by family and friends. At least five franchises are owned by former employees who started out as counter help. Two corporate training facilities and the corporate offices are located in San Diego, all necessary parts of a thriving business.

Les and Ron are still the down-to-earth guys they always were. They are the first to marvel at how an idea they had more than 25 years ago continues to thrive. "The whole thing seems incredible and the best part is we've had a great time," say the friends who revel in the fact that they can wear shorts and t-shirts all year long.

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