

President, Select Brands, LLC

allison collins

greatness on the grill

Argja B. Collins' entrepreneurial spirit was instilled in him at a young age. The namesake of Argja B. Food Products and the creator of Mumbo Barbecue Sauce knew when he moved from tiny Indianola, Miss., to the West side of Chicago in the 1950s that he would determine his own destiny. After launching his own barbecue restaurants, Collins developed his signature "Mumbo Sauce" and launched his family-owned enterprise. Now decades later, his daughter, Allison, maintains that legacy as president of Select Brands, LLC. "We worked at our dad's restaurants, we worked at [the] manufacturing plants," she explains. "So it's always been a part of our family."

Collins has shepherded Select Brands to even more growth through successful partnerships. One of the brand's oldest partnerships is with retail chain Jewel-Osco, a relationship that stretches back four decades. "Jewel Osco happened to be one of the major stores that — even in the 1960s — brought [our] product in for massive distribution in the Chicago region," Collins shares. Happily, the cooperation between Jewel and Select Brands has been mutually beneficial. "It's been a long-standing partnership over the years and we've been able to grow as Jewel has grown, and we've been able to take advantage of some very interesting promotional opportunities."

For Collins, a progressive mind-set doesn't mean disregarding your illustrious history. She embraces her entrepreneurial heritage and works hard to maintain the company's tradition of excellence. "Our parents always planted the entrepreneurial seed for us," she shares. "As a second-generation entrepreneur, [it's] about carrying on a family legacy — but also understanding the value of a great product and introducing that product to a new generation." —*todd williams* 



Store Director, Jewel Osco

darius young

committed to excellence

After 10 years, Darius Young has learned the ins and outs of Jewel Osco. "I was an Osco manager — I came up in that training program," he explains. "[I've been on] the food side now, for six years. It's good to know both sides if you can, so you can be [focused] on the [entire] store."

Young has been able to maintain his storewide focus and get his associates all on the same page. Managing a wide range of personalities, both customers and associates alike, is no small feat. Young is responsible for making sure the operations of the store are met, making sure his associates are productive, and, of course, making sure the customers are happy.

Young is a people person, and his approach to management is an emphasis on people skills and synergy. "[You have] to really get your associates on board with what you're trying to do, in terms of [your] expectations as a grocery store," says Young. "[I have] to get all 105 of my associates in the same direction."

Young understands the benefit of working in an industry that's more stable than others. "People [have] to eat," he says. "Even when the economy's tight [and] people are spending less, [they] tend to grocery shop more, [instead] of going out to eat."

Young saw the opportunities with Jewel Osco and he encourages others to do the same. "From a mobility standpoint, there are a lot of possibilities," he says. "I had great teachers. I've worked with some very experienced, diverse people. And to be able to take their experiences and [blend] those ideas shaped my management style." He also credits a personal commitment to excellence for his success. "Holding myself to a higher standard has kept me focused and moving forward." —*todd williams* 

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