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**Review | 'Earth' ★★★**

Disney's recycled nature film is awesome, gorgeous and a little bit cheesy. | C7



# FYI | Food

"WE CHALLENGE OUR CUSTOMERS TO CHALLENGE US." KATHEE KRAMM, OWNER OF PIZZA FUSION IN LEAWOOD



MIKE RANDELL | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Pizza Fusion, an environmentally friendly organic pizza chain, opened a store in Leawood last month. One of the top-selling pizzas: BBG Chicken, an organic pizza crust topped with free-range chicken and organic roasted red onion, fresh garlic and basil.

COMMENTARY

JENEÉ OSTERHELDT



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## WOOFSTOCK PLAYS FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Zona Rosa goes to the dogs on Sunday morning. Pups and their owners will take over the chic shopping plaza for Woofstock.

Some of the dogs will go on a one-mile walk, sportier dogs will jog a 5K and everyone else will be there to have some good family fun — face painting, furry fashion show, raffles, music and more.

Registration starts at 7:30 a.m., the jog at 8:30, the walk at 9:30 and entertainment at 10. A \$25 ticket gets you a T-shirt, a goodie bag and the chance to micro-chip your dog and fingerprint your kids.

For the second year, the Northland Animal Welfare Society ([www.pcnaws.com](http://www.pcnaws.com)) is putting on the event to raise money for an adoption and animal care campus.

Goldie Arnold, president of the organization, says the group has raised about \$80,000 in two years toward a \$1 million goal.

"There are so many homeless animals in the Northland," says Goldie, 58. "Our shelters are overpopulated, and some are in need of repair. Our rescue groups are working hard."

"There is a real crisis, and we formed NAWA to try and create a place for those animals to go, a place for them to be adopted, a place for them to retire when that isn't an option and a place where people and children can learn how to be good pet owners."

Goldie is a real pet lover. She and her husband have three cats. They had two Labs for 17 years.

SEE JENEÉ | C10

WEIRD NEWS

That's some spooky business. London's Daily Mail reported in March that among the recession-themed business start-up grants awarded by the Welsh Department of Work and Pensions was the equivalent of about \$6,600 to the Accolade Academy of Psychic and Mediumistic Studies. One of the Academy's owners defended the award, noting that parents who had lost children needed to know that they were safe.

EARTH DAY | Pizza Fusion

# GREEN CUISINE

**For eco-friendly, organic pizza franchise, every day is Earth Day.**

By JILL WENDHOLT SILVA  
The Kansas City Star

Why hug a tree if you can eat a fork?

Kathee Kramm's organic pizzeria in Leawood is so environmentally friendly you could eat the take-out utensils. Sure, the forks, knives and spoons look like the petroleum-based plastic kind, but the compostable cutlery is designed to biodegrade in a landfill in roughly 90 to 120 days.

Before Kramm and her husband, Ted, opened a 2,400-square-foot Pizza Fusion at 135th Street and Roe Boulevard, Kathee slowly nibbled at a spud-based fork during a franchisee training session.

She wanted to be sure she was putting her money where her mouth is.

"The guy sitting next to me and I were in a challenge," she says. "It chews down like a gum or a taffy. It tastes kind of floury, like boxed mashed potatoes. It doesn't taste bad, but I don't think you'd ever find yourself craving a fork."

Pizza Fusion's company mantra is "Saving the Earth, one pizza at a time." Sure, it's a sort of catchy marketing slogan, but what does eating green really mean?

At Pizza Fusion, it starts with organic flour. The distinctive, oblong pizza crusts are topped with ingredients such as organic tomato sauce, organic spinach, free-range chicken, soy cheese and even organic pepperoni. Almost 75 percent of the ingre-

SEE GREEN | C5



ECO-UNIFORMS

Pizza Fusion employees wear 100-percent organic cotton T-shirts. Eco-conscious and recycled materials are featured in the design of the restaurant.



RECYCLED CARDBOARD

Customers receive discounts when they bring their pizza boxes back to the store for recycling.



HYBRID DELIVERY

Two Prius hybrid vehicles are used to deliver pizzas within a three- to five-mile radius of the restaurant.

To link to the National Restaurant Association's Conserve Initiative, go to [KansasCity.com](http://KansasCity.com).

SUPPORT FOR PLUS-SIZE PEOPLE

## Stay the Course: Living large and learning their worth



Todd

By EDWARD M. EVELD  
The Kansas City Star

For some people, their body size is their prison. Laurie Todd understands. Years ago, at more than 500 pounds, she worked nights to avoid being out in public during the day.

Self-isolated, she calls it. But no more.

"I count it a victory every time I walk out the door," she said.

With counseling and "through the grace of God," she said, she discovered her worth.

"I want to help other people do that," she said.

Todd, who has lost more than 130 pounds, founded a nonprofit organization, Stay the Course. It supports "plus-size" people who feel their size is holding them back in any number of ways, in their personal and work lives, emotionally and psychologically.

The group holds its Meet and Greet Extravaganza on Friday. Newcomers are invited.

About 60 strong, the group goes out to-

gether — bowling, movies, dinner — performs volunteer work and exercises together with the help of a trainer who specializes in overweight clients. Counseling and other programs are also available.

"It's a place of safety, of belonging and acceptance," Todd said. "We want everyone to know that being fat isn't the most interesting thing about us. That's our motto. There's so much more."

To reach Edward M. Eveld, call 816-234-4442 or send e-mail to [eeveld@kcstar.com](mailto:eeveld@kcstar.com).

TO LEARN MORE

■ **What:** Meet and Greet Extravaganza for Stay the Course, an organization for plus-size people

■ **Speaker:** Former Kansas City Chiefs player Anthony Davis

■ **When:** 5:30 to 8 p.m. Friday

■ **Where:** 8900 State Line Road, Suite 230, Leawood

■ **Join:** Go to [www.staytc.com](http://www.staytc.com) or e-mail Laurie Todd, [laurie@staytc.com](mailto:laurie@staytc.com). It's free to join, \$45 to become a supporting member.

# GREEN: Pizza Fusion puts organic spin on fast food

**FROM CI**  
dients are from certified organic farmers.

The menu is printed with soy ink on recycled paper. Organic items are listed in green ink. Much of the menu is gluten-free or suitable for vegans.

But the Fort Lauderdale-based company's commitment to green cuisine doesn't stop with the food on your plate.

Kramm, who opened her restaurant in mid-March, instructs her employees — the ones wearing 100-percent organic cotton T-shirts — to pick two eco-friendly talking points to share with customers. "If the customer has not been here before, I tell them, 'Let me pitch two things you don't know,'" says Kramm, a first-time restaurant owner who has run a successful pharmacy with her husband for years.

For starters, Kramm tells customers to look out the window. See the pair of white hybrid Priuses parked and ready to deliver the store's pizzas? To save gas, home delivery is limited to customers who live within a three- to five-mile radius. But customers who leave their own cars in the garage and pedal on over to the restaurant can take 10 percent off their pizza.

Next she points out the restaurant's eco-friendly décor, including an intriguing bamboo bar with a poured concrete top studded with broken bits of colored glass from non-recyclable beer bottles.

At the bar, customers can order Boylan's sodas made with pure cane sugar (instead of high-fructose corn syrup, which has been derided by nutritionists in recent years), organic and gluten-free wines and beers or Fiji natural artesian bottled water.

But isn't bottled water turning out to be the antithesis of environmental responsibility?

Kramm quizzed the company's founders, who assured her the maker of Fiji has purchased enough carbon emission credits to offset the petroleum it requires to ship the water thousands of miles across the ocean.

Look around. The walls and floor are painted with Green Planet zero-VOC paints. A windmill graphic on one wall represents the company's commitment to offsetting the restaurant's power consumption with Green-e certified renewable energy certificates.

Look up. All the light fixtures use energy-saving compact fluorescent bulbs.

Throughout the store, wood used to build cabinets and shelves is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. The seat cushions on the dining room chairs and stools are made from naturally biodegradable latex instead of petroleum-based foam. A wall is paneled in bamboo, a renewable alternative to hardwoods.

Even the bathroom is equipped with energy-efficient features, including sensors on the lights and hand sink as well as a dual-flush toilet. A Dyson Airblade, a high-powered hand dryer, reduces the number of paper towels used.

## NRA's green mission

Pizza Fusion was started in 2006 by two college friends who "weren't happy with the mark they were leaving on the Earth," says Vaughan Lazar, the 36-year-old president and co-founder.

"We realized there was nowhere to eat organic outside of Whole Foods. There were no fast-food options if you wanted organic food on the run," he says.

Since pizza gives hamburg-

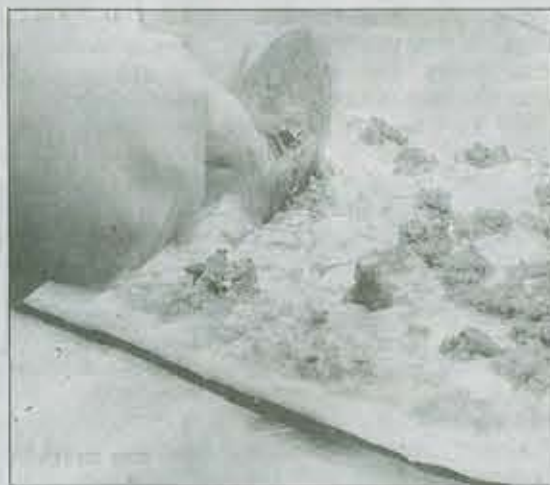


Pizza Fusion offers two sizes of organic pizza, as well as vegan and gluten-free options. Employee Brittney Brownell carries pizzas to waiting customers.

PHOTOS BY MIKE RANDELL | THE STAR



Patty and Randall Clemmons of Overland Park choose from a list of organic wines and vegan wines produced without the use of animal byproducts.



An oblong crust made from organic flour is topped with organic tomato sauce and organic pepperoni.

ers a run for their money as America's favorite food, Lazar and partner Michael Gordon thought: Why not open a restaurant? But they soon realized that marketing their brand of pizza required walking the walk, not just talking the talk.

"We realized we were starting a socially responsible business and part of that responsibility is to educate people," says Lazar, whose venture has quickly grown to 20 restaurants in 12 states.

With almost 1 million restaurants ranked as among the country's top electricity and water consumers, more businesses are eager to jump on the green bandwagon.

Last May the National Restaurant Association created a Green Task Force and launched a Conserve Initiative to educate restaurant owners on easy ways to go green. At [www.conserve.restaurant.org](http://www.conserve.restaurant.org), the association outlines small steps that can save money and the planet at the same time.

For instance, in 2005 McDonald's restaurants trimmed 1/4-inch off the seams of its french fry box for a savings of 1,100 tons of raw materials.

The association's 2009 Res-

taurant Industry Forecast found at least four in 10 full-service restaurant operators and almost three in 10 quick-service operators report they plan to devote more of their resources to green initiatives this year.

Initially focused on energy, water and construction, the Web site [www.conserve.restaurant.org](http://www.conserve.restaurant.org) is expected to grow over time to include other aspects of sustainability, including recycling, packaging, cleaning supplies, and food and beverages.

Based on each store's carbon footprint, Pizza Fusion's goal is to reduce water waste by 40 percent and electricity consumption by 20 percent per year, Lazar says.

So why were CFL bulbs screwed into some of the light fixtures at the Leawood restaurant and not others?

An oversight spotted by a sharp-eyed kid customer who pointed it out to his dad, who called Kramm to their table to point out the discrepancy. "We challenge our customers to challenge us," she says.

But before you go pointing the finger, you might want to calculate your own carbon footprint. Click on the link at

[www.pizzafusion.com](http://www.pizzafusion.com).

## Organic vs. conventional

The Kramm family — Kathee, a nurse; Ted, a pharmacist; and the four eco-conscious children ages 19, 16, 14 and 11 — became interested in investing in the green restaurant movement more than a year ago.

"We knew we wanted to do something eco-friendly and maybe something with food," says Kathee, who initially found franchise information after searching the Internet.

The Kramms' oldest child, Patrick, is an ecology major at the University of Montana and has become what his mom calls "nearly militant" about conserving, recycling, reusing and living sustainably.

Kathee recalls she grew up in a time when it was still acceptable to toss trash out of car windows while driving down the highway. "I think (Patrick's) commitment started in school, and he's been teaching us," she says.

Recently when the family went to visit and forgot to bring reusable bags along on a shopping trip, Patrick insisted

the family carry their groceries in their arms.

On the food side of the business, the Kramms are already learning that demand can often outstrip supply, driving prices sky high. Keeping a ready supply of organic spinach or organic red peppers without busting the bottom line has been a challenge. "Because it takes so long for farmers to become certified, sometimes they're just not available," she says.

Franchisees make the call on whether to temporarily strike an ingredient from the menu or tell customers they can't find — or in some cases can't afford — the organic version.

With prices ranging from \$7 for a personal cheese pizza to \$21 for a large Philly Steak Pizza, it's hard to compete with traditional pizza chains that offer three pizzas for \$5.

Despite a recession, Lazar says, customers who routinely buy organic food already are conditioned to pay a 10 percent to 15 percent premium at the supermarket.

"At the end of the day, it's a conscious decision that aligns with your core values," he says. "You can't put a value on what we're doing."

## PIZZA FUSION

4800 W. 135th St., Suite 250

913-685-0033

Organic pepperoni pizza | \$14 large, \$8 personal

**Founder's pie** (free-range chicken, Kalamata olives, roasted red onion, tomato sauce, parmesan, mozzarella, provolone and gorgonzola) | \$18 large, \$10 personal

**Fusion Salad** (arugula, romaine, cucumber, red onion, tomatoes, basil, shaved carrots and toasted crostini) | \$9 full, \$5 half

**Portabella Grill** (marinated portabella mushrooms, roasted bell peppers, pesto and fresh mozzarella) | \$9

**Boylan's Soda** | \$2.50

**New Belgium Blue Paddle Pilsner** | \$4.50

**Greens Discovery Dubble Dark Ale** (gluten-free) | \$9

**Cono Sur Pinot Noir from Chile** (vegan and made from organic grapes) | \$7

## ECO-RESTAURANTS BY THE NUMBERS

With energy costs for a typical building 30 percent of the annual budget and energy costs rising 6 percent to 8 percent a year, more restaurants are choosing to save green by going green.

Restaurants use 5 times more energy per square foot than other commercial buildings and 5 times more energy in the kitchen than in the rest of the building.

For every incandescent light bulb replaced by a compact fluorescent, a restaurant can save up to \$30 in electricity costs over the light bulb's lifetime.

41 percent of chefs say environmentally friendly equipment and practices will be the hottest back-of-house trend in 2009.

About 4 in 10 full-service restaurant operators installed water-saving ware-washers and toilet fixtures in the last two years.

60 percent of adults say they are more likely to visit a restaurant that offers food that was grown in an organic or environmentally friendly way.

Source: The National Restaurant Association

But because consumers vote with their wallets, organic pizza has to taste at least as good as conventional pizza.

"If we don't have good food, we're not going to make it," Lazar says. "People don't want to chew on a mission."

Reach Jill Wendholt Silva, food editor, at 816-234-4395 or [jsilva@kcstar.com](mailto:jsilva@kcstar.com).

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<b>CUTTY SARK SCOTCH</b> BIG 1.75L <b>26<sup>99</sup></b>	<b>4 BEARS CABERNET OR MERLOT</b> 750ML <b>10<sup>95</sup></b>

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