

LEADING THE WAY THROUGH THE 21ST CENTURY

Shopping Center Business

SHOPPING CENTER BUSINESS™

AUGUST 2007

FLORIDA RIDES THE RETAIL WAVE

WITH MORE THAN 55 CENTERS OVER
300,000 SQUARE FEET UNDER
DEVELOPMENT OR RECENTLY OPENED,
THE STATE IS BOOMING WITH PROGRESS.



- IPIC HAS ENTERTAINMENT UNDER ONE ROOF
- THE EVOLUTION OF THE LIFESTYLE CENTER

PLUS:

- PIZZA FUSION'S ORGANIC GROWTH
- A RESTAURATEUR'S GUIDE TO SITE SELECTION

August 2007

Pizza Fusion Goes Green

All-organic pizza chain offers franchisees a chance to run a successful business and make a difference.

Susan Fishman

Pizza Fusion, a Fort Lauderdale, Florida-based gourmet pizza franchise, is “saving the earth, one pizza at a time.” The new pizza chain addresses the needs of today’s health-conscious and environmentally conscious consumer by promoting the organic movement and practicing an eco-friendly approach in all operations of the company.

Founded by college buddies Michael Gordon and Vaughan Lazar in February 2006, Pizza Fusion offers an all-natural and organic menu. A novel idea, but the cart really came before the horse, says Lazar, who has always had an interest in the environment, but who, along with Gordon, had no real restaurant experience.

“We wanted to make a difference and do something different,” he says. “We started with hybrid delivery cars before we decided to do organic pizza. We realized we were probably on to something pretty big that really would make a difference because eating organically is really



Pizza Fusion uses hybrid cars for delivery vehicles. The company has an eco-friendly approach to all operations of its business.

hard the second you walk out your door. You either have to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner at Whole Foods or make

your own meals every day. And pizza is a popular food; it’s accessible — not that expensive — and we found we really could make a lot of headway into people’s homes this way.”

Pizza Fusion is currently franchising across the United States with the hopes of opening 12 to 15 locations in the first year. The company’s initial location was in Deerfield Beach, Florida, and the second recently opened in Fort Lauderdale. The Fort Lauderdale franchisees also purchased the entire Miami-Dade territory with plans to open locations in both Aventura and South Beach. Another store will be opening shortly in the Winter Park area.

The Fort Lauderdale store is 1,200 square feet with a raw, modern, earthy design that reflects the bare, basic approach to organic and sustainable living, using accents from the natural elements of the earth. The newest project for the company is making each store as green



Pizza Fusion’s Fort Lauderdale location.

RESTAURANT REVIEW



Pizza Fusion's organic pizzas have attracted a wide group of loyal customers.

as possible, using sustainable, renewable and local resources. A signature store element is a slate rock wall, which will be built using rock from the local area.



Inside Pizza Fusion.

The stores also feature things like recycled napkins, menus printed on 100 percent recycled paper with soy inks, and paper plates and plastic salad containers made from corn.

In addition to gourmet pizzas, the all-natural, organic menu includes sandwiches, wraps, paninis, salads, beers, wines and desserts, such as

chocolates and gluten-free, vegan brownies. Traditionally, organic vegetables are almost three times as expensive as con-

ventional vegetables, but you get what you pay for, notes Lazar. The same is true at Pizza Fusion.

"We're about 10 percent more expensive than your average quick-serve pizza place," he says, "but in terms of other gourmet pizza places, we're not any more expensive. We're right in line with a lot of the trendy gourmet pizza places that are popping up now."

The restaurant has traditionally done well in a strip shopping center in an affluent area, and within "a rock's throw of a Whole Foods," says Lazar. But the concept attracts all walks of life and all income levels.

"We have found that our core demographic is everyone from young, vegan teens, who are a lot more aware of things and really into the movement, to young mothers with children to older people. We even have doctors who refer chemotherapy patients who they want on an organic diet."

Like the clientele, Pizza Fusion franchisees also come from all walks of life, adds Lazar. Restaurant experience is not a pre-requisite, but franchisees must be between \$75,000 and \$100,000 liquid (the franchise can cost anywhere from \$250,000 to \$325,000 to start up, which includes the franchise fee and the build-out.)

"We've received such an overwhelming response to the concept that we're trying to make sure we take it one step at a time," he says. "We want to make sure we can sustain the growth and, also, partner with stores like Starbucks, where our customers would shop. There are a lot of businesses out there that are taking simple steps to greening their business, and that really makes us happy." **SCB**

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