



>> As part of its quality focus, Pizzaville bakes its pizzas on a stone slab, which takes longer than a conveyor oven but gives the crust a crispier texture.

Peddling Pizza

According to Pizzaville management, if you can make a pizza company prosper in southern Ontario, you can make it anywhere. **By Russ Gager**

If New York is the capital of finance and Paris of fashion, then surely southern Ontario is the capital of pizza. “Up here, it is a highly competitive market,” maintains Riccardo Mini, Pizzaville’s district manager and project manager for store construction. “Southern Ontario is the most competitive pizza market. There are more pizzerias per capita in southern Ontario than anywhere in the world.

“I was born and raised in Rome, Italy, and there are more pizzerias here than there,” he insists. “Of course, in Rome, they make their own pizzas at home.”

Pizzaville’s slogan is “Gourmet pizza at a conglomerate price.” “We are definitely not the cheapest in the market, and we are not the fastest, so therefore we have to create a niche,” Mini points out. That niche is high-quality ingredients.

“We have a production element manager, Nella Contardi, who is the wife of the owner, Angelo Contardi,” explains Alan Serrecchia, franchise development director. “She is very meticulous on what

products come to the menu because of our niche. We’re not looking at the cheapest; rather what guides our choices is the taste and the nutritional content, and third is price.

“We’ve recently introduced the extra thin crust pizza – more of an Italian style – to cater more to the health-conscious baby boom market,” Serrecchia states. The reason Pizzaville does not have the fastest pizza is that it is cooked in a more traditional way on a stone slab. “The stone gives it a crispier texture,” Mini explains.

Serrecchia points out that the stone increases cooking time over the commonly used conveyor ovens, but also increases quality and taste. “It doesn’t

company profile

Pizzaville

www.pizzaville.ca

Proj. 2010 revenues: \$30 million

Headquarters: Woodbridge, Ontario, Canada

Employees: 600

Service: Pizza franchiser

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allow us to compete on speed, but we still manage to deliver in about 40 minutes," he maintains.

The company also offers three types of pasta – lasagna, spinach ricotta penne, and ground beef and four-cheese penne. "We have a chef cooking in our kitchen at the head office and making everything from scratch," Serrecchia declares. "Every tray that goes out daily is as close as you can get to homemade." The pizza dough also is made fresh daily and shipped frozen to its locations to maintain consistency.

Promoting Pizza

Pizzaville relies on radio and, recently, billboard advertising, along with several innovative promotions. "In terms of main advertising, radio has been our staple," Serrecchia reports. "We have the longest-running, most successful radio campaign. That's pretty much our trademark, in a sense. We also just recently bought about 300 billboards in the greater Toronto area (GTA)."

Among the projects that are upgrading the franchise is offering wireless debit card transactions from drivers at delivery. Serrecchia says it has taken almost a year in negotiation to roll out.

The stores also are receiving high-speed Internet connections for a virtual private network over fiber-optic cable that the company will use for future promotions. "That will bear fruit when we launch flat-screen television campaigns all centrally driven at the head office," Mini promises.

The call center is run for the company's GTA franchisees and staffed mostly by college students.

"It fits well with their school schedules and works out really well for the franchisees," Serrecchia emphasizes. "They're getting the best customer service you can imagine from these kinds of people."

All of the company's locations are franchised, except one located near its headquarters, which is used for product testing, market research and franchisee training.

High Five

Pizzaville was founded in 1963 and is family owned. The current owner, Angelo Contardi, is not the founder but purchased the company in the late 1970s.

"He's definitely the driving force behind the company, and all of the franchisees have a good relationship with him," Mini emphasizes. He estimates the company had six locations when Contardi purchased it and it now has 61.

"We're expanding at a rate of about three to four locations a year," Mini notes. "In the last 18 to 24 months, we've been remodeling about 60 percent of our total number of units. We've done virtually all the GTA locations and still have some outside the main city core market to do."

All the advertising and promotions pay off with a top-of-mind awareness. "We are definitely in the top five in the GTA," Mini proudly maintains. **FD**

We are pleased to be a contributing partner in the Pizzaville success story.



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