



Taste a New York strip steak pizza. Savor the Pacific Rim salad with spring mix, fresh mandarin oranges, red cabbage and water chestnuts. Sip Anheuser Busch's Redbridge brew.

Relax.

It is easy being green.

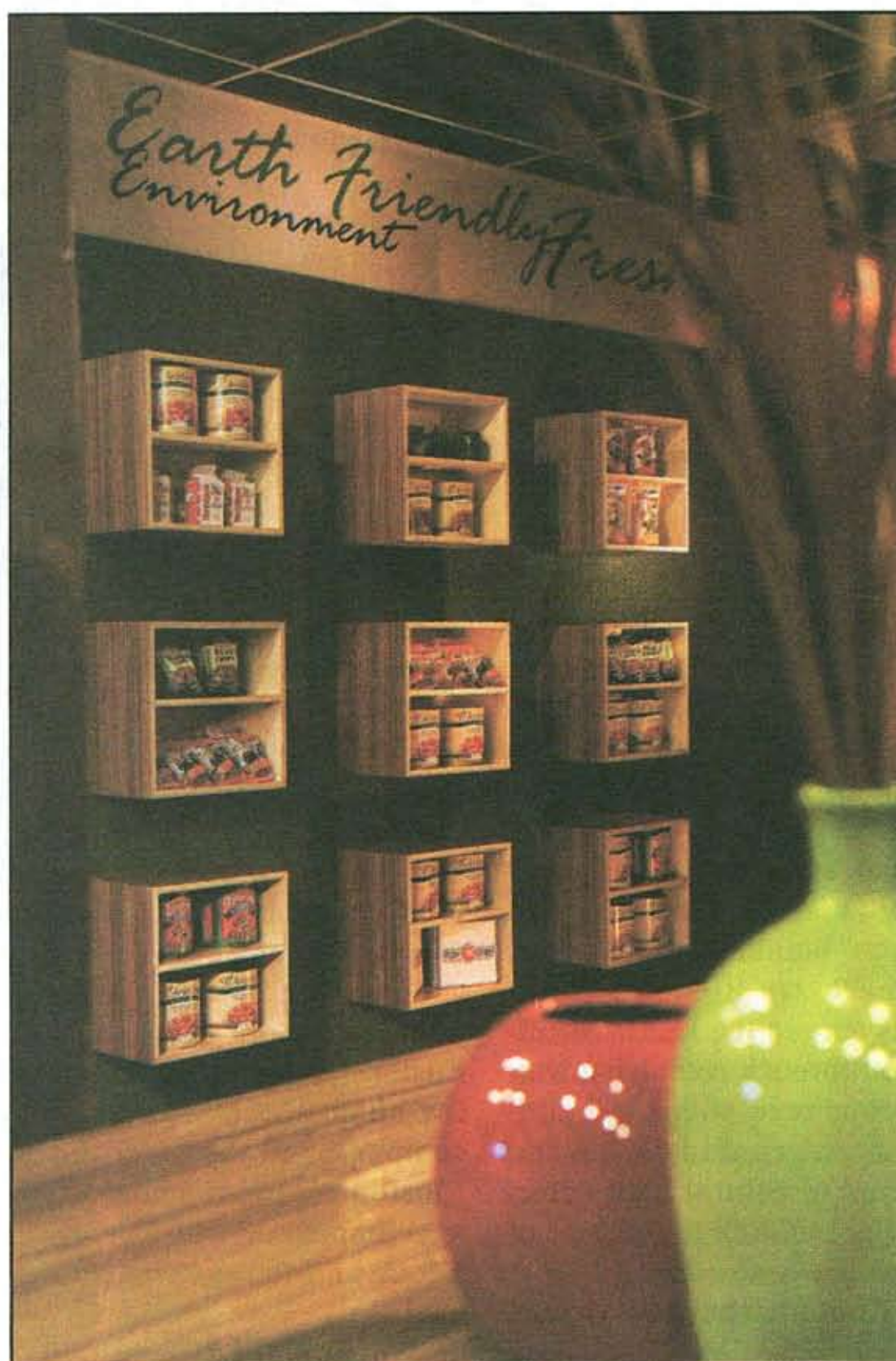
The steak is free of hormones, pesticides, antibiotics and insecticides. The vegetables are organic. The beer is gluten-free. And the pizza box is made from recycled paper and can be recycled again when you've eaten the last cheesy pizza slice.

Dine with the happy little pleasure that even the kitchen sink comes from reclaimed, recycled or reusable materials at the new Pizza Fusion restaurant, which is set to open in March in the Orchard Place Plaza in Richland Township at the corner of Route 8 and Ewalt Road.

This isn't your pop's oldtime pizza shop. Pizza Fusion is part of a new wave of environmentally friendly restaurants.

Wende Goncz, Pizza Fusion franchisee, wants to show that living a "greener" life is "as easy as eating a pizza."

The Pine Township woman, who co-owns the restaurant with husband Gray, expects consumers to embrace Pennsylvania's first Pizza Fusion, which delivers its motto, "Saving the Earth, One Pizza at a



Photos courtesy of Pizza Fusion

Time."

The restaurant operates on the belief that social responsibility is as important as profitability. The company, founded in 2006, practices an eco-friendly approach from the building of the restaurant to its service and operations.

"Pizza Fusion is an excellent fit with Pittsburgh's eco-conscious, organic hungry community," said Goncz, an anesthesiologist and mother of two sons.

"The environmentally friendly aspect is a huge bonus for us."

Pizza Fusion serves a gourmet, organic menu of pizzas, focaccia sandwiches and wraps and organic beers and wines. Health-conscious diners with special diets and allergies also can find gluten-free and lactose-free options. Vegan and vegetarian offerings with soy cheese that is casein-free also are available.

No "Pittsburgh lettuce" is served here. Think organic "spring mix." Pizza Fusion features more upscale, gourmet

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offerings with its rectangular pizzas.

Offerings range from traditional, 18-inch pizzas for \$14 to premium specialty pizzas like 28-inch “surf and turf” for \$48. Pick from such toppings as Key West shrimp, wild caught Maine lobster, fresh gorgonzola, kalamata olives, eggplant, goat cheese, caramelized onions and aged parmesan.

“It’s meant to be more

region.

“Chains are looking for a point of differentiation,” said Darren Tristano of Technomic, a food industry consulting and research firm in Chicago. And Pizza Fusion’s green mission appeals to today’s consumer. “It’s been very hot. It’s important for the new generation.”

Tristano doubts, however, if customers are willing to spring for a higher tab to be earth-friendly. “They expect people to be green, but they won’t pay to be green.”

And, it’s not just the food

materials and renewable products were used to create the site, which is located about a mile north of the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

When possible, local materials were used rather than shipping in products. Care was made with using safe paints and environmentally friendly materials.

Heat from ovens is circulated to warm the restaurant, which seats 44 diners inside and also features an outside patio area for 12 visitors. All paper products are recycled.

great for Pittsburgh,” said Goncz, who previous worked in the food industry. “We want to attract the person next door because we have good food and organic options.”

She’s had a great response from folks happy about the upscale and organic offerings. She’s had calls from people as far as Erie willing to travel for gluten-free options.

Pizza Fusion, which is open from 11 a.m. to 10 to 11 p.m. daily, also will feature music and entertainment and special tasting events.

Heat from ovens is circulated to warm the restaurant, which seats 44 diners inside and also features an outside patio area for 12 visitors. All paper products are recycled. Recycle bins are strategically placed throughout. Pizza delivery cars are hybrid vehicles.



upscale pizza on the gourmet level. It’s more of a ‘Starbucks’ feel at a pizza place,” she says. “It’s something that is going to surprise people. You can get good pizza and salads.”

Sandwiches and wraps include all-natural ingredients free of nitrates, hormones and antibiotics.

The Pittsburgh area location is one of more than 50 Pizza Fusion restaurants opening in California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Nevada, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Goncz hopes to establish three or four more Pizza Fusion sites in the Pittsburgh

that’s green.

The restaurants are certified by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design green building rating system, an accepted benchmark for design, construction and operation of high performance “green” buildings.

The Pizza Fusion restaurants earned the LEED certification through complying with rigorous regulations in building plans ranging from the amount of natural light entering the building to the type of plumbing used.

Although the restaurant looks new, reclaimed building

Recycle bins are strategically placed throughout. Pizza delivery cars are hybrid vehicles.

“The company has a strong commitment of bringing this to the mainstream,” says Goncz. “We’re going to encourage people to bring in pizza boxes so we can recycle them.”

Goncz and her husband decided to operate a Pizza Fusion restaurant after reading about the eco-conscious company and then visiting a Florida location, where they were impressed with the operations and the quality of the food.

“We thought it would be

Goncz, who talks about the environment with her sons, was accustomed to recycling at their home. “Sometimes our recycle bin is more full than our garbage bin,” she says.

She hopes to use the restaurant to encourage and educate others to take a step toward helping the environment.

“These little things add up in a big way. Everyone is a big consumer. There are ways to consume more intelligently,” she says. “You can reduce dramatically what you use. Instead of throwing away a bottle, they can recycle.”

By Debra Utterback