

Chef Spotlight



Having served as chef of Yesterday's Restaurant & Tavern for more than 30 years, Roberto Alicia-Cruz is no stranger to Southern cuisine.

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Operator Focus

Like many operations, Charleston, South Carolina-based Sticky Fingers Rib House is expanding its business through online sales.

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History of Food



Chef Lucardie explores the evolution of canned foods and their impact on the food service industry.

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People, Places & Things

Catch up on the latest industry news and events.

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Product Spotlight

Read about the newest products in the food service industry.

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Pizza Fusion Offers Diners Organic, Environmentally Friendly Menu Options

"Saving the earth, one pizza at a time." Pizza Fusion fills a niche in the quick-service restaurant market with organic foods and an earth-friendly approach to doing business, and their motto says it all. The concept's devoted fan base is growing as quickly as its list of locations.

A desire to be different prompted Michael Gordon and Vaughan Lazar to found the concept in 2006. The duo combined their three passions – pizza, eating healthy and the environment – to build a business model for Pizza Fusion. By promoting the organic movement through the use of all-natural and organic ingredients, and by utilizing eco-friendly practices in all operations of the company, the restaurant serves its customers as well as the environment.

The approach has proven to be a successful one for the Fort Lauderdale-based company. Today, there are 50 franchises opening in seven states, including Florida, Virginia and Georgia.

The menu focuses around all-natural, organic and gluten-free items and even features items for vegans and vegetarians. Pizza toppings rise above those found at a



Pizza Fusion has gained popularity not only for its delicious organic pizza, but also for its environmentally sustainable business practices. Each building utilizes reclaimed and recycled building materials as well as eco-friendly energy sources. A fleet of hybrid vehicles makes food deliveries.

traditional chain, and include Portabello mushrooms, wild-caught Key West shrimp, roasted garlic and fresh gorgonzola. Patrons may choose from a range of specialty pizzas such as pesto and walnut, veggie medley, and organic mushroom and thyme, or create their own from a list of over 30 toppings. Each pizza is baked in a distinctive oval shape; delivery boxes are hand-stamped and signed.

An abundance of addi-

tional menu choices includes salads, wraps and sandwiches, all made with pesticide-free vegetables and hormone-free poultry or beef. Organic brownies and cookies, along with a full array of organic sodas, wine and beer, and a specialty gluten-free beer are also served.

A focus on quality ingredients is reflected in every aspect of the menu. Pizza sauce and dough are made from scratch daily; other ingredi-

ents are sourced from organic suppliers such as Grateful Harvest, Applegate Farms and Annie's Naturals.

From food preparation to delivery, every aspect of Pizza Fusion's operations is designed to support the environment. Food deliveries are made in hybrid vehicles, and customers receive a discount for returning pizza boxes for recycling. Food containers are made from corn starch, which

(See PIZZA on page 17)

Southeast School Food Service Professionals Elected to SNA Board

The School Nutrition Association has announced the results of its annual election, and the Southeast will be well represented on its nine-member board of directors.

Nancy Rice has been elected to serve as vice president of the SNA. Rice is school nutrition director for Clayton County Public Schools in Jonesboro, Georgia and a longtime school nutrition advocate. She has previously served the SNA in many capacities, including Nutrition Committee Chair and Member Services Committee.

Diane Santoro was elected

to the position of State Agency Representative. Santoro is the director of the Food and Nutrition Management Office for the state of Florida.

Serving as Member Services Committee Chair will be Elizabeth Taylor, school nutrition director of Johnston County Schools in Smithfield, North Carolina. Also elected to the board is Julia Bauscher, who is a coordinator for Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky. Bauscher will serve as Nutrition Committee Chair.

Serving on the SNA Nom-

inating Committee as Southeast Regional Representative will be Debbie Mobley, school nutrition director for Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools in

Clarksville, Tennessee.

The winning candidates will be installed in July during School Nutrition Association's Annual National Conference.

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PIZZA: Concept Offers Environmentally Friendly Options

(Continued from page 1)
decomposes in landfills in just 45 days.

All printed materials are made with 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper and soy inks; eco-friendly cleaners are used in each store, and employees are provided with organic cotton uniforms.

For Pizza Fusion, "going green" doesn't stop there. Each store is built according to the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Building Rating System, making them the first franchise to include LEED in the build-out of their restaurants.

Eco-friendly construction measures include solar panels, countertops made from recycled detergent bottles, the use of recaptured industrial concrete, bamboo flooring, insulation made from recycled blue jeans and furniture made from reclaimed wood. Heat from the pizza ovens is recycled to warm water and the restaurant itself.

Stores feature a modern, earthy design that reflects the

Part of the concept's vision is to influence the restaurant industry to move toward eco-friendly business practices, and it is doing just that. Following a meeting with Pizza Fusion executives, Subway recently launched an eco-store in Florida and has announced plans to pursue voluntary LEED certification.

"We hope that building a stronger presence to support our sometimes fanatic customer base here in South Florida will encourage the state as a whole to move toward more environmentally sustainable practices," said Lazar.



Pizza Fusion restaurants feature an open kitchen and a contemporary décor that reflects its eco-friendly approach. Furniture is made from reclaimed wood, lighting is low-heat and low-voltage and ceiling panels are made from recycled aluminum cans.

*Michael Gordon
and Vaughan
Lazer combined
their passions—
pizza, eating
healthy and the
environment—
to build a busi-
ness model.*

basic approach to organic and sustainable living. The color palette is inspired by pizza, with tomato reds and basil green against a neutral background.

All franchisees are required to adhere to the company's eco-friendly model.

"Owning a business that's doing its part to contribute to society is not only important to me personally, but it's rewarding on a number of levels," said Jeffrey Yagoda, co-owner of the Fort Lauderdale Pizza Fusion. "Our communities appreciate us for taking the initiative to do what's good for the environment and for providing a quality, organic menu that they can rely on as a healthier alternative to the tainted fast food venues on every corner. It's this type of praise we get from our customers that makes me feel proud of what I'm doing."



In memory of
JAMES A. "JIM" PLESS
1935 - 2008

The Innovative Concept Group family mourns the loss of our dear friend and colleague, Jim Pless. Jim was a true pioneer in the food service industry whose contributions are too numerous to list. He touched many over his long and successful career. Beyond that, he was a bright, kind and generous man who was totally devoted to his family and friends. Innovative Concept Group would not be what it is today without his guidance and determination. We will miss him and remember him always.


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