

Local Italian restaurant spreading via franchises

BY DALE BROWN

dbrown@bizjournals.com

North Scottsdale Italian restaurant 3 Tomatoes & A Mozzarella is expanding to Chandler, with a stop along the way in Tulsa, Okla.

Opened in June 2000 by Nancy and Jeff Roskin, the restaurant's success has attracted the interest of a Scottsdale-based franchise company, and the creative geography of its growth reflects that.

Expansion is a mixed blessing for Nancy Roskin.

"I'm a very detail-oriented person, and I want to watch everything that comes out of the kitchen," she said.

The planned Chandler location will be owned by the Roskins. But an entrepreneur in Tulsa signed a development agreement for four restaurants in that city and will be opening the next one.

Another franchisee signed on to develop five 3 Tomatoes restaurants in the Las Vegas area.

Other Valley areas being eyed for expansion after Chandler are in Tempe near the new IKEA store and Peoria's Arrowhead Towne Center.

"We're just getting started with it," said George Krotosky, chief executive of Global Restaurant Development Co., which also franchises Valley-based restaurant concepts Wild Noodles and Dilly's Deli.

Although the Roskins plan on expanding their concept in the Valley, Krotosky said there still are local franchise opportunities available.

Among the adjectives that could be used to describe the original restaurant, built near Rawhide, large-scale would not be one. The interior seats 65, with room for another 35 on the patio.

There is no walk-in refrigerator there, so all the ingredients have to be brought in every day and all the bread and pizza dough, sauces, vegetables and desserts are made fresh daily.

Since its opening, the 3 Tomatoes & A Mozzarella business has been seasonal, with the busy months in the winter and the spring and slower during the summer.

But for winter customers, Nancy Roskin says, absence makes the taste buds grow fonder. Returning from cooler summer climates, regulars will call from the airport to order their pizzas as soon as they hit the Arizona ground.

Since the beginning, the kitchen has been the province of Nola Krieg, the restaurant's chef and general manager. A former teacher at the Scottsdale Culinary Institute, Krieg developed all the recipes with the exception of the pizza dough, which the Roskins purchased from a Connecticut restaurateur.

Jeff Roskin is at the restaurant all day and night, handling finances and making sure the facility is immaculate. Nancy Roskin handles the marketing and spends evenings at the restaurant.

As franchisees take the 3 Tomatoes & A Mozzarella show on the road, there still is a tinge of apprehension for Nancy Roskin.

"Although I want to grow, I don't want to saturate the market," she said. "I don't want to be a Domino's, on every corner, I don't want to be a Starbucks."

GET CONNECTED

3 Tomatoes & A Mozzarella:
www.3tomatoes.com