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- Last 7 days
- Archive

- Classifieds
- Real estate
- Cars
- Jobs
- Coupons
- Shopping
- Visitors Guide
- Home Page
- Hot Topics
- Quick Links
- News
- Sports
- Business
- Opinion
- Obituaries
- Weather
- Entertainment
- Events Calendar
- Food & Drink
- Home & Garden
- Health & Fitness
- Travel
- Photos
- Your City
- Community
- Forums
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Pizza eatery branching out

Upscale Arizona restaurant eyes valley for up to 3 new restaurants

Ferdie De Vega
The Desert Sun
February 19, 2005

The owners of a Tuscan-style pizza restaurant in Arizona say they will expand this year with several franchises, including up to three in the Coachella Valley.



Special to The Desert Sun

Nancy and Jeff Roskin opened 3 Tomatoes and a Mozzarella in Scottsdale nearly five years ago.

"We are an upscale-looking restaurant, but we serve a reasonably priced menu," said Nancy Roskin in a telephone interview. "We are definitely not a 'pizza joint.'"

"We have pizza, pasta, paninis, salads, wine and beer," she said. "Everything eaten at the restaurant is fresh-made."

The restaurant will open its first franchise near Tulsa, Okla., in two weeks with three more in the planning stages, she said.

In June, the first of five franchises in Las Vegas is scheduled to open, she said, and a site in Milwaukee could follow.

Coachella Valley locations will be next, said Roskin, noting she's currently in negotiations for a place in Palm Desert.

She said she's also interested in The River at Rancho Mirage. "I wouldn't mind opening one in downtown Palm Springs after that."

Roskin, who already has franchisees in mind, said she believes the restaurant concept would do well in the Palm Springs area because it's a "mirror" of Scottsdale with similar demographics.

A couple who has a home in Scottsdale and one in the Coachella Valley, has been asking her to bring the restaurant here, she said.

The Roskins had no previous restaurant experience before they opened 3 Tomatoes and a Mozzarella.

They had moved from the East Coast to to Arizona and weren't impressed by the local pizzas.

"The pizza out here was so disgusting," said Roskin, who was a paralegal and did interior design work in Connecticut. Her husband worked in real estate.

The couple bought a pizza crust recipe from a Connecticut restaurateur and professional bread baker, and they hired culinary school graduates for their kitchen, including Nola Krieg, the restaurant's chef and general manager.

"My chef did the menu - all except the pizza dough, everything is hers," Roskin said.

"I believe that we do have a unique set-up in using really fresh ingredients," Krieg said, noting they make all of their own sauces.

Their specialty pies include a fig and prosciutto pizza, a "sweet/salty combo"; a four-cheese pizza; and one topped with shrimp and scampi, she said.

Franchisees undergo three weeks of training at Scottsdale, and Krieg later visits the franchisees for two weeks along with the restaurant's director of operations and head server.

"Our restaurant is smaller than our franchisees' (restaurants) will be," Roskin said, adding she has 2,000 square feet of space in Scottsdale.

The franchise restaurants, however, will be 3,000 square feet each, she said. "They will look the same.

MORE ON THIS STORY

3 TOMATOES AND A MOZZARELLA

Headquarters: Scottsdale, Ariz.

Owners: Nancy and Jeff Roskin

Business description: upscale, Tuscan-style pizza restaurant that offers pizza, pasta, paninis, salads, wine and beer

Future expansion: plans include up to three locations in the Coachella Valley

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