



Tidbits to Ignite Your Business and Inspire You

Volume 6, May 18, 2018



Operator Spotlight

SAY CHEESE PIZZA COMPANY, NY

When Kevin Slachciak was just a boy his Uncle Art gave him his first comic book. Little did he realize at the time what an impact that event would have on his life! He has since merged his passion for comics and food into his own restaurant concept named Say Cheese Pizza Company. The restaurant is decorated with life size comic book heroes and includes a store that sells comic books, action figures and other super hero memorabilia. In addition to gourmet pizza, the menu includes nachos, quesadillas, burgers, sandwiches, seafood, wings and a full bar including 19 beers on tap. He has created a unique dining/entertainment experience; we spoke with Kevin recently and asked him about his operation and here is what he had to say:

What are some of the flavor trends that are currently impacting your menu?

Being located in the chicken wing capital of the world, we are constantly challenging ourselves to come up with new wing flavors to keep it fresh

and interesting for our customers. We were very pleased with the Root Beer Glazed Wing concept, and we are taking it one step further by adding a little bit of spice to it. We like some spice with our wings here in western NY. We tried diced jalapeños and we also tried Cajun flavors – trying to hit the sweet and spicy combo just right. The root beer wings are a winner, it's a good flavor combo.



Are customers asking for any spicy flavors on the pizzas?

We have a lot of different pizza options on the menu, but the favorites remain cheese and pepperoni. We have a spicy chicken wing pizza on the menu right now that is also very popular. Trending more than spicy flavors are the healthier options; for example, when I add a new salad with a flavor twist it usually sells very well. We have a Blueberry Salad that's got crumbled blue cheese, blueberries and caramelized walnuts with the option to add a chicken breast. We use the Tyson pre-cooked chicken breast – it's a really good product, very versatile, and my customers love the salad.

How has your operation changed over the past few years?

From 1994-2004 we were a small takeout and delivery pizza franchise. Then in 2004, the agreement was up, and we became Say Cheese Pizza Company. In 2008, we added a bar, a full-service dining room and a comic book store to the middle of the restaurant and business really ramped up. We expanded the business more in 2006, 2008 and again in 2010, extending the bar, adding tables, added a game room and finally a private banquet room for parties. We have created a unique dining experience that folks enjoy.

What is your customer demographic? Do you see a big difference in flavor preferences among the different age groups?

Kids are consistent, they don't go for extreme flavors too often. We have a kid's menu with all the basics - cheese and pepperoni pizza, chicken wings, homemade mac and cheese, cheese burgers and cheese quesadillas, lots of things kids love.

Our restaurant isn't just focused on the young crowd though. The comic book concept is done in a sophisticated way. We have an upscale atmosphere with a lot of wood and stone work; it's an atmosphere that adults want to dine in.

What are some of the biggest movers on the menu?

Cheeseburgers are hot right now. Anyone doing a good creative job with their burgers is selling them. The focus right now seems to be on quality, people are looking for a higher end burger. Food costs have gone up as labor costs have gone up, and when consumers go out for a meal, they expect a quality meal for their money.

What role does social media play in your operation?

Social media is like a part time job for me (laughs)! It is something that requires a lot of time and attention. We monitor it closely. It is a challenge for a small business owner, I wear many different hats. We are in the process of looking at local companies that will handle our social media presence to see if it makes sense for us to go that route.

How often do you update the menu?

We are constantly tweaking the menu and trying

to improve it. We like to experiment with new items. Our appetizer menu is changing all the time. The types of pizzas we put out are constantly changing. The wings are changing, and we are always trying to get creative with our burgers.

We just did a stuffed banana pepper on top of a burger with a sweet & spicy sauce which was interesting. We have an Old West Burger with onion rings and barbecue sauce that is very popular. We have a new sandwich called The Big Bad Wolf that's got pulled pork, smoked ham and bacon, all sautéed in a barbecue sauce, with onions and melted cheese which is also very popular. I was going to call it the Three Little Pigs, but we decided on The Big Bad Wolf.

We have a Dorrito® Burrito with crumbled chips, lots of cheese and sweet and spicy sauce served with tater tots – it is very popular, everyone loves it! I am in the process of creating the next menu; we update it about every six months.

What is your favorite part about running the restaurant?

There are many. When the kids come in and see the life size comic book characters, their eyes light up and that's a cool part of the job. Every kid gets a free comic book when they come in and they love that. And updating the menu is also a fun challenge.

