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Patxi's Pizza Opens to Crowds

By Sophie Braccini



Orinda resident Don Bleu, from radio station Star FM, cuts the ribbon of Patxi's Pizza with co-owners Bill Freeman (left) and Patxi Azpiroz (right) holding the ribbon, and Tara Fawcett holding the pizza. That's Lafayette Council member Brandt Andersson between Bleu and Azpiroz. Photo provided

along with the team, so they learn our ways by modeling what we do," says Azpiroz after whom the restaurant was named. "Patxi is actually my nickname, I was born Francisco Azpiroz and inherited 'Patxi' from my father, a Basque tradition," he says.

The team is in sync with the Bay Area groove. They buy organic produce organic whenever possible and when it came to selecting a coffee for their morning espresso, Fawcett took training at Blue Bottle Coffee, the local micromaster of organic coffee that vows to sell coffee less than 48 hours out of the roaster.

When Freeman sought out Azpiroz to start a business 8 years ago, the two men traveled to Chicago to carry out onsite research. In hearing their stories, it's clear they had a lot of fun while shaping their own vision of a deep-dish pizza.

"One of our secrets is the tomato sauce," says Azpiroz. When you cut a piece of Patxi's pizza (yes, this is a fork and knife pizza!) and take it in your mouth, the first taste goes to the sauce on top, then come all your toppings -it makes for a real mouth full. The pizza is assembled by lining the bottom and sides of the pan with dough, adding the toppings, and then sealing them in with another thin layer of dough; it's all covered generously with more sauce.

The eating satisfaction that customers derive from the experience has made the success of Patxi's so far; Lafayette is the first East Bay location. "We wanted a restaurant that fit the families in this community," says Fawcett. One of their big ideas is to give back to the community that welcomes them. "We have a program called 52 Weeks of Giving that runs year round," explains Freeman, "during that time, any local non-profit that caters to education or children's health and welfare can choose a day when 10% of the total sales for the day in the restaurant of their choice will be donated to them."

Patxi's Chicago Pizza

3577 Mt Diablo Blvd., Lafayette

299- 0700, <http://patxispizza.com>

Patxi's opens at 7:00 a.m. with breakfast and homemade pastries, and closes at 10:00 p.m. during the week and 11:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday nights. Half-baked pizzas can be ordered over the phone and kept in the fridge up to a week before being finish-baked at home.

Patxi's of Lafayette cut the official ribbon of its grand opening on June 22, 2011. The Chicago style (or deep-dish) pizzeria opened to the public in early June and has been bustling with customers. This is the 5th restaurant for the team of three partners, Patxi Azpiroz, Tara Fawcett and Bill Freeman, who, during the first years of their professional lives in the Bay Area, decided to start a business together. The young entrepreneurs have spent countless hours in Lafayette to launch their new restaurant right, and they've brought with them a local fundraising program to demonstrate their desire to become a part of the community.

The restaurateurs have completely transformed what used to be Douglah Designs, in the Clocktower Building. There is a narrow but functional outside patio and the interior has been divided into three parts: the kitchen, the bar with seating tables, and the 'family room' with two large televisions and a chalk board wall to keep kids entertained. "We want each of our restaurants to have the flavor of the community we settle in, while our recipes and cooking techniques stay consistent," says Fawcett. The triumvirate that leads Patxi's has worked together for eight years and each member has his or her own role. Along the way Azpiroz and Fawcett got married and Freeman started his own family. When asked if he has children Azpiroz responds, "we have five restaurants!"

During the weeks preceding the grand opening, the three could be spending as much as 17 hours a day at their site. "We are working

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