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*3 Tomatoes expands with an efficient casual-Italian menu and low food cost.*

BY MARY BOLTZ CHAPMAN

Founders and owners Nancy (l.) and Jeff Roskin with General Manager and Chef Nola Krieg.

## SNAPSHOT

### CONCEPT

3 Tomatoes & a Mozzarella

### HEADQUARTERS

Scottsdale, Ariz.

### UNITS

1

### 2004 SALES

Just under \$1 million

### AVERAGE CHECK

\$18 to \$19

### EXPANSION PLANS

2 or 3 new units by year-end

## Small Packages

The franchised units of 3 Tomatoes & a Mozzarella won't be carbon copies of the original, which opened in Scottsdale, Ariz., in June 2000. They won't have sunset views of the desert from the patio. They won't have owners Nancy and Jeff Roskin on site to greet snowbirds on their first visit of the season. And they'll have walk-in refrigeration.

What the new casual Italian restaurants will copy is the concept's comfortable atmosphere, from-scratch preparation and upscale menu.

The original bistro's small kitchen dictates tight operations and an efficient menu. The simplicity lends itself to duplication, and a 20 percent food cost adds to the equation.

The first franchised 3 Tomatoes will open in March in Owassa, Okla., a Tulsa suburb, and another in Las Vegas in June. At press time, eight more have been sold for locations in Oklahoma, Nevada and Arizona. Roskin expects three or four to be operating by the end of the year and up to 100 nationwide in five years.

### Keep it Simple

The Tuscan bistro serves upscale pizza, pasta, paninis and salads. The Roskins started 3 Tomatoes after moving to Arizona from Connecticut and not being able to find good pizza. They bought a crust recipe from back home and brought the chef west to teach them how to make it.

The pizza menu includes Neapolitan (with crushed tomatoes) and Margherita (with tomato sauce and basil) with a choice of 23 toppings. Prices start at \$10 for a 12-inch, a 16-inch is \$13, and toppings ranging from pepperoni and Italian sausage to artichoke hearts and jalapeños are extra.

"Specialita" pizzas include the Puttanesca, \$13 for 12-inch and \$17 for 16-inch, with tomato sauce, sliced tomatoes, anchovies, Parmesan, feta, black olives, thyme and basil; and the Fig & Prosciutto, \$14 and \$18, with fig compote, prosciutto, and Gorgonzola and fontina cheeses.

Overseen by General Manager and Chef Nola Krieg, a graduate and former teacher of the Scottsdale Culinary Institute, the menu also offers calzones, paninis, salads, antipasti, and house-made pasta with choice of five sauces and optional chicken, mushroom, spinach or shrimp toppings. Krieg cross-utilizes ingredients to keep food costs low.

"The best Italian food is simple, not complicated," Roskin says. "The menu is simple, the food cost is lower, and it's easier to be consistent with the product."

### Spreading Out

Franchised stores will be a little larger than the original, 3,000 square feet vs. 2,000, to accommodate a larger kitchen and 90 to 100 seats. The Scottsdale unit has 65 seats, plus 35 on the patio. Italian music plays in the dining room, which is decorated in warm colors with pillars, trellises, plants and copper-topped tables. The display kitchen is behind a window to keep the noise down.

Global Restaurant Development Co. is handling the franchise sales and administration. George Krotonsky, president and CEO of Wild Noodles, heads up the consultancy, which will help franchisees find high-visibility strip-center locations.

Roskin says she and her husband are also looking at real estate: "We're thinking of opening another. We're looking at Chandler and Tempe." **■**