



Dec 12
2014
Page A024
Clip resized 57%

Made to order



Sheri Miksa, president and CEO of Mazzio's, at the company's downtown restaurant.
PHOTO BY RIP STELL

Mazzio's rolls out catering program

BY KIRBY LEE DAVIS
THE JOURNAL RECORD

TULSA - Mazzio's offered a Black Friday surprise of its own this holiday season, rolling out a line of boxed sandwich deals for retailers to provide their beefed-up staffs.

It marked the launch of the Italian food chain's new catering program, emphasizing business-to-business sales. Mazzio's developed several new dishes for the revamped service - among them meatball sliders, an Italian chopped salad and desserts - along with bundled menu packages and a variety of new delivery, setup and service options, said President and CEO Sheri Miksa.

"What we really did was take the best of our menu and find ways to do it in a large-group format, and then fill in some areas where we didn't have something," she said.

The **Tulsa** chain literally capped this with a pair of new logos, **Mazzios**. We Love to Cater" and "Relax, we've got this!" emblazoned on menus, products and employees' hats.

"For businesses, it's a great option," she said of the program. "Many of them have been catering from other companies for years and haven't really thought about Mazzio's for catering."

Miksa declined to discuss revenue projections.

"Because we didn't really track it as catering per se, it's hard to say how much of the revenue stream it was," she said of past sales. "Suffice it to say, we smell a potential opportunity, one

that we think has a substantial upside."

This has proven true with similar eateries across the nation, according to a National Restaurant Association report earlier this week. Catering business by fast-casual restaurants should rise 12 percent this year, outperforming quick-service and club store sales, according to a study by Technomic.

This venture actually marks Mazzio's second catering initiative this year. Last summer, the chain recognized that its Healthy Slice pizza meets federal school menu requirements and offered catering to school systems in its 10-state region.

Resulting sales doubled Mazzio's past school lunch activity, Miksa said.

"For many people, it was just a matter about educating them about all the various offerings that we have," she said.

Several new products entered that lineup this year, all available by a new mobile phone app. Miksa, who took over leadership of the 130-plus-restaurant chain in January, said the private **Tulsa** company launched its own stuffed crust in 2014, along with some family-sized pastas and seasonal pizza products.

The catering options introduces the Mazzio's menu to potential new audiences.

"The idea is to make it easy for our catering guests," she said. "What we know is everybody loves Mazzio's, and so the idea of that is they don't have to go with what they've always gone with. Now they can have Mazzio's full menu, plus new items, all delivered and set up. For 50 or 500, it's a snap."



Items from Mazzio's new catering menu.
COURTESY PHOTO