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**Blaze Fast-Fire'd Pizza Announces Eight New Southern California Locations**

*Popularity of Built-to-Order Artisanal Pizza Concept Fuels Nationwide Expansion*

September 12, 2013 – Pasadena, Calif. – Blaze Fast-Fire'd Pizza, the leading fast-casual built-to-order artisanal pizza brand, today announced that it will open eight new restaurants in Southern California in the coming months. Two restaurants are set to open in September in Culver City (Culver Crossroads Shopping Center) and La Canada (La Canada Flintridge Town Center), and six additional locations will be opening soon in Los Angeles (Farmers Market), Isla Vista (UC-Santa Barbara adjacent), Carlsbad (Carlsbad Premium Outlets), Mission Viejo (Shops at Mission Viejo), Cabazon (Desert Hills Premium Outlets) and Southgate (Azalea Shopping Center). An additional 10 Los Angeles area locations have been identified to open in 2014.

Buoyed by the success of its Irvine, Pasadena and Torrance restaurants, the company is partnering with select qualified franchisees to develop Blaze Pizza in markets across the country. Today, Southern California is “sold out” with 11 franchise groups committed to building 70 restaurants over the next five years. In addition, Blaze Pizza has signed area development agreements with franchisees in 20 other markets including New York City, Chicago, Miami, Washington DC, Detroit, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Houston and the San Francisco Bay Area. Including the new Southern California locations, the company expects to have 25 restaurants operating by the end of March 2014.

“It started with the simple idea of making a great artisanal pizza – custom built-to-order and served freakishly fast – for about seven dollars,” said Elise Wetzel, co-founder of Blaze Pizza. “Our inspiration grew out of frustration when we couldn’t find a good fast pizza for lunch. We knew that if we could execute on this simple idea, we could sell a lot of pizza.” Elise and her husband Rick Wetzel (co-founder of Wetzel’s Pretzels) collaborated with Executive Chef Brad

Kent to create a signature “light-as-air crispy crust” that could be pressed fresh for each guest. The trio then designed an interactive assembly-line format where guests could customize their own pizzas with fresh-made sauces, hand-selected veggies and a variety of artisanal meats and cheeses. To create Blaze’s “casually hip” store design, the team brought in Ana Henton of MASS Architecture. Henton adds individualized design notes to each new restaurant space – making each location as custom-built as the pizzas it serves. From a simple idea now brought to life, Blaze Pizza has become a budding restaurant chain where individual locations can serve upwards of 800 to 1,000 built-to-order artisanal pizzas on a busy day.

“The trends behind the booming fast-casual restaurant segment – better quality, customization and premium environment – are also driving Blaze Pizza’s popularity and rapid expansion,” said Rick Fortman, former EVP of Operations at Carl’s Jr and now a franchise partner developing nine Blaze Pizza restaurants in the Inland Empire. “Pizza is already a huge category but, if you think about it, there really isn’t an option for a good fast pizza. The upside is enormous.”

### **About Blaze Pizza**

Blaze Pizza uses an interactive service format (similar to Chipotle Mexican Grill®) that allows guests to create custom artisanal pizzas at lightning fast speed – for about \$7.00 each. Each Blaze Pizza restaurant makes its own dough from scratch using a recipe that requires a 24-hour fermentation period to produce its signature light-as-air, crisp crust. Guests watch as each perfectly proofed dough ball is pressed into a generous 12-inch crust. Next, they travel down the service line to “co-create” a signature pizza or design one of their own -- with over 40 artisanal toppings to choose from. Pizzas are “fast-fire’d” in a blazing-hot oven and ready in a scant 120 seconds. Blaze Pizza’s menu also features signature salads, fresh lemonades, craft beer & wine and house-made S’more Pies. For pizza fans with specific dietary needs, Blaze Pizza offers gluten-free dough and vegan cheese.

A creation of Elise and Rick Wetzel (founder of Wetzel's Pretzels), the concept is backed by investors including Maria Shriver, movie producer John Davis and Boston Red Sox co-owner Tom Werner, and includes the talents of highly acclaimed Executive Chef Bradford Kent. Blaze Pizza’s seasoned executive team brings fast-casual and quick-serve restaurant experience from numerous concepts including Buffalo Wild Wings, Freebirds World Burrito, California Pizza Kitchen, Panda Express, Jamba Juice and Carl’s Jr. The company, which [Forbes.com](http://Forbes.com) named a “Hot New Restaurant Chain from an Established Brand,” is registered to sell franchises in all 50 states and currently has a development pipeline of nearly 200 franchise stores in 15 states and Washington DC.

For more information, please visit [www.blazepizza.com](http://www.blazepizza.com) or [www.facebook.com/blazepizza](http://www.facebook.com/blazepizza).

**Blaze Pizza, LLC**

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