

## Blaze Pizza Announces Southern California Franchise Expansion

The First Of Three New Blaze Pizzas Set To Open In Spring 2013

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Blaze Pizza, a pioneer in the fast-casual artisan pizza category, today announced that Sajha, LLC has signed an agreement to develop three franchise stores in Southern California. Sajha, led by Sandeep Bhakta, along with Kamal Patel, will open three Blaze Pizza locations in the Los Angeles area, the first of which is slated to launch in spring 2013. As the first Blaze Pizza franchisees, Sajha's executives have more than 12 years of QSR-sector experience operating successful nationwide franchises. Concepts within Sajha's portfolio include Cold Stone Creamery and Which Wich Sandwiches.

"Our team is very excited about the company's depth of experience and the quality of their execution," said Sandeep Bhakta, CEO of Sajha. "In addition to crafting great tasting pizzas, we are very impressed with the operational program, which is being developed by industry veterans from numerous successful franchise concepts."

At the heart of Blaze Pizza's operational strength are executives with decades of successful quick service restaurant experience. Blaze Pizza's executive team has overseen the growth of concepts including Buffalo Wild Wings, Chipotle and Wetzel's Pretzels, which has more than 275 locations now open in the U.S. and abroad. The company plans to grow its corporate footprint to a total of 15 stores by the end of 2013 and is registered to franchise in 34 states. Blaze Pizza plans to bring franchises to markets across the country, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, Miami, Denver, and Boston. Well-known investors in the company include Maria Shriver, movie producer John Davis and Boston Red Sox co-owner Tom Werner.

Blaze Pizza uses an assembly-line format that lets guests customize a signature pizza or create one of their own, choosing from a wide selection of fresh, artisanal toppings, most at no extra charge. Each 11-inch pizza is then "fast-fire'd" in a blazing-hot, open-hearth oven, and is ready in less than two minutes. Blaze Pizza makes its own dough from scratch using a recipe created by Executive Chef Bradford Kent of Olio Pizzeria & Café, who developed the dough and recipes exclusively for the company. Blaze Pizza offers gluten-free dough and vegan cheese to accommodate pizza fans with specific dietary needs as well. The restaurant's menu also features signature salads, lemonades, beer & wine, and house-made S'more Pies for dessert.

### **About Blaze Pizza**

A creation of Elise and Rick Wetzel (founder of Wetzel's Pretzels) and backed by investors including Maria Shriver, movie producer John Davis and Boston Red Sox co-owner Tom Werner, Blaze Pizza features the talents of Chef Bradford Kent of Olio Pizzeria & Café, who developed the dough and recipes exclusively for the company. The company, which Forbes.com named a "Hot New Restaurant Chain from an Established Brand," plans to develop 15+ Southern California locations by the end of 2013, partnering with franchisees to grow the company nationally. To learn more, please visit [www.blazepizza.com](http://www.blazepizza.com) or

[www.facebook.com/BlazePizza](http://www.facebook.com/BlazePizza).