

In Shaky Economic Times, California Franchisor Rides the Wave of Success

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Pizza Maker to Open 50th Store, Boasting 30 Percent Growth in Last Six Months

In a shaky economy, as more people interested in running a business turn to franchising, California pizza maker Straw Hat Pizza is boasting a built-in roadmap to success, one that has driven business growth up 30 percent in the last six months to 52 stores from 38. By September, the chain plans to have 55 stores.

Poised to celebrate its 50th birthday, the chain is growing rapidly. Straw Hat plans to more than double in size, increasing its locations from 52 to over 100 by 2010, and expand from California, Nevada and Oregon to Washington, Arizona, Texas and beyond. What's more, it has recently added a two new concept restaurants called Straw Hat Express and Straw Hat Grill, and plan to expand that to targeted cities and states on the West Coast. The new-concept 'Grills' expand the pizza menu to the next level, featuring typical sit down-eatery fare such as pasta, steak, ribs, burgers and pizza

'During economic slumps like this, we offer a lot of benefits for those downsized from corporations who are looking for jobs and income,' says Jonathan Fornaci, president of Straw Hat Cooperative Corp., who was brought on board in January to encourage rapid growth. 'We also offer a great opportunity to take the family for dinner at an affordable price at a time when families are cutting back on their discretionary spending.'

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