



# What Top Restaurant Operators Are Saying About Your Pie

**SPECIAL REPORT**





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## **YOUR PIE WAS THE FIRST FAST CASUAL PIZZA FRANCHISE. WE'RE ALSO ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING!**

In 2008 Founder Drew French brought the Italian art of pizza baking to Athens, Georgia, with the first Your Pie location. Just two years earlier Drew had been in Italy visiting his wife's family and fell in love with the region's use of brick ovens to produce perfectly crisp pizza dough infused with smoky, earthy flavors. He appreciated the simplicity of Italian pizzas that relied on made-from-scratch, hand-tossed dough and only the freshest topping ingredients quickly baked to perfection in a brick oven. Drew also noticed that in Italy, enjoying your pizza surrounded by family and friends seemed to be the secret ingredient. Back in the US, he knew his community would come for the pizza but that they would keep coming back for the shareable moments, making and eating pizza in a fun, communal experience. He was right.

"Having the best product in the category doesn't matter if your customer experience is not of equal caliber," shares Drew. "At Your Pie, maintaining consistent operational outputs is the first step, and we build upon that by learning our customers' names, making a second table touch, and providing an experience that creates a shareable moment."

### **NOBODY CREATES A BETTER PIZZA OR A BETTER FRANCHISE OPPORTUNITY THAN WE DO**

Because we launched a first-of-its-kind restaurant concept offering high quality, brick-oven pizza at incredible speed, innovation is second nature for us. We know that in order to stay the best and to build your brand, you have to continue to improve how you do what you do. You also have to consistently provide uncompromising levels of quality and service to your customers and your franchise partners. That's what we do. Together with our franchisees we'll continue to be successful and to lead the way in the fast casual pizza restaurant vertical, sharing our passion for making great pizzas and great communities - one pizza at a time.

- **America's first brick-oven fast casual pizza franchise**
- **Your Pie launched the fast-casual pizza category over 10 years ago and hasn't slowed down since**
- **More than 65 franchise locations in 19 states**
- **\$1.16M\* Top 20% AUV**
- **Entrepreneur magazine Top 200 Food & Restaurant Franchise 2018**
- **Drew French, founder of Your Pie, was named one of 16 Young Restaurant Leaders to Watch by QSR magazine**
- **In 2016 our fan-favorite Peach Prosciutto Pie earned Drew a spot in the 2016 World Pizza Championship**
- **In 2017 Our Peach Prosciutto Pie was named one of America's Most Innovative Menu Items by QSR Magazine**
- **Amazing brand recognition**
- **Fresh ingredients and hand-made dough prepared in-house every day**
- **Endless topping combinations for fully customizable, craveable pizzas**

While family recipes and Italian culture helped lay the foundation for Your Pie - our processes and exceptional quality - we have continued to build on our foundation with new ingredients, innovative recipes and endless choices to create a pizza experience with traditional roots, but a flair unique to Your Pie.

\*Figure reflects average unit volume for 2018 for the top 20% of Restaurants which were open and operating for the entire fiscal year ended December 31, 2018, as published in Item 19 of our April 2019 Franchise Disclosure Document and which provided us with revenue and detailed cost information for the 2018 fiscal year. There were 61 franchised Restaurants open and operating as of December 31, 2018, 42 of which operated for the entire fiscal year ended December 31, 2018 and 36 of which provided us with revenue and detailed cost information for the 2018 fiscal year. The top 20% of Restaurants covered 7 Restaurants and 3 Restaurants (43%) reported gross sales that exceeded the \$1.16M. A new franchisee's results may differ from the represented performance. There is no assurance that you will do as well. A franchise offering is made by prospectus only.





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## **Meet Our COO DAVE MCDUGALL**

In December 2018, we announced our new Chief Operating Officer, Dave McDougall. Dave brings more than 30 years of franchise operations experience from organizations like Back Yard Burgers, NexCen Brands, FOCUS Brands and more. We recently sat down with Dave to discuss findings from his first 90 days and what's ahead, including his strategy for growing sales and profitability at Your Pie.



### **Q: What has surprised you the most in your first 90 days with Your Pie?**

A: The culture has really surprised me. I've never seen such unbridled passion from both franchise owners and corporate support teams. There's truly a sense of family, and everyone works very collaboratively to address challenges and assess opportunities. I think a company's culture is always a reflection of its leadership, and this definitely rings true of founder Drew French and CEO Bucky Cook, who truly want to do right by Your Pie's, franchisees, customers, associates and communities.

### **Q: What is your biggest priority for Your Pie in 2019?**

A: One of my top priorities has been helping Your Pie define our purpose as a franchisor. We want to be a great partner for our franchisees, and we want to lead with credibility. We have to filter every initiative through the lens of the franchisee, and that means asking: "How will this improve unit-level economics, the customer experience?" We're doing some marketing research and development, and we have already identified some initial opportunities to improve things like cost of labor, vendor pricing, point-of-sale technology and more. Everything we produce and introduce needs to be thoroughly vetted and have a place within the overarching strategy to support franchisee profitability.

### **Q: Do franchisees get to speak into this strategy directly?**

A: Absolutely. There aren't many franchise brands out there where franchisees have direct access to the senior leadership—but here, they do. We also have a peer-elected franchise advisory board that represents the system and speaks into major strategic decisions. Plus, we run an annual franchisee satisfaction survey and use those results to help develop objectives each year. We have established benchmarks for where we want to rank in marketing, operations, training, etc., and actively work to improve satisfaction within each of those fields year over year. At the end of the day, transparency is key. We will make mistakes from time to time but want our franchisees to know they can count on us to fix them. Their input and participation can only make us better.

### **Q: Are there any specific initiatives you'd like to share about?**

A: For the organization right now, one of the biggest investments we're making is in technology. The way that people are engaging with restaurants is changing very, very quickly, and a significant amount of orders are coming through digital platforms. We have to make sure our systems are optimized to provide the best possible experience for both customers and our store teams.

We're also rolling out a new franchisee orientation program where new store owners will meet with all department heads for a full overview of what to expect in the next 6-12 months to get their store open. We know the development process can be very stressful, and we believe the process is made exponentially better with face-to-face communication on the front end.

### **Q: As the fast casual pizza landscape becomes increasingly competitive, what are Your Pie's biggest opportunities to stand out?**

A: There are some strong competitors out there, but I truly believe we have superior food. Our hand-tossed dough makes a huge difference in the final product, and our menu development is unparalleled. In a crowded landscape, we have to remember that every guest interaction counts. Our service and hospitality have to be better than everywhere else. More than anything, we have to get creative in how we're communicating our differentiators to customers.



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## Meet Our COO - continued

### **Q: What would you say to someone considering Your Pie as a franchise?**

A: At Your Pie, you get more than a franchise—you get a whole team of people behind you who want to see you succeed. Everything we're doing and that we've talked about doing is meant to support the franchisee experience, from both a culture and sales perspective. We're also backed by an investment group called Georgia Oak Partners, which affords us access to phenomenal resources, including our Chairman, David Barr. David is a multi-unit franchisee himself and sits on the board of a number of well known franchise companies. He has a deep understanding of the franchise landscape, both as a franchisee and franchisor.

### **Q: Where do you see Your Pie in 10 years?**

A: In 10 years, I hope Your Pie will continue to be known as a compelling investment opportunity for new and existing franchisees, and known for doing good in the communities where we operate. Rather than give a quantifiable growth goal around how many units we'll be operating, I'd rather focus on having successful restaurants. I hope that we'll be seen as a great franchisor and a great partner, and looked upon as a leader in our category.



## FRANCHISEE SPOTLIGHT



### PAUL CHILDERS

Savannah, Sandfly and Pooler, Georgia



#### **What's the most rewarding part of being a franchisee?**

I really enjoy being part of an accomplished team of fantastic employees. Working together, we create a wonderful environment for patrons to enjoy some damn good tasting food. I also love meeting all of the loyal Your Pie fans who love our product.

#### **Why did you decide to join the Your Pie brand?**

I joined Your Pie because they made a terrific product, but even more importantly because of the amazing people.

#### **What's your favorite Your Pie pizza?**

The one I enjoy with a great beer!

#### **What are the two most important things you rely on your franchisor for?**

I rely on them to make the Your Pie experience for my team members and patrons better and better.

#### **What do you think sets Your Pie apart from the competition?**

It's definitely the food and the in-store experience. Neither can be beat!

#### **What do you enjoy most about owning a Your Pie?**

Working with some great people, and cashing the check!

#### **Where do you see Your Pie going in the future? How will this benefit you?**

We're on a mission "Saving the World from Bad Pizza." We see Your Pie continuing this work, having the right ingredients, and making each pizza up to standard every time. When you have great pizza and great service, this benefits franchisees and our patrons.

#### **How do you encourage your team to be their best?**

I tell them when they're awesome, and I tell them when they're not quite awesome enough.

#### **What advice would you give someone who is thinking about investing in Your Pie?**

If you work hard and enjoy the people you're working with, success will come.



## FRANCHISEE SPOTLIGHT

### **DAN SACCO - Dubuque and Davenport, Iowa**

#### **What's the most rewarding part of being a franchisee?**

The ability to offer suggestions and have input as we move the brand forward is very rewarding for me. The monthly webinars and weekly e-mails are great forms of communicating what is happening with Your Pie.

#### **Why did you decide to join the Your Pie brand?**

We were looking for a fast casual brand that had great food, atmosphere and a down-the-line concept. We really liked the people we met on our Discovery Day and decided that these guys get it.

#### **What's your favorite Your Pie pizza?**

This is a tough one for me, but I'd have to say it's my version of a souped-up Lineage. I love fresh mozzarella!

#### **What are the two most important things you rely on your franchisor for?**

We look to corporate for communication and technology that helps grow the business.

#### **What do you think sets Your Pie apart from the competition?**

It's all about the food!

#### **What do you enjoy most about owning a Your Pie?**

I have really enjoyed seeing the young families enjoying our restaurants. I also enjoy and get a lot out of the interaction we have with the other owners and Your Pie staff.

#### **Where do you see Your Pie going in the future? How will this benefit you?**

Your Pie continues to innovate, which is crucial and very beneficial for franchisees. I see the continued development of technology to strengthen customer loyalty and online ordering programs that will grow our business.

#### **How do you encourage your team to be their best?**

I work side by side with my team, and try to model the behaviors we are trying to achieve. I also try to come up with different motivational contests like a pay for performance program that awards \$100 for 100% secret shoppers. I also give extra to anyone named on shopper. I work to set a vision and let managers run their business while still holding them accountable.

#### **What advice would you give someone who is thinking about investing in Your Pie?**

This one is easy: be involved, set high expectations, and stay the course.







## FRANCHISEE SPOTLIGHT



### **DOUG AND DENISE ZIRBEL** **CLEMSON, SOUTH CAROLINA**



#### **What's the most rewarding part of being a franchisee?**

We love that we get to provide an income doing something we are passionate about.

#### **Why did you decide to join the Your Pie brand?**

Your Pie's culture was unique and special. Leadership demonstrated a supportive and close-knit organization geared toward helping franchisees be successful. Your Pie emphasized quality execution and continuous improvement to the "model" to improve AUV and operations. We personally saw an opportunity to implement the culture and key brand concepts in a way that could be localized to connect with our community.

#### **What's your favorite Your Pie pizza?**

I build my own pizza with olive oil and ricotta as a base, then I top it with a mix of feta, shredded and fresh mozzarella, mushrooms, onions, and Italian sausage. Then I add a splash of olive oil on top and around the edges to make the crust extra crispy. Denise loves our BBQ Chicken Pizza with pineapple added.

#### **What are the two most important things you rely on your franchisor for?**

We rely on corporate for brand consistency, which includes everything from the core elements of store design, equipment, and technology to the operating culture and values. We also count on them for supply chain assistance.

#### **What do you think sets Your Pie apart from the competition?**

At Your Pie we are genuine, authentic, and work hard to connect with our community. Our team members are engaged and have a passionate focus on every guest's experience. Our culture fosters owner/operator engagement, and we think that's a very good thing.

#### **What do you enjoy most about owning a Your Pie?**

We enjoy developing young people and watching them grow and learn. We love to connect with our guests and know we're bringing something special to our community.

#### **Where do you see Your Pie going in the future? How will this benefit you?**

We see Your Pie's focus in the short-term on driving AUV to \$1M, increasing the number of stores in the system. We also hope to see a design that yields \$1.5-\$2.0M in sales. This will bring bigger ideas that will not only help attract the right new franchisee candidates (higher return) but also help owner/operators stay engaged (higher return).

#### **How do you encourage your team to be their best?**

We foster a team-oriented culture where everyone participates and learns every aspect of the business so everyone can do each and every one of our different jobs. We provide a leadership presence to nurture the culture and values.

We engage our team members with experiences and responsibilities that keep them learning and growing. We treat their work as a business internship vs. a part-time job. We communicate with them about all of the key business drivers from service, to cost drivers such as food and labor. We involve them in improvement plan development and implementation. We conduct weekly team leader meetings and quarterly all-staff meetings.



## FRANCHISEE SPOTLIGHT

### DOUG AND DENISE ZIRBEL – CONTINUED

#### **What advice would you give someone who is thinking about investing in Your Pie?**

If you are passionate about people and want to bring something meaningful to your community, Your Pie is your choice. Your success depends on your leadership capabilities and the passion you bring to introducing the brand to a new market. You don't have to know anything about running a restaurant, the model is as simple as it gets and the training you'll get will help you with the operations and successfully starting-up.

If you can see yourself having a blast in your local Your Pie restaurant five years from now, fully engaged with developing your team and deeply rooted in relationships within your local community, then you will make lots of money and this is the right place for you. If you are looking for a purely financial investment and minimal hands-on involvement, the likelihood of your success is much lower.







## FRANCHISEE SPOTLIGHT



**ROSS BRADLEY**

**SNELLVILLE, MONROE AND COVINGTON, GEORGIA**



**What's the most rewarding part of being a franchisee?**

The most rewarding aspect for me is having the opportunity to enrich the lives of our team members and guests.

**Why did you decide to join the Your Pie brand?**

The Your Pie business model and proven system makes sense! If you like the restaurant business, it's as simple as you can get to operate.

**What's your favorite Your Pie pizza?**

I'm boring, but that's the beauty of Your Pie – every guest gets to make the pizza they want. I love sausage, pepperoni and garlic.

**What are the two most important things you rely on your franchisor for?**

I look to corporate for great marketing campaigns and continued business development.

**What do you think sets Your Pie apart from the competition?**

Our ability to create awesome teams!

**What do you enjoy most about owning a Your Pie?**

I'm automatically a rock star because Your Pie is in my title.

**How do you encourage your team to be their best?**

I wake up every day focused on how I can serve them!

**What advice would you give someone who is thinking about investing in Your Pie?**

Jus freakin' do it!



## Your Pie Reports Strong Growth to Close 2018

**Between January 1 and March 31, Your Pie plans to open five to eight new stores, including expansion in Georgia, Florida and Montana, plus the brand's first Arkansas location in Conway.**



*This article was published on 1/14/19.*

Your Pie announced significant growth for the fourth quarter of 2018, boasting a total of seven new stores across the U.S. These fourth quarter openings bring the brand's total footprint to 65 locations across 19 states.

Between October 1 and December 31, Your Pie opened new stores in Tucker, Macon and Monroe, Georgia; St. Augustine and Stuart, Florida; Mt. Juliet, Tennessee; and Chesapeake, Virginia. The brand plans to continue expanding in these and other states in 2019.

During the fourth quarter, Your Pie also welcomed new Chief Operating Officer Dave McDougall to its corporate leadership team in Athens, Georgia. With tenured industry experience, including executive roles with Back Yard Burgers, NextCen, FOCUS Brands and more, McDougall oversees operations and marketing at both the national and store levels, with an emphasis on unit revenue growth and profitability.

"The last quarter brought a lot of exciting growth, both in terms of our store footprint and our leadership team," says Your Pie Founder and President Drew French. "We're pleased to welcome Dave McDougall as our new COO. His expertise has already proven invaluable in helping us to hone and strengthen our brand identity while also fueling store sales. We have a vision to one day see Your Pie in every corner of the U.S., and we're making huge strides internally in pursuit of that goal. We are proud of the team we've built and believe our 2018 growth is a testament to their commitment to our customers and communities."

In 2018, Your Pie celebrated 10 years of business, starting with its 10th annual nationwide Pi(e) Day event during which the brand served \$3.14 pizzas to more than 45,000 customers. The celebration continued into the summer with prizes and giveaways, including a \$5,000 trip to Italy.

"As we enter decade two, we challenge ourselves to continue innovating and improving year after year to provide the best possible product and service for our customers," French adds. "We're proud of all that we accomplished in 2018 and look forward to another year of strong growth in 2019."

Between January 1 and March 31, Your Pie plans to open five to eight new stores, including expansion in Georgia, Florida and Montana, plus the brand's first Arkansas location in Conway.

Your Pie was founded in 2008 by culinary entrepreneur Drew French, who aimed to create a first-of-its-kind restaurant concept offering high quality, brick-oven pizza at incredible speed. While family recipes and Italian culture helped lay the foundation for its processes and exceptional quality, Your Pie has continued to build upon this foundation with new ingredients, innovative recipes and endless choices to create a pizza experience with traditional roots, but a flair all its own.



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## YOUR PIE ENJOYED RECORD DAY ON MARCH 14 FOR PI DAY

**Your Pie opened a new restaurant in Canton, Georgia, this quarter and plans for continued growth in Q2.**

*This article was published on 4/10/19.*

Your Pie announced a successful first quarter on Wednesday, including its biggest ever Pi(e) Day event on March 14 and national recognition for its leadership through industry events, conferences and media.

For its 11th annual Pi(e) Day event, Your Pie rolled out the red carpet for Hollywood-themed festivities and \$3.14 pizza deals all day. Guests lined up to celebrate the holiday with Your Pie's personalized, brick-oven pizza. At more than 60 locations nationwide, Your Pie served 54,318 pizzas, marking the brand's biggest Pi(e) Day event to date.



Your Pie's guest experience was recognized well beyond Pi(e) Day in Q1. Your Pie Founder and President Drew French was featured on Forbes as a leader who is transforming the customer experience and shared his insights alongside other top executives.

"Having the best product in the category doesn't matter if your customer experience is not of equal caliber," says French. "At Your Pie, maintaining consistent operational outputs is the first step, and we build upon that by learning our customers' names, making a second table touch and providing an experience that creates a shareable moment."

French and other members of the Your Pie leadership team headed to Las Vegas in March to attend the world's largest pizza trade show, the International Pizza Expo, to experience the latest in operations, marketing, vendors and more. At the show, French and Culinary Manager Grant Fox competed among the industry's best in the International Pizza Expo with an original creation, the Tomato and Pancetta Pie. The same month, Marketing Director Hassy Braggs served as a featured panelist at the annual Restaurant Franchising & Innovation Summit in Louisville, Kentucky, sharing his expertise in online consumer behavior and digital marketing trends.

"Our leadership team has a wealth of knowledge and experience, and we value the opportunity to join and learn from our industry peers across the country," French says. "Maintaining fresh ideas for our customers and our brand comes from traveling, listening and seeking continual inspiration."

In Q1, Your Pie's Chief Operating Officer, Dave McDougall, also announced his top priorities for the brand in 2019, including investments in new technology to improve online ordering and optimizing systems for the best possible experience for both customers and store teams.

Your Pie opened a new restaurant in Canton, Georgia, this quarter and plans for continued growth in Q2. In addition to preparing its new franchisees to open in the second quarter, Your Pie has several existing franchisees who are in progress on second, third and fourth stores in areas like Billings, Montana; St. Augustine, Florida; and Dublin, Woodstock and Dahlonega, Georgia. Your Pie has more than 60 restaurants open across 19 states, with nearly 50 locations in development.

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# Fast casual pizza joint Your Pie to open 2nd Billings locations downtown

*This article was published on 8/8/18.*

Your Pie, the fast casual pizza chain, will open a second Billings location downtown in the old St. Vincent de Paul store.

St. Vincent de Paul moved earlier this year from its longtime downtown location at the corner of South 27th Street and Montana Avenue to a new building just a few blocks away on First Avenue South.

The building at 27th and Montana is in the Montana Avenue Historic District, something the owners of Your Pie are excited to embrace. They will have to extensively remodel the interior of the building to accommodate the restaurant, but the exterior will be preserved.

"We'll keep the history of the building intact," said Parker Swenson, one of the Billings Your Pie owners.

The goal is have the restaurant up and running by spring 2019.

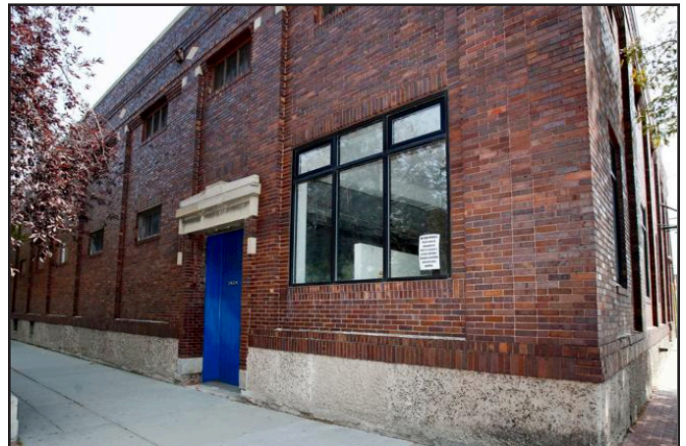
Your Pie is a Georgia-based brick oven pizza chain. It first opened in west Billings in October, situated near the corner of King Avenue West and Shiloh Road in the building that used to house Montana Cycling. The local franchise is a joint venture, co-owned by Swenson and Robert Meyer. The team owns the exclusive franchise rights to Your Pie for the entire state.

The pizza chain is a fast casual restaurant like Chipotle or Cafe Rio; customers line up and order their meals at the counter rather than ordering at the table with a waiter. The pizzas, which can be customized, bake for 10 minutes in a brick oven, meaning they're ready about the time customers have filled their drinks and found a table.

"It's been a really good fit for Billings," Swenson said.

He's excited about the downtown location; not many fast casual restaurants have set up shop in the area. He's hopeful Your Pie will draw in a chunk of the downtown lunch crowd and tap into its burgeoning dinner scene.

Fast casual pizza chains are on the rise. In June, Blaze Fast Fire'd Pizza announced it will open its first Montana location on 24th Street West next to Rimrock Mall early this fall. Blaze will open at 316 S. 24th St. West, the previous home of Paris Nails and Spa, which moved inside Rimrock Mall earlier this summer.



**Your Pie will be opening in the former St. Vincent DePaul thrift store at 2624 Montana Avenue.**



**The former Montana Cycling building is now Your Pie pizzeria at Shiloh Crossing.**



**A brick oven sits in the center of the kitchen at Your Pie pizzeria at Shiloh Crossing.**





## Your Pie Opened 5 Locations in First Quarter

*This article was published on 4/16/18.*

Your Pie announced significant growth for the first quarter of 2018, boasting a total of five new stores across the U.S. These first quarter additions bring the brand's total footprint to 53 locations across 18 states.

Between January 1 and March 31, Your Pie launched in three new markets: Nashville, Tennessee; Wilmington, North Carolina; and Houma, Louisiana. The brand also expanded in Augusta, Georgia and Raleigh, North Carolina.

On March 14, Your Pie celebrated its 10th annual Pi(e) Day event at stores nationwide. The 2018 theme was "Out of This World," and the brand launched a pizza into space to celebrate a decade of Pi(e) Day. Across more than 50 locations from California to Florida, Your Pie served \$3.14 pizzas to more than 45,000 customers. Additionally, each store awarded free pizza for a year to one lucky customer, and one grand prize winner received a GoPro Karma Drone and GoPro HERO6 camera.

Other first quarter milestones included two new additions to the corporate leadership team in Athens, Georgia. Trevor Jorgensen was named a franchise support manager and will help to ensure that franchise locations across the country are equipped to provide the best possible experience for guests. Trevor joined the Your Pie Family in 2013 and has served as General Manager at Your Pie Jacksonville since 2017.

Chris Biesiadecki also joined the team as a franchise support manager and will oversee corporate Your Pie locations, team member training and professional development programs. Biesiadecki brings 10 years of corporate accounting experience, in addition to six years in the food service industry with Chick-fil-A.

"We have a vision to see Your Pie expand its reach and serve customers in every corner of the U.S.," says Drew French, Your Pie founder and president. "We attribute our strong and steady growth to our dedication to craftsmanship, customer service and close knit culture. We're very proud of the team we've built, the products we serve and our commitment to creating shareable experiences in each of the communities we call home."

Between April 1 and June 30, Your Pie expects to open four to six stores in new markets including Chattanooga, Tennessee; Fayetteville, Georgia; Gloucester, Virginia; Richmond, Virginia; and St. Augustine, Florida. The brand aims to have 75 stores in operation by the end of 2018.

Your Pie was founded in 2008 by culinary entrepreneur Drew French, who aimed to create a first-of-its-kind restaurant concept offering high quality, brick-oven pizza at incredible speed. While family recipes and Italian culture helped lay the foundation for its processes and exceptional quality, Your Pie has continued to build upon this foundation with new ingredients, innovative recipes and endless choices to create a pizza experience with traditional roots, but a flair all its own.



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## CEOs Who Are Transforming Customer Experience



*This article was published on 1/2/19.*

In this age, Amazon is arguably the most successful business model, and at the core is Jeff Bezos' day one goal to be "earth's most customer centric company." It is no small wonder that other companies find themselves chasing the same goal, knowing that while they won't be an Amazon, they might achieve and do the right thing and truly deliver for their customers, and as a result advance leadership in their industry.

With that goal in mind, Joe Adams, managing partner and CEO of RSM US LLP, invited me down to Sea Island, Georgia for a special event this past November. I had the opportunity to attend The RSM Classic, an official PGA TOUR event sponsored by RSM, to conduct interviews for "The Middle Market Transformative CEO", a radio show that RSM Chief Economist Joe Brusuelas and I co-host. I had the privilege to be part of the RSM Classic Pro-Am draft party and dine at the home of Davis Love III, and also to interview with Brusuelas three transformative middle market CEOs from three very different industries (restaurant, manufacturing, and luxury retail clothing) and with very different leadership styles and life

experiences. One thing they all had in common, however, was their understanding of the need to have a fanatical focus on the best service and experience their businesses could provide to their customers.

From the restaurant sector, specifically customized pizza, Drew French, Founder and President of Your Pie, America's first brick oven, rapid service pizza chain model shared his insights on the importance of customer experience by emphasizing: "Having the best product in the category doesn't matter if your customer experience is not of equal caliber. At Your Pie, maintaining consistent operational outputs is the first step, and we build upon that by learning our customers' names, making a second table touch and providing an experience that creates a shareable moment." Keep in mind this insight comes from a relatively young, and successful business owner at only 35 years of age.

While Your Pie focuses on the creation of a "shareable moment" for their guests, in the area of manufacturing, specifically of sports, fitness and office lockers, Texas-based Hollman, Inc., the world's largest manufacturer of these types of lockers, focuses on connecting and sharing the same vision with their customers, in effect partnering to the end goal of creating a valuable product. President and CEO Travis Hollman explained: "Exceptional service is exceptionally easy when your customers share the same vision and passion. Customer relationships based on mutual respect create value for both parties and a win-win relationship. At Hollman, we always strive to do the right thing for our customers being more concerned about the end result instead of the cost. This does not mean we give things away. Instead, we strive to create value for our customers and treat them fairly which ensures a positive, value-driven experience." And Hollman carries this philosophy of sharing the same vision and passion throughout its organization by providing its full time employees, their spouses and eligible dependents with free college tuition.

Interestingly, Hollman lockers are handcrafted from luxury materials, gracing the halls of the finest country clubs, leading resorts and spas, top universities, national sports facilities, health and fitness centers, and municipalities, which ironically connects into the final industry interviewee and insight from a true leader and visionary in the luxury clothing retail market, Jack Mitchell, Chairman of Mitchell Stores. Jack (he doesn't go by Mr. Mitchell) has by far the most experience and success with customers I have had the pleasure of personally experiencing as his flagship store is based in nearby Westport, Connecticut. Jack's philosophy of "hugging" his customers is not only a Harvard case study but a time-tested, family success story.

Simply stated, Jack says: "Exceptional customer service boils down to knowing your customers--really knowing them--their names and nicknames, what they do, their cat's name, whether they like baseball or field hockey or curling. And then constantly surprising them with little hugs--a smile, a kind remark, remembering they were on a family trip to Santo Domingo and asking how it went. And you must be caring and genuine! These hugs make them feel great and look great in new clothes they like and enjoy--and us look great--and very often they become friends and clients for life!"

Circling back to Joe Adams, RSM provides a framework for employees that exemplifies his philosophy on being a customer centric business and providing exceptional service: "At RSM, our vision is to be the first-choice advisor to middle market leaders globally, and that starts with being a first-choice advisor to our clients. Advising begins with understanding our clients' goals and then bringing fresh ideas and great resources to support them. We have defined five characteristics of a first-choice advisor – caring, collaborative, curious, courageous, and critical thinkers. To me, caring is most important as it is the foundation of strong relationships and makes the rest of the C's possible."

In the end, three principles surface in providing great customer service leading to an even greater customer experience – creating a memory, connecting and sharing a vision, and genuinely knowing and caring about your customers, all while providing a valuable and quality product or service. Depending on your industry, you may use one or all of these principles, but either way, the end goal is to make your customer the center of your business, and in turn, these customers will come back with friends and referrals to make your business the center of success.







## Young Restaurant Leaders to Watch



This article was published on 6/4/18.

### **Drew French**

*Founder & President*

### **Your Pie**

Athens, Georgia

**Age: 34**

While most newlyweds spend their honeymoon relaxing, Drew French spent his dreaming up the idea for a fast-casual pizza concept. Learning how to make brick-oven pizza from his wife Natalie's family in Naples, Italy, French brought his discoveries back to Athens, Georgia, where he opened the first Your Pie location in 2008. Now the brand has grown to more than 50 stores across the country, with 50 additional units in development. Dedicated to creating a strong sense of community, French—a member of Team USA in the World Pizza Championship—has made it his mission to give back, donating hundreds of thousands of dollars to local charities and nonprofits through Your Pie and its guests.



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# THE IDEAL YOUR PIE FRANCHISEE

At Your Pie, we have the privilege of helping entrepreneurs nationwide take control of their future through franchising. If you've ever explored franchise opportunities, you know firsthand just how many concepts are out there and how confusing the process can be. Our franchise development team is here to support potential candidates every step of the way—from navigating the complexities of the franchise process to determining the best concept and culture fit for their lifestyle. We understand the magnitude of a franchise investment, and we don't take our responsibility lightly.

From initial interest to grand opening day, our team works alongside franchisees to create a successful partnership and position their new business to flourish in its local market. We look beyond a candidate's financials to evaluate on a more holistic level—and in doing so, have established a very intentional, sustainable growth model. From my years of experience talking with interested candidates, I've identified a few key factors that make up an ideal Your Pie franchisee:

**Shared Values** – We seek franchisees who are committed to seeing Your Pie become an integral part of their communities. These leaders are already enthusiastic about connecting with local organizations, causes and schools and are driven to make an impact. Time and time again, community involvement has proven to be a strong, authentic foundation for growing a successful Your Pie franchise.

**Teamwork** – Once the agreement is signed, our franchisees become valued members of the Your Pie Family. As with any family, we celebrate success and work through opportunities together. We look for individuals who are excited about the prospect of collaborating with and contributing to our franchise system. This close-knit culture allows franchisees across the system to learn from one another and improve the Your Pie experience for everyone.

**Leadership Ability** – Strong leadership inspires a strong team. Our top franchise owners have an innate passion for developing teams by recognizing employees' unique gifts and helping to translate those into tangible skills that serve the business at all levels. Our franchisees also benefit from strong leadership at the corporate level, where seasoned industry executives are continually developing strategies to grow store sales and improve the franchisee experience.

**Investment** – The investment in owning a Your Pie goes beyond the financials. Of course our franchisees must meet net worth qualifications, but we also want to make sure they fit the Your Pie culture and are invested in the brand's long-term success. The best way to position our owners for success is to align with franchisees who share our vision for improving communities by changing the way people experience pizza.

These are just some of the factors we consider when pursuing franchisee relationships that are mutually beneficial to our brand and each individual. If you're interested in learning more about franchise opportunities at Your Pie, you can reach out to [franchising@yourpie.com](mailto:franchising@yourpie.com) to discuss. We look forward to connecting with you!



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## **CREATING SHAREABLE MOMENTS, MAKING BETTER COMMUNITIES, AND BUILDING A GREAT BUSINESS ONE DELICIOUS PIZZA AT A TIME**

Founded in 2008, Your Pie currently operates over 65 locations in 19 states. We were the first, and now we're one of the fastest growing.

### **Ready to learn more?**

#### **Ken Caldwell**

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