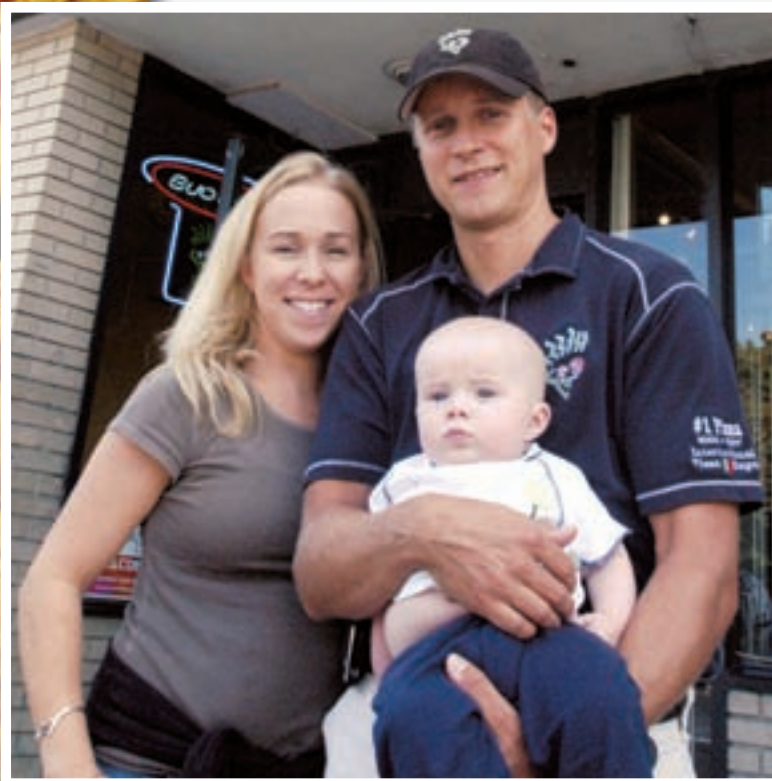


# GOING CRAZY

Boston operator laying ground work for future growth



Story by Jeremy White  
Photos by Josh Keown

Only two people have won the coveted Pizza of the Year honor more than once at International Pizza Expo. Doug Ferriman, owner of Crazy Dough's Pizza in Boston, accounts for half of that exclusive list (the other person, by the way, and the first to do so, is Tony Palombino, owner of Tony Boombozz in Louisville, Kentucky). Ferriman first won with his "The Nutty Tuscan" pizza in 2004. He repeated the feat in 2007 with his "Mission di Parma" pizza.

Normally, contest winners see a big boost in business (upwards of 30 percent) as a result of the free press that comes along with winning. For Ferriman, though, the numbers were much lower. He found out the hard way that Beantown is what you'd officially call a tough media market.

"In Boston, there's so much going on and the city is so big,"

he says. "It's hard to get the press around here to blink at anything. Even an award this huge . . . I just don't think they understood the significance of it. But what we found out is that, in Boston, you have to pay to play."

Ferriman eventually hired a public relations firm to get the word out, and before long news outlets were picking up on his story — hence the pay-to-play comment. Thankfully for the pizzeria owner, Boston's customers can be more forgiving than the press. Crazy Dough's has enjoyed a good

stores and then think about franchising," he says. "Our goal is to build a brand so that it sells itself. We want to get some infrastructure in place."

That means documenting everything so that each and every task in the pizzeria can be consistently performed across multiple locations, time and again. Thus far, Ferriman has a good start on that process.

"We've spent the last two years systemizing everything," he says. "We've got a daily strategy developed for every 15

customers."

To meet the demands of this segment, slice sales are part of the repertoire, along with whole pies. The slice pizzas are cooked to the point that they're almost fully baked and then placed in a display case near the counter. It takes approximately one minute to heat them through once the order is placed.

The specialty pies are big movers at Crazy Dough's, and pizza accounts for 75 percent of sales overall. The menu also features pasta, calzones, salads, sandwich-



degree of success with its two locations thus far, and plans for a third shop are in the works.

"We've been looking for a while," says Ferriman, who owns the company along with his wife, Melissa. "We're about to open something soon. There's a food court mall in a huge office building that we're going to go into, and we will be able to staff that store with just three people. Having that store will give us a food court model as well as a stand-alone model for us to use as we move forward and grow."

Like any enterprising operator, Ferriman has his eye on steady future growth, though he still has a lot of details to work out.

"We really want to grow to six or eight

minutes. We've systemized the big things and now we're going back to do the little things."

*Before there were thoughts of growth, there were simply thoughts of one-unit success when Crazy Dough's opened in Harvard Square in 1999.* The 1,600-square-foot location (it seats 40) is ideally situated in a busy area next to thousands of college students. For a pizzeria, that's normally a good thing.

"We have a few schools nearby, actually," says Ferriman. "That keeps the foot traffic up, but at the same time we have an ever-changing customer base. Each year, you have to wipe the slate clean and introduce yourself to a whole new group of

es, cookies, soda and beer.

"We offer \$4 Pabst Blue Ribbon pitchers," Ferriman says, "and we sell a ton of it."

After launching delivery some time back, Ferriman quickly realized the segment could offer as many headaches as rewards. So he recently signed a contract with a delivery company to outsource the service. He sells delivery orders to the delivery company at wholesale prices, and they take it from there and charge the customer the Crazy Dough's menu price.

"They wear our uniforms and they do all the marketing around this," explains Ferriman. "As a result, our volume goes way up and some of the negative costs on our P&L go down."

When asked why he made the decision to outsource the delivery, Ferriman responded that “It’s hard to find drivers with the gas costs the way they are. Delivery is just so expensive. And, really, our core competency is not delivery. It’s gourmet pizza. Our labor has gone down thanks to the switch.”

According to Ferriman, the labor cost at Crazy Dough’s fluctuates between 21-24 percent. He said it was five percent higher with delivery drivers on the payroll. As for food costs, they sit at 28 percent, including paper.

The pizzas at Crazy Dough’s are hand-tossed and, as Ferriman mentioned earlier, decidedly gourmet. Next to the requisite pepperoni, the Potato Bacon Cheddar is the top draw, followed by the Buffalo Chicken. Among his college student clientele, Ferriman says the Chicken Nacho pizza is a favorite.

“That one is real popular with the students,” he says. “But, like I said, the market changes every six months to a year, so we’re always experimenting. Food reps are always bringing in different samples, so we usually mess around with them to see what we can come up with.” ♦

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**Jeremy White** is editor-in-chief at PIZZA TODAY.



Crazy Dough’s Doug Ferriman is a two-time Pizza of the Year winner at International Pizza Expo in Las Vegas. In 2007, he took the industry’s highest pizza-making prize with “Mission di Parma,” the recipe for which is featured below.

### **Mission di Parma**

- 12-inch dough, par grilled\*
- 3 ounces diced mozzarella
- 1.7 ounces thinly sliced prosciutto di Parma
- 2 ounces pecorino Romano
- 2 ounces sliced Black Mission Figs\*\*
- 1 ½ ounces crumbled Pt. Reyes Bleu cheese

Par-grill the dough as described below,

then assemble the ingredients on top of the dough. Cook pizza on stone deck oven for five minutes at 525 F. Garnish with thin cut basil.

### **\*Hickory Grilled Pizza (requires char broiler at medium heat)**

Flatten a 7-ounce dough ball (free of flour/cornmeal), thoroughly coating dough with EVO.

Stretch dough over a 12-inch screen, making sure it slightly sticks to the screen.

In a spray bottle, mix 3 ½ ounces Wright’s Hickory flavor, 5 ounces apple juice and 5 ounces water. Before placing the dough on the grill, thoroughly spray down the grill and the lava rocks. This imparts a hickory/applewood flavor without the expense of a wood grill.

After thoroughly seasoning the grill, place the screen with dough facing down on grill. The dough should stick to screen, allowing you to maintain a round shell as you are placing on grill. After 30 seconds you can remove the screen.

Grill the first side long enough for the signature grill marks and slight char flavor to appear (1 ½ minutes). With tongs, flip the dough to sear-in that smoky flavor.

### **\*\*Black Mission Figs (dried)**

Slice 2 ounces dried figs and place in a bowl.

Add 1 ½ ounces Fig Jam to bowl and mix thoroughly. The figs will be generously covered with jam, maximizing flavor and presentation.