

California pizza chain to open restaurant in Royal Oak

By Sylvia Rector Detroit Free Press Restaurant Critic Filed Under Entertainment Dining Out Royal Oak Northland
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A California-based fast-casual pizza chain, Blaze Fast-Fire'd Pizza, will open its first Michigan location at 112 S. Main in Royal Oak in mid-October and plans to add nine more restaurants in the next few years.

Blaze's 11-inch, thin-crust pizzas are made to order and bake in 120 seconds in super-hot open-hearth ovens.

Customers watch as their crust is pressed from house-made fresh dough and moved down an assembly counter, where employees add toppings at the diner's direction. Customers can choose as many of the 40-plus toppings as they want and still pay \$6.95 each. Cheese-only and cheese-and-pepperoni pizzas cost less.


Each Blaze location makes its own dough from scratch and allows it to ferment for 24 hours, which gives crusts more flavor and superior texture, the company says. The menu also features signature salads, fresh lemonade, house-made S'more pies and the option of gluten-free dough and vegan cheese.

Pizza served in a fast-casual setting — similar to Panera, Chipotle, Smashburger and Pei Wei — “is the next logical step in fast-casual,” says Darla Bowen, marketing director for Blaze Midwest, the Houghton Lake-based franchisee.

The fast turnaround time for orders “makes pizza at lunch an option,” she said. Online ordering will also be possible.

The “casually hip” Royal Oak restaurant will seat 80 guests with additional patio space, the company says.

Blaze Midwest is part of Northland [Investments](#)

 , which owns 43 quick-serve and 13 casual-dining restaurants in Michigan, Indiana and Ohio. The company, founded in 1987, employs nearly 1,800 workers.

Contact Sylvia Rector: 313-222-5026 and srector@freepress.com Follow her on Twitter [@SylviaRector](#).