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Fat Jack's Pizza in Fairport a tasty team effort

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Fairport, N.Y. — There's a new pizza place on the block with a new spin on taste.

Fat Jack's Pizza at 110 Packett's Landing in Fairport is a partnership of two guys who left their white collar careers behind to make pizza. Dave Chambers, 40, and Jack O'Brien, 46.

It's been open just eight weeks, but it has already gained a number of new followers. It all started when the owners got acquainted with the people in the village by bringing free samples of their homemade stromboli — a sliced loaf of dough with pizza toppings rolled into it — to people standing in line for the hay ride at the village tree lighting in early December.

"People absolutely loved it," said O'Brien, "But when we got back here afterward, everyone came in looking for more. We had to start a new batch," he said with a laugh.

Although delicious, it takes more time to assemble than a regular pizza.

From shaved steak subs to their signature New York style pizza, the owners say they'll do anything to put the best food in front of their customers, even if it means leaving the convenience of heat-and-serve ingredients in the dust.

Their story is one of returning to their roots. O'Brien, who grew up in Utica, N.Y. owned a pizzeria in Somerville, Mass. for 12 years before moving back to Upstate and working as a suit-and-tie financial broker. At the same time, Chambers worked for IBM, where he says he was a slave to his pager. Both men say their new career trumps their previous careers by a long shot.

"You become a grownup and I think you do things because you think you have to do them," said O'Brien. "I think eventually we both realized that this is what we really want to do."

The two men, who met each other through an old business deal, later teamed up to open a pizza place when the location went up for sale on Craigslist. They began renovations in mid-September of last year and finally opened their doors in late November, 2010.

Since then, their clientele has grown from people looking for a casual meeting place to get lunch, to families looking for a dinner delivery, to hosting a ladies book club meeting.

Part of the appeal of the cozy shop is the integrity of the food served. From the sauce, made with special crushed tomatoes shipped from Utica, to the dough that becomes the crispy pizza crust, it's all done from scratch. And on purpose.

"We're trying to get back to a scratch kitchen feel," said Chambers.

There are glimpses of Chambers' former tech savvy in the flat screen monitors above the counter where customers read the menu items. In the back you'll find a flat screen TV hooked up to an XBOX where the guys watch DVDs as they stretch dough and cover the flat pies with mozzarella.

"He's the tech guy," said O'Brien. "I'm the food guy."

Together, it's a beautiful — and tasty — combination.

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