



Adam and Debbie Goldberg launched Fresh Brothers in 2008. It has become the sixth largest independent pizza chain in the nation. Photo by Brad Jacobson (CivicCouch.com)

Homemade pizza empire

How Manhattan Beach's Adam and Debbie Goldberg built Fresh Brothers to be hometown and family affair and succeeded beyond anyone's expectations

by Caroline Anderson

She works in an office that sits above hundreds of stacks of Fresh Brothers pizza boxes, but Debbie Goldberg still gets excited when she sees an empty box sitting in someone's recycling bin.

"I love trash day in Manhattan Beach," she says while sitting at a conference table at the company's headquarters near LAX.

The boxes are a small example of the love and thoroughness with which Debbie and her husband Adam treat every detail of their business. Earlier, on a tour of the warehouse below their offices, Adam pointed out the logo on the boxes with pride, noting the four colors of the tilted pizza slice with a tomato on top. He said that it's unusual for a pizza chain of their size to have boxes with their own branding.

The couple opened the first Fresh Brothers store off North Sepulveda in Manhattan Beach in 2008. Since then, they have opened 11 more stores throughout Los Angeles and Orange County, becoming the sixth largest independent pizza chain in the country based on revenue, according to Adam. They're on track to becoming number three next year, he says. Two weeks ago, they signed a contract for a store in the remodeled Terminal 2 at LAX. The terminal is scheduled to reopen in mid-2015.

Not bad for a couple that started the business so they could spend more time with their kids.

Though the company has expanded beyond the South Bay and hopes to go international one day, Fresh Brothers is deeply rooted in its home turf. The Manhattan Beach location continues to do the best of all the chain's stores. Adam attributes this to their involvement in the community, where the couple also lives. Debbie feels like the people of the South Bay have invested as much in Fresh Brothers as the business has invested in them.

"Our friends, our customers, the community — they sort of feel like they share in our success," she says. "They've been there from the beginning. It's like everybody's rooting us on. We started right at the beginning of the horrible financial crisis so there was a lot of, 'Wow, are you guys insane for doing this?'"

As

we've gone along through the years, it's really fun to have people be as excited and supportive of us as they are."

Because of the support that the community has shown them, Debbie and Adam have made it a priority to give back. They donate their food or provide it at cost to too many events to name.

"Every sports field in the South Bay has a Fresh Brothers banner," says Adam.

The weekend after we spoke, Fresh Brothers planned to provide 1,000 slices of pizza to the Manhattan Beach 10K Run. At the Hometown Fair, the Boy Scouts will be selling their pizzas.

And Fresh Brothers was just named the AdventurePlex's exclusive food supplier. They will give back 20 percent, or basically the profit, to the Beach Cities Health District, which owns AdventurePlex.

So with all their success, have Debbie and Adam really gotten to spend any more time with their kids?

"Definitely," says Adam. "And that was the goal. When my kids were three and a half, I rarely saw them awake."

As a director of photography for ABC Network News and later MTV, Adam would leave the house at 4 a.m. and come back around 9 or 10 p.m. Now, he coaches soccer and basketball and takes the kids to the beach on the weekends — in between working 100 hours per week.

"I work when everyone else is sleeping," he says. "There's no doubt the creation of Fresh Brothers added a lot of value to our family life."

Debbie, who stopped working as a producer for the Travel Channel when the couple had their twins in 2004, loves the balance that owning her own business gives her.

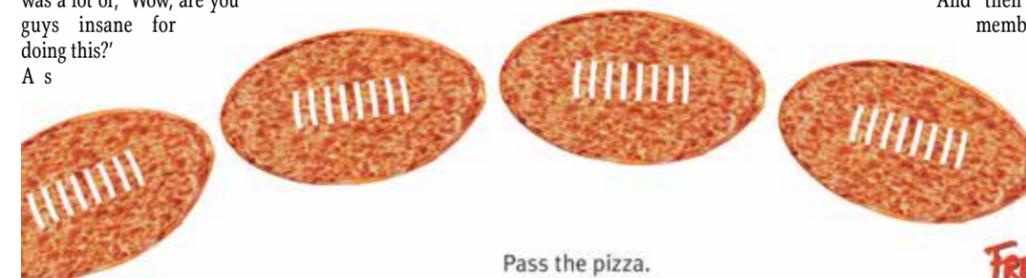
"You're able to be present for your kids' important moments and things you want to be part of, and yet still have such an important role in the company," she says. "It's really the best of all possible worlds."

The couple's kids also like it.

"They really feel like they have a stake in it, too," she says. "They're our biggest taste testers."

And then there are those other members of the family with a stake in the company — Adam's brothers.

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Pass the pizza.



"We're simply trying to talk to people the way we would to any friend, to let our personality be reflected in our communications," said Mike Pitts, of Pitt+Pitts, who collaborates with Adam and Debbie Goldberg on Fresh Brothers Pizza's marketing. Their print and billboard campaigns play heavily (some would say mercilessly) on verbal and visual puns.



The Fresh Brothers' Goldberg brothers Adam, Scott and Michael checking out the tomatoes in Stanislaus County.

The Fresh Brothers recipe was adapted from a recipe of Adam's older brother Scott, who started Miller Pizza Company in Indiana in 1985. Now Scott works for Fresh Brothers doing quality control. Another brother Michael

is the chief operations officer.

The couple was brought together 17 years ago by mutual friends. Debbie subsequently hired Adam to direct the photography for some of the shows she produced. Those includ-

ed series like "World's Deadliest Snakes" and "World's Deadliest Insects."

"We knew if we could be in a pit full of venomous snakes or a swarm of killer bees, we could pull pizza off," says Debbie. **B**



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