

Rodney Ray

Gaetano's Pizzeria • Rocklin, CA



Gaetano's Bakes the Perfect Business

Pizzerias tend to be a dime a dozen, but that didn't deter Rodney Ray from taking possession of Gaetano's Pizzeria in Rocklin when the previous owner offered it to him in the fall of 2007. He knew, however, that he first needed to understand the business ingredient of this entrepreneurial recipe, and that's when he turned to Northern California Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Sierra College.

"It's one thing to run a restaurant," Mr. Ray says. "It's another to run a business. People open restaurants out of passion, but a lot of them fail because of a lack of business savvy. They need to know what to look for before putting money into something like that."

Mr. Ray has been cooking since he was 12 and has more than a decade of experience running restaurants, but he needed to take his business knowledge further before taking ownership of Gaetano's. "I can run a restaurant in

my sleep," he explains, "but conducting a market analysis, paying attention to the competition, and so forth — I had no idea about those things."

SBDC at Sierra College helped him develop a business plan, mentored him, and, he enthuses, "took it to a whole other level." Adding SBDC at Sierra College to the mix allowed him to quickly increase daily sales 3.5 times above his predecessor's level.

"We're getting more popular because we're the best at what we do," Mr. Ray observes. He's so thorough in his prep work that he includes any pizza sales in his competitive menu, even if it's a grocery store that only stocks the frozen variety. And he isn't planning to rest on his laurels any time soon: he's currently fine-tuning his business plan so he can present it to banks and secure funding for additional locations.