

Case Study

Graze! Shared Kitchen

Three concepts, one kitchen and a single restaurant management system



At Graze! Shared Kitchen in Toledo, Ohio, owner Rod Brant operates three restaurants under a single roof. This unique concept is growing in popularity as restaurant owners adapt to changing consumer preferences for take-out and delivery due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Under the Graze umbrella are three distinct offerings - Oasis Eats Mediterranean, Mozza Pizza and Wings, and Big Knuckle Burgers. Rod describes the delivery and take-out only model as the “new eat at home or office experience” with faster ordering, better service, and a wider variety of foods to choose from.

Rod got his start in the restaurant business offering marketing consulting services – helping other restaurants improve and grow, but always had the itch to become a restaurant owner of his own. He fulfilled that dream by purchasing Eat at Oasis in early 2020, just before the Covid-19 pandemic hit. Eat at Oasis had two dine-in locations about five miles apart, and Rod made the purchase with plans to change one location into the Graze! Shared Kitchen concept.

Challenge

The onset of Covid-19 played into Rod’s strategy for developing the shared kitchen vision. Focusing on delivery and take out only, Rod set about developing the sub-brands segmented by the type of food they offered.

The legacy Eat at Oasis restaurants had an extensive menu, and Rod saw an opportunity to improve. “Big menus are confusing to customers. When you put that many choices in front of people, they sometimes don’t know what to do. I felt that it was distracting to the customer experience that we were trying to build.



Customer

Graze! Shared Kitchen

Challenge

Bringing three concepts under one shared kitchen while minimizing the investment in technology and operational infrastructure.

Results

The HungerRush RMS system helps Graze! Shared Kitchen use a single technology installation across all concepts.



By dividing into three concepts and giving our customers fewer choices, I felt we would end up strengthening the individual brands.”

Rod examined the top selling items from his Eat at Oasis locations and split them among the three new concepts:

- **Big Knuckle Burgers** – offering burgers and fries, sandwiches, salads and shakes
- **Mozza Pizza** and Wings – offering pizza, wings and appetizers
- **Oasis Eats** – a full menu of Mediterranean food

After removing some items from the original Eat At Oasis menu, Rod decided to upgrade others. “We saw a chance to improve our food quality, so we sourced better patties for our burgers and upgraded our pizza crusts to both a New York and a Detroit style,” adds Rod.

When Rod began shopping for Restaurant Management Systems (RMS), he wanted a flexible POS that could handle the three concepts with a single workstation. The legacy Eat At Oasis location used the HungerRush RMS, and Rod was happy to find that the platform’s flexibility and easy-to-configure menu system could accommodate the shared Graze concept.

“The HungerRush team was really good at figuring out how to do execute our vision. Ninety percent of our business is delivery, so we didn’t want to have three different operating systems – or have to charge customers three times for delivery,” says

Rod. “We wanted customers to be able to order from three different menus and have one delivery charge, and that is what we are able to do utilizing the platform from HungerRush.”

The Results

With most orders placed between 8:00 PM and 2:00 AM, Graze is quickly becoming the area’s late night food delivery destination. “Sales at Graze are growing each month, which is encouraging because we have not been open that long. At least 30% of orders include items from more than one concept, which is proof that our vision for providing customers with multiple options is resonating,” says Rod. Although Rod is focused on growing the core late night business, he is also increasing marketing efforts to drive more sales earlier in the evening during the prime dinner hours. “We see an opportunity to improve our business in parts of the day when we are currently slow, and that is where we are steering our marketing efforts.”

Rod and his team are looking to expand toward the suburbs with additional locations and want to enhance the ordering experience for drive-up customers. “I think drive-thru is key”, adds Rod. “Customers are becoming acclimated to the drive thru and take out routine. While we have curbside pickup available at Graze, it is not the best scenario. The best (and safest) experience is when customers can remain in their vehicle, and that is the experience that a drive-thru offering provides.”

The shared kitchen approach has been successful so far with over 12% month-on-month sales increases and improved margins over the single Eat at Oasis location. Graze recently expanded the delivery radius to six miles and has plans to add a fourth concept to the shared kitchen – with longer term plans to add a suburban location. “We are trying to acquire more restaurants to optimize our operations. We are looking to expand and put other concepts in as well,” said Rod.



Future Plans

As Graze! Shared Kitchen continues expansion with more locations, Rod’s vision is to consolidate ordering – essentially by building a call center that can direct orders to the proper location for preparation and delivery. “Centralizing ordering staff can help us lower our cost structure. And we think we can improve the customer experience by having dedicated staff answering the phone. We have some very talented people that can upsell during the ordering process, plus we can handle more order volume with fewer people,” claims Rod.

Rod and the Graze! Shared Kitchen staff is working through the nuances of call center ordering jointly with the HungerRush team. According to Rod, “Orders need to be routed to the nearest location in the customer’s delivery area, so it is a bit of logistical challenge. The type of people that we employ is also different from a normal restaurant. Instead of a crew comprised of waitstaff and servers, we need people that are focused on operations – order processing,



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