

FIVE MINUTES WITH EATZI'S CEO ADAM ROMO: BELOVED DALLAS STAPLE NOW FEEDS TRAVELERS IN ONE OF NATION'S BUSIEST AIRPORTS

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Busy travelers at DFW International Airport can now experience a unique version of Eatzi's Market & Bakery with its brand new location in Terminal D. The long-anticipated opening infuses modern technology with its classic European-style market, marking a few firsts for the beloved Dallas staple. Recently, Eatzi's CEO Adam Romo sat down with Texas Lifestyle Magazine to discuss how the newest outpost came about, his recipe for success, and what's in store for Eatzi's future.

What was the inspiration behind opening the DFW Airport location?

We were first approached by DFW about 10 years ago. We always believed our concept of chef-crafted meals to-go was ideal for time-constrained airport passengers and employees, but the timing didn't work for us as we were busy opening new stores around the DFW metroplex. After we debuted our Preston Royal and Fort Worth locations in 2017, we had more time to focus on this sort of expansion. An opportunity to open Eatzi's in DFW airport was presented to us in 2019, but COVID-19 delayed that opening until 2023. So, it's been a long journey and one we're excited to share with travelers.

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Eatzi's newest location at the airport marries its traditional European-style market and bakery with the latest retail technology "Just Walk Out (JWO)," which is a great example of how to incorporate modern technology into your business model. In what other ways do you see Eatzi's innovating while staying true to its brand image?

We are always evaluating ways to improve our operation without diminishing the unique Eatzi's experience. For example, we considered self-checkout for speed of service and labor efficiency benefits, but we ultimately passed on this because a reason that customers come to Eatzi's is for the customer experience, from theatrical opera singing to interactions with our employees. Self-checkout would have eliminated that customer-employee interaction that serves as the final touchpoint of the experience while still implementing an extra step, so we adjusted to make operations best suit the unique airport environment. Because of our labor-intensive scratch kitchen environment, we will move cautiously with any initiative we undertake.

With numerous awards such as being recognized as one of the "Most Influential Restaurant CEOs in the Country," what has been your recipe for success?

My basic recipe for success consists of critical brand elements, effective communication, servant leadership, and a great culture. Defining your critical brand elements allows you to focus on the most important aspects of your business. We identified "QVCPT" as the elements our customers value most about Eatzi's, which stands for quality, variety, convenience, price value, and theater. Every decision we make contemplates these branding elements, and we steer clear of anything diminishing them. Of course, effective communication is also a big priority for me. Even a great strategy and vision will fail if poorly communicated, so I always keep this in mind with all my teams.

As a servant leader, I also believe you should provide everyone with the proper tools, resources, and support for them to achieve success. A great servant leader will seek to understand and remove barriers that make employees' jobs unnecessarily difficult, leading to better employee morale, greater productivity, and a better workplace overall. This has been key to Eatzi's success over the years, in addition to an inclusive culture. I am passionate about giving everyone a role in the decision-making process. By doing so, employees believe and understand their ideas and opinions are valued and important. The question I constantly ask everyone is "what would you do?"

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Eatzi's has been known as one of the most prominent Dallas-based brands and is very much a part of this city's identity. How does it feel to represent Dallas and how will Eatzi's continue to be a major player in the community?

I am incredibly proud of the fact that Eatzi's has become such an integral part of so many people's lives over the past 27 years. We appreciate our customers' love for our brand, introducing friends and family to our stores. I can promise that we will continue protecting the brand elements our guests know and love while also exploring what we can do better as we continue to grow.

Can we expect more locations in the DFW area, or maybe elsewhere in Texas?

Our growth strategy is certainly close to home right now, focusing on fully expanding throughout the DFW metroplex. After that, I can definitely see us turning our attention to some of Texas' other major markets such as Houston, Austin and San Antonio, and eventually into other Sunbelt states. We're also continuing to keep our eye on other airport opportunities as they arise.

