



## **&PIZZA RECEIVES INVESTMENT TO FUEL EXPANSION**

*RSE Ventures Leads Round for Innovative East Coast Pizza Purveyors; &pizza to Expand to Miami, Boston and Broaden NYC Footprint in 2018*

**Washington, D.C.** (October 25, 2017) – &pizza, dubbed “the pizza shop of the 21st century” by *The Washington Post*, and known for its innovative workplace culture and dedication to corporate responsibility, announced today that it has closed a round of strategic funding from RSE Ventures.

Founded in 2012 and helmed by CEO, Co-founder and Creative Director, Michael Lastoria, &pizza currently operates 23 restaurants in Washington, D.C., New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia; the capital infusion will serve to accelerate growth in major East Coast markets, including planned expansion to Miami, Boston and the debut of 4-6 new shops in New York City in 2018.

RSE Ventures was co-founded by Stephen Ross and Matthew Higgins to back forward-thinking entrepreneurs in the sports, media and entertainment industries. Ross is the Chairman and Founder of the global real estate firm Related Companies and principal owner of the NFL’s Miami Dolphins. In addition to vast residential, commercial and mixed-use real estate holdings, Related and Ross have invested in experiential consumer-retail brands including cultural phenomenons, Equinox and SoulCycle, and utilized their real estate and operating expertise to help them purposefully expand their footprints across the United States. Ross and Related’s experience and relationships nationally are an ideal fit for &pizza’s strategic goals.

Under Higgins, RSE has founded or helped incubate numerous companies, from the Drone Racing League, to RESY, and the International Champions Cup, the largest independent soccer tournament in the world featuring the biggest brands in the sport. Higgins also serves as Vice Chairman of the Miami Dolphins. Both Higgins and Ross will join &pizza’s board of directors.

Matt Higgins says, “It’s our aim at RSE to arm innovative and socially conscious brands with the tools they need to command their categories. Michael Lastoria has already upended the fast casual food space by fostering an enviable and authentic company culture through his financial commitment to &pizza’s most valuable asset – its employees. We look forward to supporting Lastoria as he brings &pizza’s inclusive message, smart business and superior product to new markets.”

RSE’s investments in sporting events, marketing, technology and public relations firms have expanded of late with partnerships in the restaurant world. In late 2016, RSE made a significant investment in Momofuku, David Chang’s renowned restaurant group, which includes full-service, fast casual (Fuku) and bakery (Milk Bar) concepts. Higgins also sits on the boards of both RESY and Milk Bar.



&pizza guests are encouraged to indulge in HIT (signature) pies, like the American Honey (spicy tomato, mozzarella, pepperoni, arugula, red pepper flakes, goat cheese, Mike's Hot Honey) and Moonstruck (mushroom truffle, garlic ricotta, mozzarella, mushroom, grilled onion, goat cheese, fig balsamic), as well as build their own pies with an array of toppings, which include local non-GMO produce and other high-quality ingredients, often sourced from local partners called "Little Giants." In an effort to encourage customization and provide a compelling value proposition, toppings are unlimited and carry no extra charge. A full spread of gluten-free, vegan and vegetarian offerings are also available. The brand's innovative menu includes house-made beverage offerings such as craft &SODA and small batch &TEA.

While &pizza's critically-acclaimed pizza and craft beverages fuel the brand, it's the people-first approach to business that distinguishes it from other growing concepts in the space. &pizza CEO, Co-founder and Creative Director, Michael Lastoria, is a passionate advocate of the Fight for 15, and his employees, known collectively as "the Tribe," are all paid a living wage. As a result of the brand's inclusive values, more than 100 tribe members and guests have chosen to get tattoos of the company's ampersand logo.

In an effort to respond to and reinforce the community-first mindset, Lastoria recently debuted a new marketing campaign, dubbed Make Your Mark – it celebrates the brave and bold communities &pizza serves, honors local entrepreneurs, charities and partners, invites user participation, and, most importantly, layers meaning into &pizza's iconic ampersand logo.

Michael Lastoria says, "We founded &pizza to create something entirely new. We wanted to create a scalable business that's built on sound moral grounds. And that's why we thrive. We challenge ourselves at each stage of our development to do the morally sound thing as well as make the sound business decision. We pay a living wage. We source from small businesses. We support our communities. We have an active charity arm. We support our people, we urge them to be themselves, we give them all of the support we can to help them thrive. And in return, we find that our Tribe is engaged, supportive, active in informing us about their thoughts and opinions, and generally true believers in the brand and happier in their work." Of the investment, he added, "RSE understands and supports our vision and how we do things, and has deep brand-building and scaling experience. They're the ideal partner for us as we enter this new chapter."

## **ABOUT &pizza**

Founded in 2012 in Washington, D.C.'s historic H Street NE corridor, &pizza set out to create a different kind of pizza shop – one where experience is the focal point, and every shop reflects the culture and people of its neighborhood. Since 2012, &pizza has been fueling the communities it serves through its charitable arm, &CHARITY, which has supported over 1,000 local organizations since the program's inception. Evidence of their disruptive success can be found in the organizational culture of its employees, its rapid expansion and numerous recognitions. The brand was recently dubbed the "next generation of pizza" by BuzzFeed and



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named Business Insider's "Most Popular Pizza Chain" in Washington, D.C., taking home wins in 7 different "Best Of" categories by Washington City Paper.

&pizza currently has 23 shops across Washington, D.C., Baltimore, New York and Philadelphia. Follow &pizza on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook at @andpizza, and visit their site at [www.andpizza.com](http://www.andpizza.com).