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Casale takes Paradise to next level

Barbara Yost

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When Scottsdale chef Gregory Casale, a 2005 Arizona Culinary Hall of Fame inductee, announced he was taking a job as corporate chef for Scottsdale-based Paradise Bakery & Café, eyebrows were raised.

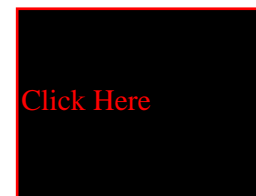
Casale had been chef owner of the acclaimed Gregory's World Bistro on North Hayden, then chef at the tony T. Cook's at the Royal Palms. A great chef turned Muffin Man?

Two years into his new job, Casale is having the last laugh. Paradise Bakery is undergoing an incredible expansion that includes the opening of 10 new Valley stores this year. The company that established a presence in shopping malls from California to Massachusetts now is committed to building free-standing cafés.



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Paradise Bakery master chef Gregory Casale.



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One of the newest ribbon-cuttings was Aug. 13 at the Paradise Village Gateway Mall. Other stores opening this summer and fall are in Surprise, at Chandler Pavilions in Chandler, and the San Tan Village in Gilbert.

Known for innovation, Casale has applied his talents to the Paradise Bakery menu, expanding breakfast offerings with such favorites as Irish steel-cut oats, strawberry and house-made granola parfaits, signature muffins and filled croissants, omelets, quiches and breakfast

wraps.

"I got it to the point where it is now," Casale said, mindful that for busy Americans breakfast has become "the most important day-part for the (restaurant) industry."

Now he's tackling sandwiches, another important industry product. The portability of sandwiches makes them popular with consumers, he said, while healthful choices continue to be a concern.

"Dressed-up sandwiches are the number one food trend," said Casale, who will launch a new sandwich roll-out in October. Turkey, chicken and tuna are favorites, chicken walnut a top seller.

Another change sounds like a small thing except for those wearing a white shirt or blouse and heading into an important meeting. Casale has dumped cherry tomatoes in favor of small grape tomatoes in salads, which are firmer and less likely to squirt when stabbed with a fork.

Best of all, Casale gets to play in the kitchen, dream up new ideas and still have time for his family - something a chef owner finds in short supply.

"Paradise Bakery has been wonderful for me," he said. "I really love it here."

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Paradise Bakery & Café

What: Newest location for the pastry, soup, salad and sandwich restaurant, 10625 North Tatum Boulevard, Phoenix.

Phone: (480) 751-5960.

Web: paradisebakery.com

Hours: 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sundays.

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