



COIN OP REEMERGES IN MODERN, FAMILY-FOCUSED RESTAURANTS
*Roaring Rapids Pizza Co. Embraces
Coin Op as Key to Family Connectivity, Fun and Profits*

Putting the Entertainment in Family: Insert One Quarter

Eight years ago, Roaring Rapids Pizza Company opened the doors to its first restaurant in Eugene, Ore., which is about a two-hour car ride outside of Portland, to serve up piping hot, delicious pizza. Knowing that pizza pie translates into fun and entertainment for most American families, Roaring Rapids wanted to deliver just that—fun and entertainment—along, of course, with its, signature crust, zesty sauce and flavorful cheese. As a result, Roaring Rapids operational partner, Garry Weber, went to work, doing his research to find out what ingredients were essential in making this family-oriented business a success.



What Weber confirmed, was that when it came to family outings, kids have a big vote. (Otherwise, let's face it, the time spent together can be anything, but entertaining.) While looking at other successfully-run family businesses, there was one common thread that tied everything together: an experience. While every restaurant wants to create a pleasant dining experience, when families are involved, extra attention must be paid to the experience itself. According to Weber's findings, "With kids, it had to involve great food and entertainment; it had to involve coin op."

"Eugene-Springfield has a population of more than 200,000; so there are lots of families who like to eat pizza here," says Weber. "To stay on top of our game, in such a competitive industry—more than 75 pizzerias within a 20-mile radius—meant we would have to focus on the total family experience."

So, despite the finely made, tasty pies that would be created, as well as the nice piece of real estate Roaring Rapids would sit upon (right on the banks of the Willamette River), Weber recalls, "We just absolutely wouldn't start our business

without putting in some coin op. Without it, research told me that I would start up in a deficit and lose much of my target audience right away. I saw and studied how other similar establishments and industry colleagues benefited from the games and how they gave families interactive fun and restaurants return visits.”

Special Topping: Coin-Op

Weber still, however, wanted to walk before he would run with coin-op. He consequently started out with seven non-violent, family games from operator



Amusements Unlimited. Roaring Rapids’ first games included air-hockey, a Grand Prix driving game, and a mini bowling game. Coin op was an immediate hit.

Weeks after opening, Weber noticed that their 8,000-square-foot, 400-seat pizzeria, which includes both inside and outside eating areas, was seeing lots of folks playing coin op either while waiting to be seated or after finishing dinner. Many return visitors,

too, would fill out comment cards with variations of statements such as:

We enjoyed great food and beverage; kids had lots of entertainment and fun. We’ll be back!

Mellinda, Eugene, Ore.

What a fabulous place to visit with the friends. Our kids had fun in play room, we got to visit.

Jack, Springfield, Ore.

Weber also noted that families were mingling and interacting more than they could at competitive restaurant establishments. Weber noticed that the games allowed grandpa, for example, to have fun and connect with his grandchild—get to know each other better—in a fun setting. “It’s about quality time together and coin op provides the dining experience that makes the whole family happy.”

With all this positive response, Roaring Rapids made the strategic decision to put in additional coin-op games in lieu of more seating. “Sure it’s a trade off. Instead of being able to seat people right away, we chose more games. But the seating sacrifice was the right choice given the contribution of the games to the overall restaurant experience, validated by our own observations and customer feedback, as well as the significant contribution the games were making to our

profitability both from direct game revenue and people staying longer and spending more on food and beverages,” says Weber. “Plus, while people do wait in line, or wait for their pizzas on busy nights, they have something fun to do, which makes the time fly even faster.”

Coin op also has been a key to keeping weekday traffic up. “We can see the impact but it’s also pretty clearly quantified. Our change machines, which convert dollars into quarters for game play, are filled on Mondays and must be refilled before the busy weekend crowd even arrives.”

Any Way You Slice It, It’s about Families, Fun & Coin-Op

Today, Roaring Rapids has a total of 15 games, with lines often forming around the air-hockey table and basketball hoop shoot. The restaurant is now a premier destination in the Eugene-Springfield area, with a clearly noticeable amount of return patrons. Since opening its doors with coin op, the restaurant has experienced double digit sales every year. Weber notices that patrons stay longer and spend more because of coin op. On average, guests order at least one or two additional beverages while their kids play one or two games more before going home.

Roaring Rapids also finds that the games provide added value in marketing the pizzeria out for high-profit-margin events, such as birthday parties and other family type get-togethers, which involve all ages.

Piece of the Pie, The Overall Picture

Coin op is evolving, it’s moving out of the video arcades and into modern restaurants and bowling centers where interaction and connectivity among friends and family is established with game play. For locations, this fun, relationship-building interaction, means people enjoy good times together, encouraging plans for return visits.



To learn more about the coin-op industry and how it is evolving and keeping innovative, visit www.coin-op.org or contact Jeanine Riedl at either 312-329-3977 or riedlj@ruderfinn.com. Or, if you would like to find out more about Roaring Rapids Pizza Co., please visit www.rapidpizza.net.

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