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Pizza parlor is both green and Extreme

■ Restaurant is first to be certified by environmental group

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Extreme Pizza has taken over the storefront at 2352 Shattuck Ave., which has been empty for years. But, unlike what its name would suggest, the Bay Area-born chain went up quietly more than a month ago, without getting much notice from surrounding residents.

It is starting to catch on, though, and now serves about 200 orders a day for slices, pizzas to go, sub sandwiches and other items.

Extreme Pizza now also has the distinction of being the first restaurant certified by the Green Business Program. Using the program's standards, eateries "can significantly reduce consumption of resources and can eliminate or recycle most of their wastes," said Pamela Evans, coordinator of the county program. "Extreme Pizza is a good example of a business that worked right from the planning stage with local utilities and the Green Business Program to build a 'greener' restaurant."

Says store manager Jeremy Wike, the "extreme" theme is about quality — "not that snooty service. Everyone here is upbeat and motivated."

Well, that and pizza. "Anything you can think of, we'll make," said Wike, who is opening the company's first franchise in Fresno.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

STORE MANAGER Melanie Sheaves.



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THE CERTIFIED GREEN pizza parlor moved into this Shattuck Avenue space earlier this year.

The outfit specializes in pizzas that are embarrassing to order, like "Drag it though the garden" (cheese and vegetables), "Holy Cow!" (fontina, swiss, gorgonzola, mozzarella and sage), and "Mr. Pestato Head" (pesto sauce, potatoes, onions, feta and mozzarella).

The sides of the store's cardboard pizza boxes promise, "Extreme, not mainstream." A trademark jukebox plays randomly selected classic rock tunes.

The chain was created in 1994 by Todd Parent and Jimmy Ryan, first opening on Fillmore Street in San Francisco as a "take and bake." It has since expanded to other locations. The only difference at the Berkeley location, said one worker, is that people in Berkeley tend to come and sit down to eat, rather than ordering deliveries.

As a job, it appeals to young

men, and many of the new employees were hired from other Extreme locations. Chablé Santos, for instance, says he commutes from San Francisco, where he used to work at a different Extreme Pizza. At \$9.50 an hour, he gets to work more hours in Berkeley.

But for anyone walking in, the theme has more to do with sports than service. The walls are hung with photos of people engaged in all types of danger sports, like skateboarding, windsurfing, skiing and mountain biking. Outside, clients can lounge on a bench made of snowboards.

"I sleep extremely," offered John Meyer as he waited for his pizza Tuesday night.

Formerly the site of a Barnes & Noble espresso bar, the 1,300-square-foot space has been vacant since 1998. Others have made proposals for the site, but

none of the plans ever materialized. Extreme Pizza obtained a permit last November, and since it didn't require a different use permit, no public hearings were required to open it.

It's had a smoother rise so far than the Noe Valley site that opened in 1998. Friends of Noe Valley, a neighborhood watchdog group, objected to replacing the site, formerly a bakery, with another pizzeria.

Two other pizzerias exist within walking distance on Shattuck and a third closed recently. "In general, (the area) probably didn't need another one," said Meyer. "But here I am."

Also, it's probably the only place in town you can find spicy ginger sauce, scallions, fontina cheese and cilantro all on the same crust. Jonathan Martin, who works at the nearby Used Computer store, said he welcomes the variety during his lunch hour.

Then there are the side benefits, like a pizza-naming contest once a month, the prize being a large pizza every month for a year.

Workers also try their hand at naming special combos of the day — within limits. Bill Glazier, a delivery man, said when working for a different Extreme Pizza he was scolded for peddling "Cock Fight," a pizza covered with chicken.

According to Meyer, though, the theme could be taken still further, like teaching clients how to make pizza or holding raffles for tickets to extreme sports.

Pizza combinations may compete with clients for ingenuity, but on a recent evening workers agreed that cashier Brad Dupuis is by far the most extreme of the bunch.

At 6-foot-6, wearing black Grip Fast combat boots, a black beret and sporting red mutton chops, he didn't deny the title. His ensemble includes a .44 Remington bullet necklace, spiky dog collar-style wristwear, a barbell tonguering, and a "drunken rage at 16" tattoo that resembles a rose.

Dupuis is more amiable than his outfit would suggest, though. His only complaint is the pain he gets leaning down to punch the keys on the computer, that and "people who pay all in change."