

## ANDY STENZLER, 32

### XANDO COSI

IN 1994, ANDY STENZLER WAS YOUR typical Gen X poster boy: hip, educated, with no clue what to do with his life. The then-25-year-old had just graduated from NYU business school when he saw the slacker classic *Reality Bites* with best friend Nick Marsh. After watching the film's characters skulk around coffee shops by day and pine at home by night, Stenzler (pictured on page 64) and Marsh saw an opportunity. "We figured those people needed a better place to hang out," jokes Stenzler.

In less than a year, Stenzler and Marsh created that place—and, eventually, a chain of places. The two scoured the East Coast and raised \$400,000 to open their first day/night coffee bar in Hartford, Connecticut. The concept soon caught on with the same young hipsters that the *Reality Bites* characters were based on, and within a few years, Xando Coffee Bars became *the* hot spot for the East Coast in crowd. While Stenzler doesn't like to name drop (ahem . . .), regular patrons wouldn't be surprised to bump into Ethan Hawke lounging in an overstuffed chair, Uma Thur-

man perched on a bar stool, Allen Iverson swinging to R&B music or Julia Roberts roasting s'mores. S'mores?

"We serve them to you in a Chinese poo-poo platter with hibachi sticks and a heater," says Stenzler. "You roast the s'mores yourself right at the table. It's a good icebreaker. Nobody can stay straight-laced while they're roasting s'mores."

"I want each location to be a comfortable place that takes on its neighborhood's feel and personality," says Stenzler. "I walked into one location and saw two 70-year-old women drinking Bass ales and roasting s'mores."

Xando Cosi's motto is "From wake-up call to last call," and it's not unusual for the same businesspeople who grab cappuccinos and "squagles" (square bagels) in the morning to come back at lunch for Cosi's signature sandwiches or unwind after work with a Chai Lullaby or Mocha Kiss.

"The concept changes throughout the day," says Stenzler. "We're unique because you order at the counter during the day, but after 5 o'clock, we unveil our liquor bar and have full table service."

In 1999, Xando acquired Cosi Sandwich Co., and the marriage has been a perfect fit. This year, the New York City-based company will open 21 new locations, with sales for all 60 stores approaching \$100 million. Plans include West Coast expansion next year.

## EILEEN SPITALNY, 35 DAVID KRAVETZ, 35

### FAIRYTALE BROWNIES

AS FAIRY TALES GO, EILEEN SPITALNY and David Kravetz's story has all the ingredients of a classic. Armed with just one secret family recipe and a high school promise, Spitalny and Kravetz founded Chandler, Arizona-based Fairytale Brownies Inc. in 1992.

The two childhood friends grew up savoring the brownies Kravetz's mother made from scratch. Years later, both dissatisfied with their jobs, Kravetz and Spitalny remembered a promise they'd made in high school to start a business together someday and decided those beloved brownies were the ticket.

With no baking, manufacturing or direct-marketing experience, Kravetz and Spitalny moonlighted from a friend's catering kitchen for the first year, selling mostly through catalogs. In 1993, they moved into their own bakery and soon after went online with their Web site, [www.brownies.com](http://www.brownies.com), where they receive 25 percent of their orders today.

The summer of '94 taught the two an important lesson about getting the word out about their company. "We got a great write-up in *The New York Times* that changed that summer season forever," says Spitalny. "And it made us become very proactive in sending brownies with our press releases because of the phenomenal results we saw from [the story]."

Once people receive the company's gift-boxed gourmet brownies (now in 12 flavors), they often come back for their next gift-giving occasion—helping Fairytale Brownies sales reach \$3.75 million this year.

So what's Spitalny and Kravetz's recipe for success? "Well, most everybody loves chocolate, so that helps," Kravetz jokes. "But we know that we don't know everything, so we're not afraid to ask for help or advice. You've got to be humble."



PHOTO: COURTESY: FAIRYTALE BROWNIES INC.