

Readers say Brooklyn Water Bagel Co. is the best

By [John Tanasychuk](#), Staff Writer

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Bagels at Brooklyn Water Bagel Co., winner of the Best of South Florida: Best Bagel competition.
(Carline Jean/Sun Sentinel / March 24, 2011)

Steve Fassberg is feeling elated by the confluence of events surrounding his business.

Online readers of the Sun Sentinel voted bagels made by his Brooklyn Water Bagel Co. the best in South Florida. It's only been 17 months since he opened the first Brooklyn Water Bagel Co. store on Military Trail in Delray Beach. Outlets in Palm Beach Gardens, Sunrise and Coral Springs followed.

Two weeks ago, the first out-of-state location opened in Beverly Hills, Calif.

"We sold 800 dozen bagels our first day in Beverly Hills," Fassberg said by phone from the West Coast, where he'd gone for opening week. "People are ordering bags and bags. We were open last night until 9:30. We were supposed to close at 6."

Fassberg, who grew up in Flatbush, Brooklyn, is feeling starstruck -- Steven Spielberg, Adam Sandler and Ron Howard have been in -- and riding a wave of bagel popularity.

"I couldn't be more ecstatic, more humbled, more excited about the future and what we've accomplished," he says. "It's not quite like the Academy Awards, but I think it's the Academy Awards of bagels."

Fassberg's bagels are winners, he says, because they start with the "Brooklynized" water"

that's at the heart of his quickly expanding empire. His proprietary water filtration system, developed by Pompano Beach-based Aquathin Corp., can turn any city's water into Brooklyn water.

Water is even more important to this process, he says, because bagels are boiled before being baked.

"Everyone said it was an old wives' tale," says Fassberg. "But clearly, it's about the consistent water that goes into the product. Before I got out to California, I wasn't really sure. Having those bagels come out of the oven for the first time was a sigh of relief -- the sheen, the color, the exterior, the crispness -- it's consistent now anywhere in the world."

Indeed, Fassberg says those are the characteristics of his bagels and any good bagel. They also have to be light and fluffy inside. It's no surprise the Brooklyn Water Bagel Co. employs a director of baking operations, Brett Rothfuss, whose job is to train bakers at every location.

Bagels, once considered a strictly Jewish breakfast item, are now consumed by everyone at all times of the day. "People thought of bagels as cream cheese and lox," says Fassberg. "Not anymore."

The Brooklyn menu includes omelets, salads, soups, wraps and sandwiches that showcase the bagel's adaptability. His Scooper Melts are made with bagels that are scooped of the soft bread inside and then filled with combinations of meat, cheese, vegetables and condiments. There's a Cordon Bleu with grilled chicken, ham, Swiss and Dijon mustard. The Cuban Reuben is filled with sliced pork, ham, Swiss, pickles and yellow mustard. The Bagoli Melt is a stromboli/bagel combination: asiago bagel topped with pepperoni, sausage, marinara sauce and melted mozzarella.

Next up for Brooklyn Bagel are openings inside Terminal 3 of Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport and in Miami Beach, Boynton Beach, Lady Lake, Coral Gables, Orlando and Severna Park, Md.

"A year from now, our goal is to have 21 to 24 units open," says Fassberg.

Wherever they end up, however, residents of South Florida will always be his core customers.

"We consider them the bagel aficionados, without question," he says. "Because they're the people who lived in the Tri-State area and have a lifelong experience with the product."

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