



August 9, 2009

<http://www.pbpulse.com/dining/breakfast/2009/08/09/new-bagel-store-brings-brooklyn-home-%E2%80%93-by-the-bottle/>



New bagel store brings Brooklyn home – by the bottle

By Charles Passy | Breakfast | August 09, 2009

Photos: Inside Original Brooklyn Water Bagel Company

Venue Details

For almost as long as New Yorkers have been making their way to South Florida, the kvetch has come: Where can you find a decent bagel?

Steve Fassberg wondered the same. But the former New York deli owner-turned-South Florida mortgage broker took his quest for an authentic bagel — crusty on the outside, chewy on the inside — a step further. Now, after five years of culinary tinkering, he believes he has discovered what amounts to a holy grail — the perfect Brooklyn bagel.

It all has to do with the water.

Fassberg's new Delray Beach restaurant, the Original Brooklyn Water Bagel Co., set to open this morning, represents a curious marriage of scientific sawy and plain ol' chutzpah. Using patented technology, Fassberg transforms Florida tap water into what he claims is the equivalent of mineral water, Brooklyn-style.

And what happens when you use that water to make your dough? Bagel bliss, says Fassberg, who plans on turning his Delray store into a globally franchised concept.

"We took this myth and proved the science," said the 49-year-old entrepreneur, speaking with characteristic New York braggadocio.



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By way of Brooklyn

Indeed, the notion that New York water is what gives a New York bagel — or a slice of New York pizza — a certain unique taste and texture has long persisted in the public mind. On the popular HBO series *Entourage*, a character once kidded that the bagels were better at a particular Los Angeles locale because the water came straight from Brooklyn.

But Fassberg had no intention of importing his water. Instead, he partnered with Aquathin, a Pompano Beach-based water-purification company, on what he says proved to be a surprisingly simple solution.

First, the company figured out how to remove all the chemicals and minerals in Florida water, resulting in as pure an H₂O as possible. Then, it analyzed Brooklyn water, which comes via the Adirondack mountains in upstate New York, for its chemical and mineral content.

Finally, Aquathin devised a way to add the same New York mix of minerals to the pure H₂O. The result: A "made from scratch" New York water.

Actually, Fassberg says his water is better than the Brooklyn kind because he leaves out such less-than-desired elements as lead and chlorine.

To be sure, Fassberg has more than his share of skeptics, who doubt you can create a cocktail for New York water, much less create the perfect dough using that water.

"I thought of that years ago. ... It's not something you can do," said David Manero, the South Florida restaurateur behind *Vic & Angelo's* in Palm Beach Gardens and Delray Beach. Manero added that when he failed in his scientific attempts to spin such aquatic gold, he ended up shipping in water from New York to make his pizzas at a cost of more than \$10,000 per year.

But even if Fassberg's water and bagels are worthy replicas of the real deal, who's to say anyone outside of a few picky ex-New Yorkers will care?

"It's not going to work on a national level because people don't know the difference" between authentic and mass-market bagels, said Steven Greenberg, a New York-based retail consultant.

Such comments don't seem to faze Fassberg, who says he has invested at least \$200,000 in his bagel-making dream over the last five years.

In many ways, bagels are in Fassberg's blood. He got his start working in bagel places and delis in New York as a teen, before eventually owning ones in Queens and Long Island. When he moved to South Florida in the '90s, he continued in the business — he even attempted a drive-through deli — before moving fully into the financial world.



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Hoping for a bagel boom

Now that Fassberg is back behind a restaurant counter, he's continuing to come up with more ideas for his new eatery, which cooks its bagels in the time-honored boil-then-bake method.

Fassberg is putting his bagel production line in full view, not unlike what Krispy Kreme does with its doughnuts. He's also allowing patrons to add the "mix ins" of their choice, from veggies to smoked salmon, to their cream cheese, not unlike what Cold Stone Creamery does with its ice cream.

Oh, and he's also selling his Brooklyn water – for \$1.39 a bottle. (The bagels run 95 cents apiece.)

Perhaps just as important: Fassberg is partnering with a prominent restaurant franchising executive, Larry Feldman, who has developed more than 1,000 Subway shops. Together, the two hope to find like-minded bagel buffs to start opening Original Brooklyn Water Bagel Co. stores in 15 regions in the coming years.

And don't think Fassberg has forgotten about New York, where an old-school bagel can sometimes be hard to find.

"We want to be in Times Square," said Fassberg.

The Original Brooklyn Water Bagel Co.

*Address: 14451 S. Military Trail, Delray Beach;
(877) BAGEL-80; brooklynwaterbagels.com*

The menu: Bagels (in several varieties), water, sandwiches, entrees, specially blended coffee and more.

Grand opening: Today at 6 a.m. The first 100 customers will receive a dozen bagels, a bottled six-pack of Original Brooklyn Water and a bag of Brooklyn's Best coffee.