

Many Siblings Make Light Work

These Southwestern vendors give family business a good name

By Bethanne Kelly Patrick

They employ 35 people, manage 150 accounts, own 21 route trucks, and produce 3,500 fresh meals, desserts, and snacks every day – but to Steve and Rosemary Parisi of Stafford, Texas, the most important number is their five children – Cosmo, Jim, Joe, Stephanie (whose married name is Dodd), and Steve, Jr.

The Parisis, however, didn't stop after naming their vending company "Five Star Foods" – they have included the next generation in every way. The elder Parisis, retired educators in their early 60s, began their business nearly a quarter century ago, when they began thinking about college tuition and the best way to keep their tight-knit family together. "We're very Italian, very close," says Jim Parisi, the third of four brothers. "We built our business around our bonds."



Those bonds have been strong enough to take the company from its original two machines to over 1,000 Houston-area automated vending machines located in hospitals, school districts, manufacturing facilities, and office environments – "any kind of business that needs meals and packaged foods available around the clock," says Jim Parisi.

That means Five Star Foods also has to be ready around the clock, which is why they turned to their local SAM'S CLUB® less than a mile away, for new ideas in efficiency, value, and variety. "We're really trying to expand with more products," Jim continues.

"We did some comparison shopping, and then called Eddie, the manager of our local SAM'S CLUB, to talk about how we could help them help us."

One area in which Five Star Foods wanted guidance was ingredients for the up to 34 separate menu items prepared each day at their in-house commissary, overseen by Stephanie Parisi Dodd, a graduate of the University of Houston's Hilton School of Hotel Management, and her mother. Dodd and Rosemary Parisi rotate menus monthly depending on weather, seasonal ingredients, and their knowledge of culinary trends. From enchiladas with homemade refritos ("Mexican food is big here in Texas," laughs Parisi) to sweet-and-sour chicken to six different kinds of fruit cobbler, the Parisis use many foods in their production.

"We go over to SAM'S CLUB and walk the aisles to try and find new items," says Jim. "But we're also excited about great prices on motor oil and tires for our trucks." Parisi says the "nice people" at SAM'S CLUB make it easy to keep coming up with ideas for new purchases. But that's nothing new to the Parisi family: "All of us get along so well because of the values our parents engendered in each of us." Winners of a 1997 Baylor University Institute of Family Business award, the Parisis believe in succession. "We all have children; there are 12 grandchildren in all, ranging from 22 down to six months. We intend on growing our business into the foreseeable future." 

Business Member Profile

Business Member: The Parisis – Steve, Rosemary, Cosmo, Jim, Joe, Stephanie, and Steve Jr.

Company Name: Five Star Foods

Address: 10135 Green Ridge Street
Stafford, TX 77477

Business Member Since: 1993