

DENVER

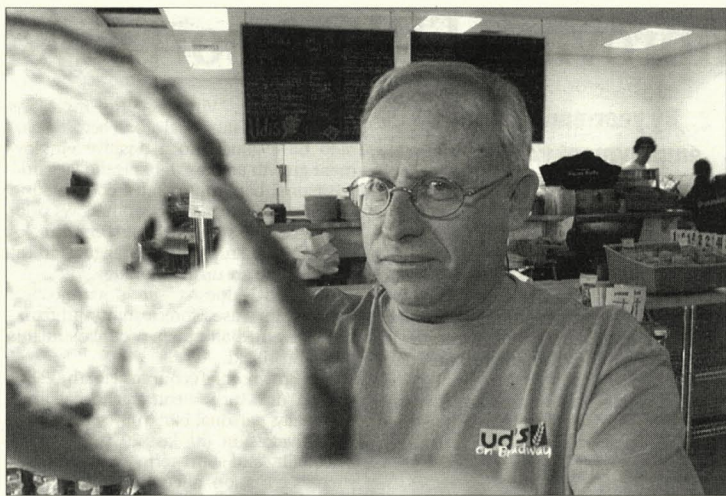
# BUSINESS JOURNAL

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## RETAIL



KATHLEEN LAVINE | BUSINESS JOURNAL

Udi Baron, founder of Udi's Bakery, is expanding his business and its products.

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## Udi becoming baron of food business

BY PAULA MOORE  
DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

Udi the Sandwich Man of Denver has added bakery owner, restaurateur and granola seller to his resumé.

Udi Baron's bakery now produces 19 varieties of bread — 11,000 loaves and rolls a week — for area stores such as Costco and Marczyk Find Foods Inc. as well as restaurants like Table 6, North, Racine's and chef Kevin Taylor's dining spots.

The Udi's on Broadway cafe at 7000-A N. Broadway in North Denver debuted in March, and Baron plans to open another restaurant at the East 29th Avenue Town Center in Denver's Stapleton neighborhood this summer. More restaurants may be in the offing.

Udi started selling his own granola six months ago as a catering sideline, and the cereal may be the beginning of a retail food business. Baron and his corporate chef, John Broening, also are looking at selling freshly made cookies, croutons, pickles, chutneys and mustards, according to Eric Clayman, Udi's marketing director.

Nine years after opening a single sandwich shop in Northglenn, Baron's food operation generated \$4 million in revenue last year.

"I started as Udi the Sandwich Man... and now we really have four businesses," Baron said.

Baron, who's originally from Israel and formerly was an economist, launched his sandwich business in 1996 at an old Mrs. Field's cookie shop. Back then, Udi made the sandwiches, and his wife, Fern, sold them.

Now the Barons run Udi the Sandwich Man Inc. with their son Etai, who uses the family's Israeli surname, Bar-on. Udi isn't just an entrepreneur anymore; he's the Udi's brand.

Fern Baron, a fifth-generation Coloradan, oversees the company's computer operations and acts as resident troubleshooter. "I do all the problem solving," she said, just as an employee asked her to do just that.

Etai Bar-on manages the bakery business.

In March, Udi's finished a 12,000-square-foot, \$2.2 million building at East 70th Avenue and Broadway in Denver that houses all its businesses. The company employs 80 people, including several chefs.

Handmade sandwiches remain a cornerstone of Udi's operation. To satisfy 3,000 corporate accounts and retailers such as Russell's, staffers make 7,000 sandwiches a week in a large, open room kept at 45 degrees to prevent food contamination.

Udi's used to get its bread from Pasquini's

Baking in Denver, but in 1996, started making its own bread to get just the taste and texture it wanted. The company uses 15 percent of the bread that comes from its two, massive Bongard ovens for its own sandwiches, and sells the rest.

Maurizio Negrini, a third-generation baker from Bologna, Italy, oversees the bakery. He formerly was with the Daily Bread bakery in Boulder, and then with Whole Foods Market Inc., which bought Daily Bread.

Negrini moved to Udi's because of the company's emphasis on handcrafted food sold locally. The baker even helps customers come up with breads to suit their needs, as he did when he and Kevin Taylor created a special lemon focaccia bread.

"Whole Foods experimented with an artisan bakery, but Whole Foods is a corporation," said Negrini, who shakes a visitor's hand with his flour-dusted hand.

The bakery's pastry chef, Yasmin Lozada-Hissom, concocted Udi's granola recipes. The cereal is mixed by hand and toasted for several hours, and comes in three varieties: original, blueberry and cranberry walnut.

"We wanted to get into products with a longer shelf life," Clayman said of the granola.

Costco has begun carrying pallets of granola, and Udi's is looking at packaging the cereal in snack-size bags for stores.

Broening, who formerly was with Denver's Brasserie Rouge restaurant, calls Udi's restaurant fare "bread cuisine," or food designed to go well with bread.

The Udi's on Broadway lunch menu features Cobb, Greek and Waldorf salads as well as hot sandwiches ranging from tuna melt on rye to barbecued pork (marinated 48 hours and smoked another eight hours) on a French roll. The cafe also serves breakfast, including pastries from its bakery.

The Stapleton restaurant will serve dinner, including beer and wine, as well as lunch, with dinner items priced at less than \$20. Broening will rely on his background in French cuisine to include sausages, patés and mousses in dishes there.

"Everything is made from scratch," Broening said. "We even make our own mayonnaise and pickles."

But even with his recent expansion, Udi, 57, hasn't completed his business' evolution. There's still more to do.

"I'm always searching for the fresh food I grew up with," Udi said. "I'm still on the same search."

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