

Upscale pizza shop opens downtown

By Tom Dalton
Staff writer

SALEM - The Upper Crust, an upscale pizza chain, has come to the North Shore.

Michael Buchhalter, the former manager of the Upper Crust on Newbury Street in Boston, has opened the first franchise North of Boston at 118 Washington St. The 50-seat restaurant with the pizza-pan ceiling and outdoor café seats is in Lappin Park at the intersection of Essex and Washington streets.

Buchhalter, 31, who grew up west of Boston, said he came to Salem to look at another location when he was shown this vacant storefront where The Phoenix School used to be. He opened during the October madness, and he couldn't be happier.

A lot of his customers, he said, have recently moved to Salem and used to go to Upper Crusts in Boston and Brookline. A lot of others, he said, are locals who like the thin-crust pizza.

"Today is our 12th day," he said earlier this week, "and we have so many repeat customers."

Upper Crust is more expensive than the average pizza shop. Slices sell from \$3.15 to \$3.50, and 18-inch pizzas range from \$15 to \$20 or more depending on toppings. Lobster, by the way, is one of the choices.

Even before coming to the city, Upper Crust had a Salem fan. Native son Jack Welch, the former GE chairman, is a regular at the Charles Street shop in Boston and gave the restaurant a plug in his book "Winning."