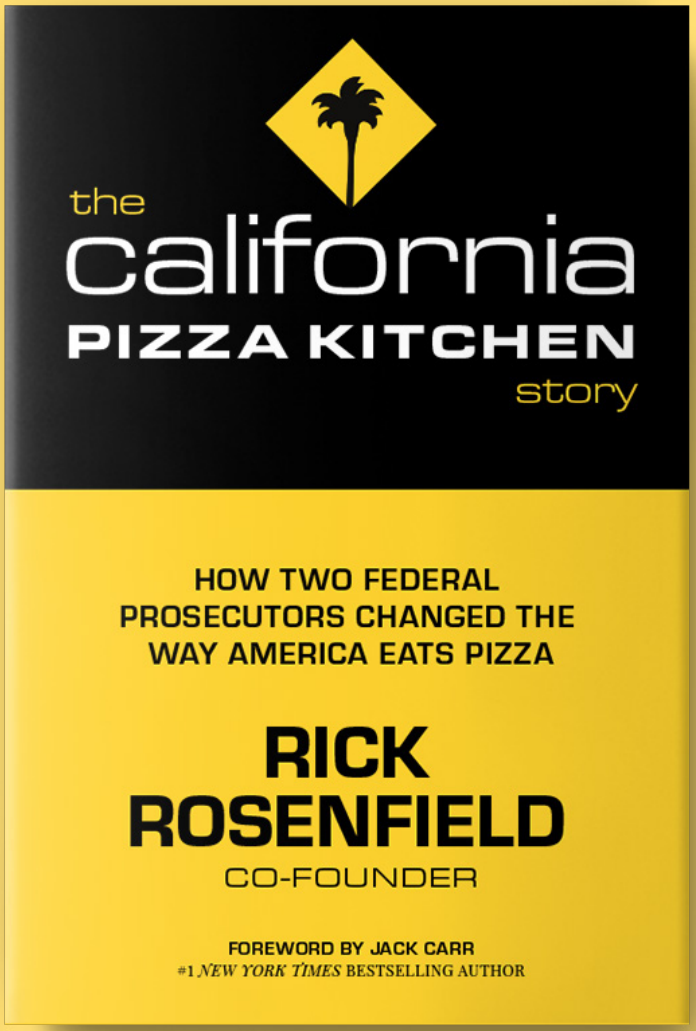


The California Pizza Kitchen Story: How Two Federal Prosecutors Changed the Way America Eats Pizza is a candid business memoir that traces the unlikely journey from federal courtrooms to the creation of one of the most influential brands in modern casual dining.

Before co-founding California Pizza Kitchen (CPK), Rick Rosenfield built his career as a federal prosecutor and defense attorney, handling cases before the US Supreme Court, prosecuting organized crime, and representing high-profile clients. In 1985, Rosenfield and his longtime partner and fellow former federal prosecutor, Larry Flax, made the radical decision to leave the law field and open a pizza restaurant in Beverly Hills. Their ambition was not simply to open a restaurant but to rethink what pizza could be, where it could be eaten, and whom it could be for.

What followed was the moment California-style pizza moved into the mainstream—with its unexpected ingredients, open kitchens, and a relaxed yet elevated dining experience—and the rapid growth of CPK from a single location into a global brand. Along the way, Rosenfield and Flax navigated skeptical bankers, explosive expansion, partnerships with major corporations, and the pressures and consequences of private equity ownership.

More than a growth story, this book reveals the human realities of entrepreneurship: partnership dynamics, culture under pressure, betrayal and resilience, and the constant tension between creativity and control. Central to CPK's success was the deliberate creation of a people-first culture, embodied in the ROCK values—Respect, Opportunity, Communication, and Kindness—and the belief that culture, not product alone, drives enduring success.

Written in a direct, personal voice, *The California Pizza Kitchen Story* is both a memoir and a practical guide, offering lessons in leadership, reinvention, and how vision and values can turn an unconventional idea into a lasting brand.

AVAILABLE JULY 21, 2026

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rick Rosenfield is a former federal prosecutor and defense attorney. He is the co-founder of California Pizza Kitchen, the restaurant brand that helped redefine how America eats pizza and reshaped modern casual dining.

Before entering the restaurant business, Rosenfield began his legal career at the US Department of Justice in Washington, DC, where he worked on cases before the US Supreme Court and the US Courts of Appeals. He later served as an assistant US attorney in Los Angeles, prosecuting major criminal cases, including organized crime matters, before transitioning into private practice representing high-profile clients.

In 1985, Rosenfield and his partner, Larry Flax, made the unconventional decision to leave the law field and open the first California Pizza Kitchen in Beverly Hills. What began as a single restaurant grew into a global brand while maintaining a distinctive culinary vision and culture

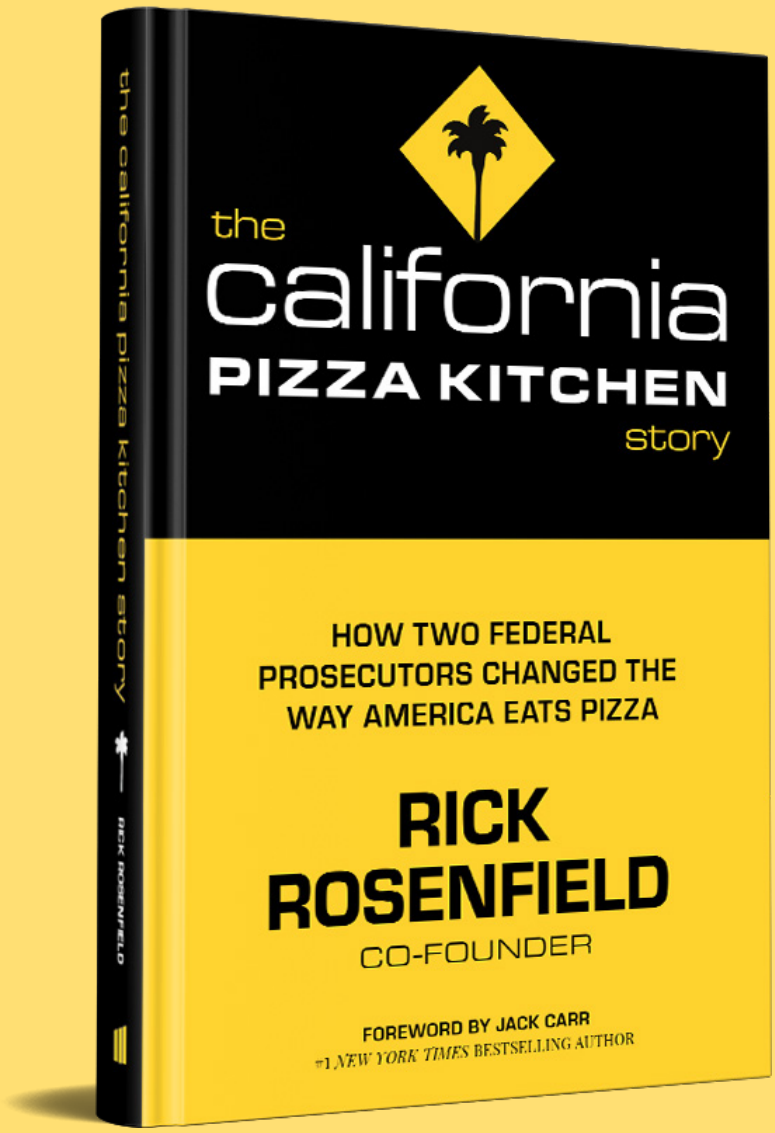
Praise for *The California Pizza Kitchen Story*

"There's something profoundly human about leaping into the unknown, trusting your instincts when reason says to stay put. Rick Rosenfield's memoir captures that spirit. Leaving the familiar is never easy, but as Rick shows, the biggest successes often begin with the courage to chase an idea that simply feels right. This isn't just a story about pizza—it's about purpose, persistence, and the beauty of taking risks that can change everything."

***—THOMAS KELLER,* THE FRENCH LAUNDRY**

"From the Supreme Court and mob trials to creating one of America's most iconic restaurant brands, this is storytelling at its best."

—JACK CARR, #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR* OF *THE TERMINAL LIST



Rick Rosenfield is available for interviews, features, book events, speaking engagements, and appearances.

To learn more, visit:
rickrosenfield.com

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