



Brooklyn-based Damascus Bakery to expand operations in Newark

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By [Sarah Portlock](#) / [The Star-Ledger](#)



John Munson/The Star-Ledger Edward Mafoud, the owner of Damascus Bakery in Brooklyn, poses by the assembly line of whole wheat flatbread roll-ups. The company is expanding to Newark later this year.

A family-run, third-generation Middle Eastern bakery in Brooklyn will expand to Newark in the coming months, after receiving more than \$9.9 million in grants, loans and a bond from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority.

Damascus Bakery first started making pita breads in downtown Brooklyn in 1930 and now bakes pizza crusts and gourmet flatbreads, and distributes its products nationwide. Many of the wraps at Starbucks and Costco use Damascus bread, said Ed Mafoud, who owns the bakery with his brother David.

But demand is outpacing their 20,000-square-foot facility in Brooklyn, and Damascus has spent the last four years considering additional sites throughout New York, New Jersey, including Secaucus, and Pennsylvania. Last week, the bakery closed on a 117,000-square-foot facility near Newark Liberty International Airport, Mafoud said.

"Newark came out with flying colors for us," he said, pointing to the site's prime location, nearby labor force and the warm welcome he felt from the city administration.

"We're excited, we love Newark — there's a lot going on there," Mafoud added.

Damascus first applied for state financial incentives in 2006, and has since received a \$7.75 million tax-exempt bond and two loans from the Local Development Financing Fund Program totaling \$1.75 million, according to the EDA. The company also received a grant from the Business Employment Incentive Program for \$414,000, and under its terms will create 180 new jobs at the facility.

Buying and renovating the plant will cost nearly \$6.3 million, according to its EDA application, and Damascus has already purchased nearly \$5.7 million worth of equipment and machinery that is currently in storage. Renovations will begin as soon as the necessary permits are secured and Damascus could be baking bread as soon as the end of this year, Mafoud said.

"This is a much bigger site than we have now, so we have great aspirations for this site and for this building," he said.

The bakery will also receive a \$550,000 relocation assistance grant from the city of Newark in exchange for interviewing and hiring Newark residents, said Adam Zipkin, chief of staff for the city's Department of Economic and Housing Development.

"We are very excited to have Damascus Bakery relocating to Newark, and specifically the 180 or more full-time food manufacturing jobs that they will be bringing us," Zipkin said. "It is exactly the type of business we are looking to attract."

In the last year, other food manufacturers have opened in Newark, including the world headquarters of Manischewitz, a center for ShopRite's distributor, Wakefern Food Corporation, and Bartlett Dairy, whose clients include Starbucks.

"It's indicative of Newark becoming known as an attractive location for these types of food manufacturing jobs, and industrial jobs generally," Zipkin said.

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