



An Interview with Samantha Rincione, **Crave Hot Dogs & Barbecue** Co-Founder and CEO: 'We've Made it Our Mission to Deliver a Restaurant that has Menu and Atmosphere Where there's Something for Everyone and You Leave Happy, Not Hungry'

"One of our features that keep our customers coming back time and time again, in addition to our delicious BBQ and grilled dogs, is our self-serve beer wall."

Crave Hot Dogs & Barbecue is a unique fast-casual barbecue and hot dog restaurant that offers barbecue sandwiches, plates, and sliders along with 100 percent all-beef hot dogs, brats, and sausages, grilled to perfection. It also offers other delicious favorites such as barbecue tacos, mac n brisket sandwiches, jumbo chicken wings, loaded tater tots, etc. Top your hot dogs and brats your way with an array of over 20 Crave-offered toppings and of course add baked fries, mac n cheese, beans, or coleslaw.

Crave is always looking for franchise partners throughout the U.S. as well as internationally. If you want to own your own business, encourage creativity, and still have time for your family, Crave could be the opportunity you've been waiting for. With multiple revenue streams, a delicious menu and easy operation, Crave is an outstanding opportunity for any level of entrepreneur.

Crave was established in 2018 and is based in Long Island, NY.

Samantha Rincione, Crave Hot Dogs & Barbecue Co-Founder and CEO, spoke exclusively to The Silicon Review. Below is an excerpt.

What motivated you to enter the fast-food restaurant business?

I have had a passion for the restaurant industry ever since I was a child. In being a franchisee in my younger years, which I enjoyed very much, I knew I had to experience the other side and become a franchisor. That would give me the opportunity to create a franchise system and company where I could fill the gaps I saw in being a franchisee, and have what I felt was a top-

notch company with all systems in place. The experience I had as a franchisee helped me in creating the foundation of this company today.

One of the most common problems restaurant owners face is the menu. A good menu is a balancing act. People need to know what your restaurant is about – do you keep your menu aligned with your restaurant's unique proposition?

Absolutely! We're constantly updating the menu, improving our offerings, and listening to customers' feedback. All of our menu items are in line with our core demographic. We also run monthly LTO items. Many times, those items become permanent menu items due to customer reaction and demand, such as our Mac n Brisket sandwich. The menu also must have something for everyone in a family.

Samantha Rincione: A Bankable Leader

Samantha Rincione has been an integral force in the franchising sector for over 15 years. Currently, she is the **co-founder** of Crave Hot Dogs and BBQ with her husband. She is also the **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** and **Chief Operations Officer (COO)** of the company. Samantha was the founder and CEO of Emerging Franchises, a franchise development firm, which developed and built franchise companies from the ground up, specializing in emerging brands. Emerging Franchises was responsible for creating franchise operations systems and growing brands from one and in some cases hundreds of units.

Samantha was also previously the largest multi-unit franchisee with Red Mango, Smoothie Factory, and Red Mango Café, owning and operating 10 stores on Long Island, NY. During her tenure as a multi-unit franchisee, Samantha's stores were utilized as corporate training stores for potential franchisees. She has been recognized for her outstanding operations skills which ultimately led to multiple franchised units sold within the Red Mango Franchise Network.

Samantha has also served as Vice President and Director of Marketing for UFood Grill, a healthy fast-casual concept. During Samantha's time at UFood Grill, the UFood Brand secured #22 spot on the "Top 100" Mover's and Shaker's Award by Fast Casual Magazine. She possesses vast knowledge in franchise operations, franchise sales, restaurant operations, marketing, social media, restaurant development and training, and much more. Samantha was recognized by QSR Magazine as an excellent operator and received the MVP influencer award in 2013. Crave Hot Dogs and BBQ has also received multiple awards including part of the 'Fran-Tastic 500', #16 on the 'Top Movers and Shakers' list, best southern BBQ franchise in 2019, and many more!



Samantha Rincione
Co-founder
CEO & COO

For example, in addition to BBQ and hot dogs we have salads and vegan/gluten free items. We make sure that our menu has offerings that can be offered for takeout, delivery, and curbside as well as dine in. It's important to be able to keep our product quality, but allow customers to get their food whatever they choose.

A unique selling point offers your customers a

feeling that enables them to remember you long after they are gone. How do you manage to make your amazing food and service your unique selling point and connect emotionally with your customers?

One of the items that keep our customers coming back in addition to our delicious BBQ and grilled dogs is our self-serve beer wall.

Every store has a self-serve beer wall with 24-32 local craft beers on tap. Each location picks their options that are offered and they come from local breweries. In some cases, we even have wine, cider or liquor on tap. It's a way to connect to the community and expand breweries reach beyond their location. We also have a loyalty point system for our customers. They can use our app to order food and collect points to earn rewards such as free food. The interior of

our restaurant is also very modern and inviting to our guests. Our participation in each community is also second to none, belonging to the chamber of commerce, PTA catering, sponsoring local youth sport's leagues etc.

How efficient is your supply chain management? Explain.

Extremely efficient! We work with Sysco on our product and menu innovation. I have personally met every individual vendor and tasted their product before allowing it to go on our menu. Their items go through Sysco so it's easily distributed to our locations. Sysco has been great about bringing in products for us and assisting in procurement. We also have a director of logistics in the house that oversees all the products and supply chains for each individual location.

With hundreds of new restaurants coming out almost every day, people have a lot of options to choose the best that can tickle their taste buds. Explain what makes customers come to Crave Hot Dogs & Barbecue for more?

For starters, our food is top-notch quality. We only use 100 percent

all-beef grilled Hot Dogs. Our BBQ meat is smoked to perfection and customers constantly comment on the quality and freshness. In addition to our product, the Crave environment is extremely welcoming. There are TVs throughout the restaurant and many sports games for adults and other shows for kids are constantly going. Most stores have patios and feature cornhole tournaments or giant connect four and checkers. Inside there are board games etc. The restaurants typically host Trivia nights; kids eat free on Wednesdays and have \$2 hot dogs on Tuesdays. The loyalty program encourages customers to come back to earn more points to get free products and the self-serve beer wall, well that speaks for itself. All in all, it's a very family-friendly restaurant and has something for everyone.

Franchising is a good strategic business move, but it can dilute the quality and reputation of a business?

How do you make sure that your franchisee has the potential to keep up your name?

All franchisees have to go through an approval process. We, as a company, have to take into consideration their finances,

experience, and passion, and motivation for the brand. Someone needs to possess these qualities to be successful. We believe in our brand and its success and want our franchisees to feel the same way and see a future with us. We have systems in place for all operational items which franchisees have to follow, and recommendations for other operational procedures. We take all the suggestions brought forth from our franchisees seriously and are very open to modifying systems if we feel it makes sense for both the franchisee and the franchisor. We also conduct weekly calls with the franchisees to discuss upcoming events and updates, and quarterly we review performance and meet with franchisees to discuss.

Trust is a difficult attribute to measure and a delicate dynamic to maintain. How do you maintain this with your customers?

We do our best to deliver our customers nothing but the best quality and service we can offer. In the restaurant business, things are not always perfect and situations do arise. Any issue on the store level is typically handled by the manager or franchisee directly. We always have and will do our best for our customers.



At Crave, we strive to give our customers not only excellent food but a fun experience.”