



International
Foodservice
Manufacturers
Association

Shaping the Future of Foodservice

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PRESS RELEASE

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Buffalo Wild Wings' Sally Smith Wins IFMA's 2009 Gold Plate Award

Chicago, Illinois – At the International Foodservice Manufacturers Association's (IFMA's) 55th annual Gold & Silver Plate Awards Celebration, **Sally Smith**, President and CEO, Buffalo Wild Wings, Inc., in Minneapolis, Minnesota, was named the 2009 Foodservice Operator of the Year. The announcement was made May 18 by IFMA Awards Committee Chairman **Norb Mayrhofer**, Vice President – Global, Procter & Gamble Professional™, before a crowd of nearly 600 foodservice leaders and their guests.

In accepting the award, Smith said, “I want to say to my team ‘woo hoo.’ That’s our internal ‘wow.’ I’m rarely speechless, as my team will tell you. But I am speechless now!” Smith thanked her team, her restaurant managers and her NRA colleagues. She also thanked her husband, Craig, her son, Phillip, and her daughter, Jana, and closed by saying “I am blessed to be part of a giving industry.”

Listed as one of *Fortune* magazine's 2008 Top 100 Fastest Growing Companies, Buffalo Wild Wings, Inc. has earned the attention and respect of the foodservice community and consumers across the country. As Buffalo Wild Wings' President & CEO, Smith is credited as the driving force behind the company's incredible growth. When she joined the Buffalo Wild Wings team, the struggling company had 35 locations and was on the brink of collapse. Smith turned the company around in a few short years, and today it has over 580 full-service restaurants in 40 states, with a total annual sales volume of \$1.2 billion.

Buffalo Wild Wings' phenomenal profit and sales growth can be attributed to Smith's impressive financial background and her creative business savvy. In addition to putting the company on solid financial footing, Smith worked diligently to orchestrate another watershed moment in her career – unveiling the company's extremely successful IPO in 2003. Going public

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allowed the company to raise over \$50 million to help grow and revitalize the brand. Since launching the IPO, the company has expanded its annual revenue an average of over 28 percent. The growth continues, with revenue up 28 percent in 2008. Company same-store-sales increased 5.9 percent for company-owned locations in 2008 and 2.8 percent for franchised locations. Today, Buffalo Wild Wings has no debt, a healthy balance sheet and millions saved to finance future growth.

In addition to solid finances, Smith also has worked tirelessly to make sure guest satisfaction is a top priority at each location. Serving upwards of 450,000 meals per day, Buffalo Wild Wings focuses on creating a great guest experience to continue its success. Known throughout the industry as a risk taker, Smith replaced the counter-only service found at most Buffalo Wild Wings with “choice service,” by combining fast food and sit-down service for a unique experience. Choice service allowed guests to customize each dining experience to meet their needs, offering the speed of counter service or a longer, more relaxed dine-in experience. Smith then went on to develop company-owned restaurants that followed this new “choice service” format. Franchisees quickly became supportive and joined in the revitalization of the company. Today, Buffalo Wild Wings is focused on providing a unique, game-day-like, full-service dining experience for its guests.

By uniting the franchisees and increasing guest satisfaction, Smith was well on her way to creating a unique brand that compelled the customer to come back. Under her direction, aided brand awareness took more than a 30 percent leap and increased to a high of 72 percent. To fully accomplish her goal of heightened brand awareness, Smith expanded Buffalo Wild Wings’ advertising to include its first fully national TV campaign. Completely tuned into her target audience, Smith teamed up with the ESPN networks to showcase their new branding campaign “You Have to Be Here[®].” Buffalo Wild Wings continues to expand its national media presence in premier sporting events like March Madness, NFL games and the BCS Championship game.

These accomplishments also have earned Smith and Buffalo Wild Wings industry-wide recognition from many prestigious organizations. In 2007, Technomic, Inc., listed Buffalo Wild Wings as one of the 10 Fastest Growing Casual Dining Restaurant Chains, and in that same year the company ranked 27th on *Forbes*’ list of the 200 Best Small Companies. *Fast Casual* magazine put Buffalo Wild Wings as number six on its 2006 Top 100 Movers & Shakers list. In 2005, *Restaurants & Institutions* named Smith Executive of the Year and listed Buffalo Wild Wings as number 64 on its Top 400 Chains for that year. And in 2003, the company received the

Golden Chain Award from *NRN*.

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In addition, Smith was named Ernst and Young's Entrepreneur of the Year 2001 for Minnesota and the Dakotas.

Smith was chosen as the Gold Plate Award recipient by secret ballot from among nine Silver Plate Award winners who were selected in February by a jury of chief trade press editors and past Gold & Silver Plate Award winners in nine categories of operations. The Silver Plate Awards are the industry's highest operator recognition of innovation, dedication, leadership and extraordinary contributions to the foodservice community.

IFMA is a leading trade association comprising more than 400 of the world's most prestigious food, equipment and supply manufacturers in the \$610 billion foodservice industry, as well as related marketing service organizations, foodservice trade publications, distributors and brokers. IFMA's mission is to shape the future of foodservice by creating an environment for positive change and actionable solutions benefiting manufacturers and their foodservice channel partners.

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Cutline: [Sally Smith Wins 2009 Gold Plate Award](#)

Sally Smith (center), Buffalo Wild Wings, Inc., Minneapolis, Minnesota, receives the 2009 Gold Plate Award from IFMA Chairman Tom Sampson (left), President, Kraft North America Foodservice, and IFMA President & CEO Michael J Licata (right).