

Buddy's bar-b-q Plans Aggressive Franchise Growth After 53 Years of Success

KNOXVILLE, TN, UNITED STATES, July 9, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- For more than 53 years, Buddy's bar-b-q has been serving Hickory-smoked bar-b-q that keeps families coming back for more. Now, the beloved East Tennessee staple is ready to share their legacy by expanding its franchise footprint across the Southeast and Midwest.

Since 1972, Buddy's bar-b-q has been a cherished gathering place where friends and families can enjoy authentic bar-b-q smoked on-site daily, along with mouthwatering sides such as their homemade Hushpuppies served tableside. This sense of nostalgia and tradition, highlighted by their 53-year-old family-owned recipes, is what franchisees bring to their communities.



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"Buddy's is, and has always been, a business that cherishes tradition," said Mark Lemoncelli, CEO of Buddy's bar-b-q. "In 2019, my brother-in-law and I purchased Buddy's from my father-in-law, and to this day, we are proud to call Buddy's bar-b-q a third-generation, family-owned business."

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When you join the Buddy's family, you're never alone — we're with you every step of the journey.”

*Mark Lemoncelli, CEO of
Buddy's bar-b-q*

With a strong emphasis on unit economics and a culture rooted in family, Buddy's offers “A Smokin' Good Deal™” for franchisees looking to invest in a concept with a rich history and a value-driven model built for sustained

success, with the top 25% of locations averaging annual sales of \$2,583,830.

“We believe we have an extremely unique business model, as 68% of our business is off premises with 44% of sales coming through our drive-thrus,” added Lemoncelli. “All our locations

have bar-b-q pits on-site to emphasize our dedication to freshness, and we developed a 2,400-square-foot prototype that, when combined with our value-driven model, is truly a marketplace differentiator."

Buddy's bar-b-q is actively seeking franchise partners to bring its Southern comfort to high-demand markets in the Southeast and Midwest, including Nashville, TN; Lexington, KY; Tri-Cities, TN (Bristol, Kingsport and Johnson City); Atlanta, GA; Louisville, KY; Huntsville, AL; Cincinnati, OH, and surrounding markets.

"At Buddy's, we recognize the importance of smart growth, which is why we plan to build out our concept strategically around our home base of Knoxville," said Dom Paiotti, franchise development coordinator for Buddy's bar-b-q. "We are beyond excited to share our unique bar-b-q concept with these wonderful cities in our region."

From the initial inquiry to the grand opening, Buddy's bar-b-q provides franchisees with the training, marketing and operational guidance they need to thrive. Buddy's bar-b-q has a comprehensive support team and direct access to their owners for any assistance needed.

Several key members of Buddy's pit crew have been with the company since the 1980s, including Brad Wantland, who has served for 16 years and now leads training; Sandy Hayes, with 40 years of experience as a regional manager; and Sonya Paris, who has been with the company for 36 years and currently serves as a regional manager. Together, they bring 92 years of expertise to help franchisees succeed and feel confident that they will be fully supported by the Buddy's family every step of the way, ensuring the growth and success of their locations.

"Our team is committed to standing beside our franchise partners at every step," Lemoncelli added. "When you join the Buddy's family, you're never alone — we're with you every step of the journey."

"We have 14 corporate stores, which allows us to perfect our concept and have first-hand knowledge in daily operations and customer feedback," added Paiotti. "We currently have five franchise stores, and this is the first time in Buddy's history we are aggressively pursuing franchise expansion. We are seeking multi-unit operators and multi-unit multi-brand operators (MUMBOs) who have an existing portfolio in the markets we have identified."

For anyone ready to bring "A Smokin' Good Deal™" to their neighborhood and join a brand that's been serving smiles for over five decades, visit Buddysbarbq.com/franchising to learn more about available territories and how to get started. For more information on Buddy's bar-b-q, please visit Buddysbarbq.com.

ABOUT BUDDY'S BAR-B-Q

Serving guests since 1972, Buddy's bar-b-q is a Tennessee favorite. The Buddy's Family operates

with their original philosophy of treating customers as if they are guests in their own home. In 1966, Buddy invested in his wife, LaMuriel's, energy and talent by helping her become the owner of her first restaurant, the Pixie Drive Inn in Seymour, Tennessee.

People would drive for hours for their country buffet, and business doubled in a year. LaMuriel and Buddy decided it was time to find their specialty, and bar-b-q from their former home state of Alabama was what they were craving. They just couldn't find bar-b-q in East Tennessee that suited their taste, so they created their own. Buddy soon left the finance business and joined LaMuriel in her newfound bar-b-q ambitions. With the help of their guests, they perfected the taste that would define Buddy's. Everything was a Buddy's original, from the dry rub and bar-b-q sauce to the delicious sides and desserts. The first store with Buddy's name opened in 1972 at 5806 Kingston Pike in West Knoxville and has remained open at that location for over fifty years.

From those humble beginnings, Buddy's bar-b-q became the go-to dining spot at the 1982 World's Fair, and the addition of new locations was rapid as people began to know Buddy's as a Tennessee bar-b-q tradition. In 1988, Buddy Smothers was recognized as Restaurateur of the Year and was elected President of the Tennessee Restaurant Association. Following Buddy's death in 1992, his three children took over the restaurant operations and the business flourished winning numerous regional awards and gaining popularity which resulted in more new restaurants. Currently, Buddy's next generation and their extended families are at the helm and are poised for further success and expansion while maintaining the qualities and values that the bar-b-q restaurant is known for.

For information on franchising opportunities at Buddy's, please contact Dom Paiotti at DomP@buddysbarbq.com. For more information on Buddy's bar-b-q, please visit Buddysbarbq.com.

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