Craig HALEY

CEO / SMOKEY MO'S BBQ

Craig Haley serves as CEO of Smokey Mo's BBQ, a Texas-born fast-casual barbecue brand with more than 25 years of history serving communities across the state. He brings a long history of leadership in successful Texas barbecue operations, including his time at K&N Management, where he rose from general manager to chief operating officer and oversaw operations for several Rudy's Bar-B-Q locations. Since stepping into the role at Smokey Mo's, he has focused on strengthening the brand's operational foundation while positioning it for long-term, sustainable growth.

Throughout his career, Craig has built extensive experience in restaurant operations, team development and multi-unit leadership. His background in Texas barbecue has given him a unique perspective on both the traditions that define the category and the operational discipline required to succeed in an increasingly competitive environment.

Under Craig's leadership, Smokey Mo's has continued investing in restaurant development, remodels, technology upgrades and operational improvements designed to enhance both the guest and team member experience. His approach centers on the fundamentals that have defined the brand since its founding: quality food, friendly service and strong relationships within the communities Smokey Mo's serves.

Today, Smokey Mo's operates 22 locations across Texas, with additional restaurants in development. The brand continues to invest in areas like catering, digital ordering and restaurant modernization while remaining committed to its identity as a neighborhood barbecue concept with deep roots in Texas communities.

As CEO, Craig continues to guide Smokey Mo's through its next chapter, balancing operational excellence with strategic growth while staying focused on the neighborhood barbecue experience that has been central to the brand's success for more than two decades.

What was your very first job? When I turned 16, I got a job at Kroger, where I worked as a sacker and a cashier.

What's your favorite menu item at Smokey Mo's? I love a simple three-meat plate. To me, it's the traditional—and best—way to enjoy barbecue: three sliced meats and two sides. My go-to order is pork belly burnt ends, brisket, sausage, potato salad and green beans.

What's your favorite cuisine aside from Smokey Mo's menu? I really do love a ton of different kinds of cuisine. If I must choose one, I'd have to pick Tex-Mex.

Who inspires you as a leader? My biggest inspiration as a leader is my grandfather, Lyndel Haley. He came from a small town and had a very humble upbringing during the Great Depression. He was kind and loving, but he was also fair, unwavering in his values and committed to doing "right by everyone". He led our family through trying times, and yet we always came out stronger because of it.

What is one piece of advice every restaurant executive should hear? I remind myself of this often because I need to hear it, too: our culture and ethos—the difference between who we say we are and who we truly are—will ultimately determine our success. Everything else follows from that.

What are some of your interests outside of work? I enjoy fishing, watching Texas A&M sports, playing golf and, most importantly, spending time with my wife, kids and grandson.

SMOKEY MO'S BBQ