

WELCOMING 2016
TRENDS THIS YEAR

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ROOSTERS CROSSES THE FIELD FOR A NEW LEVEL OF FANS

Behind the Official Wing Sponsor of Ohio State Athletics

FEATURE
page

6

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Sponsor of Ohio State Athletics



pg 4 | DEPARTMENT UPDATES



pg 10 | WHAT'S HOT IN 2016

DEPARTMENTS

- pg 2 *A Word from the CEO*
- pg 3 *Food for Thought*
- pg 4 *Department Updates*
- pg 19 *New Members*
- pg 20 *Member Benefits*

FEATURES

- pg 10 *NRA's 2016 Top Food Trends*
Looking forward — and back — at food trends
- pg 15 *Dietary Guidelines*
Making helpful food choices
- pg 17 *Ohio Restaurant Industry at a Glance*
Statistics, facts and figures

Roosters Crosses the Field for a New Level of Fans

Behind the **OFFICIAL WING SPONSOR**
of Ohio State Athletics

BY NATALIE WALSTON



Many companies try to get their products in front of fans of The Ohio State University. For Roosters, becoming the Official Wing Sponsor of the Ohio State Department of Athletics was made possible by fans' love of their food and Roosters' existing relationship with OSU.

It also didn't hurt to have a 27-foot-long food truck called the Road Show that has been a staple at Ohio State home football games.

The Roosters Road Show is a fully equipped, stainless steel restaurant on wheels with its own HVAC system, fryers, coolers, freezers and a grill. Being an institution at all the home football games and a partner with IMG sports marketing at Ohio State, Roosters was afforded the opportunity to open locations in the Schottenstein Center and Ohio Stadium, more commonly known as "The 'Shoe." They currently have two spots in the Schott and one in the south stands at The Shoe.

The company boasts a growing 35 locations in Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia. Roosters also has partnerships with the University of Dayton, professional sports teams and local sports teams for students and adult leagues.

"We work with everyone," said Nicole Cox, director of marketing and public relations for Roosters. "We receive multiple donation requests a week, and strive to contribute to each and every one of them."

One way that's done is through Fun Cards,

which allows an organization to sell discount cards for 10-percent off each purchase at the restaurant. Organizations sell the cards for \$10 and keep 100 percent of the profit while Roosters enjoys increased restaurant traffic.

"It's a win-win," Cox said.

The story of Roosters

Bob and Corrine Frick opened the first Roosters in 1988 on N. Main Street in Dayton. Bob was a teacher, coach and trainer who developed the signature sauces and recipes.

They expanded to Columbus, bringing on Dan Ponton as a partner and CEO-president. The Fricks exited the businesses 22 years ago. Today, Roosters is an employee-owned company with options for managers to buy in. There are close to 1,300 corporate employees. *Columbus Business First* recently ranked Roosters as one of the top 25 employers in Central Ohio.

"Every single employee here has started as a dishwasher or hostess," Ponton said. "We have 40 employees who've been here 15 years or longer, and probably another 15 employees with 20 or more years of service."

Cox started as a hostess at Roosters 12 years ago. Once she earned her college degree, she came back to the restaurant to start its marketing and public relations program.

"You never want to leave; that's what I love about the company," she said. "Our culture is focused on supporting one another and

"You never want to leave; that's what I love about the company. Our culture is focused on supporting one another and showing appreciation. In turn, our guests leave with a smile."

—Nicole Cox

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

supports us and we want to do the same for them. Supporting our employees and guests is a philosophy very important to our culture and the foundation of our company.”

—Nicole Cox

The walls at Roosters locations are dotted with many plaques and awards for outstanding community service. Roosters has been a state finalist for the National Restaurant Association’s *Good Neighbor Award*, which honors restaurants for outstanding community service and involvement. This award highlights the positive contributions restaurants make in their local neighborhoods each and every day.

While the company gives back on a daily basis, its main charity is the Buckeye Cruise for Cancer benefitting the Urban and Shelley Meyer Fund for Cancer Research and The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute.

Roosters and The Roosters Foundation

Nicole Cox (right) and the Roosters team present a check to Urban and Shelley Meyer (middle) for the Urban and Shelley Meyer Fund’s Buckeye Cruise for Cancer.



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PHOTO COURTESY OF ROOSTERS



continue to donate and give back an excess of \$1 million a year to the local community and charitable organizations, including Ronald McDonald House Charities, Second and Seven Foundation, and Nationwide Children's Hospital. In 2015, Roosters and the foundation donated to more than 185 charities.

"As a company, it's very important to us to give back to our local community," Cox said. "Our community supports us and we want to do the same for them. Supporting our employees and guests is a philosophy very important to our culture and the foundation of our company."

Wrap-up

As Roosters expands, their menu has expanded as well. On every table at participating locations is a test food menu that diners can order from.

"Some of the wing recipes and food items have been developed by our employees," Ponton said.

Customers have the most say of what goes into the menu as Roosters gathers data and keeps the most popular items, chucking the not-so-popular fare.

In addition to wings, you can find healthier options like grilled chicken and a variety of salads. All of Roosters chicken is fresh, never frozen, and cooked to order.

"Our customer base is 50/50 male and female," he said. "People may think we're just fried food, but we're not."

Meanwhile, requests for franchises continue to flood in — from locations as far away as India and London.

Growth will continue, but Ponton says they scrutinize every franchise request to control quality.

"We're working on some things right now to accelerate growth in a controlled manner. We're creating a lot of jobs, which we love," Ponton said with a smile. ¶



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