Big O' Smokehouse Expands Local Reach Through Meijer

Big O' Smokehouse has been handcrafting smoked fish and sausage in the Grand Rapids, Mich. area for more than 25 years. The family-owned business, now in its third generation, is known for products like summer sausage, salmon jerky, and whitefish dip, all made with simple ingredients and a focus on quality.

Grandpa O' and his son, Keith Osterhaven, started Big O' Smokehouse in 1997, and Keith's son, Bruce, now leads the company. Bruce's daughter Ellie manages the operations, and Kendra Higgins leads sales and marketing.

Although Big O' Smokehouse had focused on food service for much of its history, the team saw an opportunity to expand through retail. When they looked for the right partner to help take that step, they set their sights on a longtime neighbor — Meijer.

"We're proud to be part of the local Meijer endcap program," Kendra told us. "That visibility, in addition to places like Bridge Street Market in Grand Rapids, helped us grow in ways we didn't expect."

This partnership took off after Kendra reached out to a friend, who introduced her to the Meijer Supplier Relationship team. After a tour and product tasting with Meijer, the opportunity to partner became a reality.

"The Meijer team looked at our lineup and said, 'This is a perfect fit,'" Kendra said. "Within a week, we were in 47 stores on the east side of the state."

Today, Big O' products are available in more than 65 Meijer stores across Michigan. Their shelf placement, including spots next to other local favorites, has helped them stand out.

"Honestly, we didn't expect them to move that fast, especially at a higher price point," Kendra said. "But the response blew us away."

Working with Meijer has helped Big O' learn more about reporting, inventory, and data tools while working within a community of like-minded local vendors.

"Meijer talks to you like you're a person, not just a vendor," Kendra said. "They've helped us think about long-term opportunities, like private label options or how we might work within the Meijer seafood brand."

Being on our shelves has also created opportunities with other retailers. Kendra said several new accounts came from people discovering Big O' at Meijer.

The company sources ingredients from other Michigan producers, including maple syrup from nearby Twisted Tap and local honey for its salmon jerky. All products are made without nitrates, MSG, or fillers.

"At the end of the day, we care about quality," Kendra said.

We're proud to partner with Big O' Smokehouse and to continue supporting local businesses that bring something special to our communities.

Additional assets available online: Photos (1)