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Sweet Baby Ray's Barbecue Restaurant offers a distinctive vision of authentic high-quality Chicago-style barbecue; An unbridled barbecue passion and a unique team of culinary professionals create the definitive Chicago rendition

No one is more passionate about great barbecue than Dave (aka Sweet Baby Ray) Raymond and his partner, Mike O'Brien, owners of Sweet Baby Ray's Restaurant in Elk Grove Village (800 E. Higgins Rd., Elk Grove Village, Ill.; 847-437-9555).

/24-7PressRelease/ - ELK GROVE VILLAGE, IL, May 15, 2008 — For barbecue lovers, barbecue isn't simply a cuisine, it's a passion. No one is more passionate about great barbecue than Dave (aka Sweet Baby Ray) Raymond and his partner, Mike O'Brien, owners of Sweet Baby Ray's Restaurant in Elk Grove Village (800 E. Higgins Rd., Elk Grove Village, Ill.; 847-437-9555). "Barbecue is about having fun," says Dave. "If you're not having fun, you're not having great barbecue."

Dave, Mike and their unique, professionally trained culinary team have great fun every day. That fun translates into serving hundreds of customers daily both at the restaurant and through private catering events. What most people don't realize is that, behind the smiles and laughter, their barbecue expertise comes from their deep understanding of what goes into barbecue quality. They have developed distinctive, out-of-the-ordinary recipes, source the best ingredients, procure the best cooking equipment and then prepare the food in the painstaking, time consuming manner that is required to produce the Sweet Baby Ray's signature barbecue.

While the name is familiar in most Chicago households, the restaurant, Sweet Baby Ray's has only been open since December 2007. Friends since high school, O'Brien and Raymond are dedicated to applying their years of barbecue experience and business savvy to provide the best barbecue dining experience possible for their enthusiastic customers.

Sweet Baby Ray's is named for the nationally known barbecue sauce that was created in 1982 by Dave's brother, Larry. The sauce has become the second best selling barbecue sauce in the United States. "The name is who we are, but we are more than just a name," states Dave. His personal dedication to barbecue is easily explained with his trips around the country to sample each region's take on authentic barbecue.

There are four key accepted styles of barbecue: Carolina, Memphis, Texas and Kansas City. The goal of Dave and O'Brien is to put Chicago style barbecue on the map. "Sweet Baby Ray's is an expression of our distinctive barbecue vision," says O'Brien. "It's our version of what we know to be authentic high-quality Chicago barbecue."

Chicago Style Barbecue

Authentic hickory smoked meats have been smoked in Chicago since the days of the stockyards when Chicago was known as the "hog butcher to the world." Chicago's barbecue joints have developed and evolved from Southerners bringing what they know about barbecue, based on where they're from, and expanding their knowledge in Chicago.

Over the years, the Sweet Baby Ray's team has learned the barbecue preferences of the Windy City patrons. Chicagoans love baby back ribs. To satisfy this craving, Sweet Baby Ray's has a very specific preference on the dimensions of its baby back ribs. Each slab must be 1¾ pounds, have 11-13 bones, be at least 2½ inches wide on its shortest end and be no more than 1½ inches larger than the small end. Sweet Baby Ray's does not accept "shiners"—slabs where the meat has been cut too close to the bone. These exposed bones may fall out during cooking. The high quality of the baby back ribs is something Sweet Baby Ray's prides itself on.

While not nearly as popular as baby back ribs, Chicagoans prefer the St. Louis cut of spare ribs over full spare ribs, which are more common in Southern markets. In Chicago, patrons have a great penchant for rib tips, which is the tip of the spare rib that is separated from the St. Louis cut spare rib.

Chicago barbecue fans are also serious about their sauce. Sweet Baby Ray's keeps bottles of its signature sauce at each table, and warm sauce is always available upon request.

"When you put it all together, Chicago is not on the top tier of barbecue," says Dave. "But I believe we are at the top of the second tier and, as such, Chicago is deserving of its own style and standards. Sweet Baby Ray's is enthusiastic about further defining what Chicago barbecue is all about."

About the menu

Another clear example of the enthusiasm for high quality barbecue is the dynamic professional staff at Sweet Baby Ray's. Executive chef and partner Paul Papadopoulos worked for a year in New Orleans, and for seven years at Chicago's own Heaven on Seven as executive chef. Papadopoulos' experience helps bring a southern flavor and New Orleans style dishes to the Sweet Baby Ray's menu, while maintaining the Chicago authenticity.

Sweet Baby Ray's Elk Grove offers a unique menu with staple barbecue dishes, as well as a number of seafood and steak dishes that incorporate Papadopoulos' passion for Southern and New Orleans style cooking. Appetizer selections include New Orleans Barbecue Shrimp, pan-seared wild shrimp in New Orleans style sauce, served with crusty garlic bread (\$8.99); Pulled Pork Nachos, spiced pulled pork, black beans, roasted Poblano chili salsa and jack cheese, served on a bed of tortilla chips with sour cream and pico de gallo (\$8.99); and signature Smokin' Wings, smoked jumbo chicken wings tossed in a signature sweet and spicy hot barbecue sauce (\$7.99).

Also on the menu is a selection of soups and gumbo. The Gumbo is a bold fusion of Cajun flavors with smoked chicken, andouille sausage, bell pepper, celery and onions in a medium roux (\$3.49/cup, \$4.99/bowl).

Lighter selections include Sweet Baby Ray's salad and pasta dishes, including the Grilled Steak Salad, grilled tenderloin served over baby greens with oven dried tomatoes, crumbled bleu cheese, red onions and fried onion strings served with red wine vinaigrette (\$10.49); Grilled Smoked Chicken Breast Salad, tender smoked chicken breast, roasted almonds, cranberries, crumbled bleu cheese, granny smith apples and mixed greens tossed in a signature ginger vinaigrette (\$8.99), and Sweet Baby Ray's Smoked Tomato Rigatoni, rigatoni pasta tossed in signature smoked tomato marinara sauce and topped with aged Parmesan cheese (\$9.99). Roasted vegetables, grilled chicken and grilled shrimp may be added for an additional charge.

Sweet Baby Ray's Barbecue Restaurants offer a variety of sandwiches, each of which include a cup of soup and choice of side item. Sandwich selections include Smoked Shaved Prime Rib, served on a toasted French garlic roll, topped with sautéed onions and au jus on the side (\$10.99); Shrimp Po' Boy, flash-fried shrimp, shredded lettuce, tomato and chipotle mayonnaise served on French bread (\$10.99); Barbecue Cubano, sliced ham and pulled pork topped with Swiss cheese, red onions and pickle, served on pressed French bread with citrus mayonnaise on the side (\$9.49); Sliced Beef Brisket, rubbed with a signature spice blend, smoked up to 14 hours, served with Sweet Baby Ray's Barbecue Sauce (\$9.49); Baby Ray Burger, a half-pound fire grilled burger with Sweet Baby Ray's Barbecue Sauce, choice of cheese, smoked bacon, lettuce and tomato, topped with fried onion strings (\$8.99); and the top selling Pulled Pork Sandwich, seasoned with a signature rub, smoked low and slow up to 12 hours, hand pulled and infused with The Boss (\$8.99).

A variety of Baby Back and St. Louis Spare Ribs (full and half slabs) are also on Sweet Baby Ray's menu. Pulled pork, beef brisket and rib tips are also offered in combinations with soup or salad, cornbread and two side items (\$10.99-\$19.99).

Other Sweet Baby Ray's meat selections include Bone-in Delmonico Steak, 16 oz. Ribeye (\$24.99); Barbecue Pork Chops, two 5 oz. grilled barbecue pork chops (\$15.99), and New York Strip Steak, 12 oz. center cut (\$24.99). Sweet Baby Ray's proudly serves only Midwest USDA Choice beef. Steak and chop selections are served with soup or salad, a choice of potato and vegetable.

For poultry, Sweet Baby Ray's offers a Barbecue Chicken Platter, tender young half chicken, seasoned with signature rub, smoked for two hours, then finished on the grill and topped with Sweet Baby Ray's Barbecue Sauce (\$12.99), Jamaican Jerk Chicken Platter, half chicken, marinated in a blend of Caribbean seasonings, grilled and roasted to seal the flavor (\$12.99), and Chicken Kabobs, twin kabobs of marinated white chicken chunks, peppers, onions and tomatoes basted in a savory sauce and grilled (\$12.99). All chicken entrees come with a selection of soup or salad, cornbread, a choice of potato and one side dish.

Seafood lovers will enjoy the variety of seafood selections at Sweet Baby Ray's, each served with soup or salad. Choose from Barbecue Salmon, grilled Atlantic salmon glazed with Sweet Baby Ray's Barbecue Sauce, served with Tchoupitoulas potatoes, drizzled with homemade Worcestershire sauce and topped with fried onion strings (\$17.99); Crab Cakes, pan-seared lump crab cakes with roasted red pepper cream sauce and vegetable of the day (\$18.99); New Orleans Style Barbecue Shrimp, pan seared wild shrimp with Papadopoulos' signature barbecue shrimp sauce, served with Tchoupitoulas potatoes (\$16.99).

Most of the entrée selections come with a choice of side dishes. Among the choices are Green Chile Mac N' Cheese, Red Beans and Rice, Cole Slaw, Tchoupitoulas Potatoes, Roasted Garlic Mashed Potatoes, Jumbo Baked Potato, Sweet Potato Fries, Potato Salad and Cornbread (\$2.49-\$7.99).

Save room for dessert and enjoy one of Sweet Baby Ray's signature desserts. Try Banana Pudding, vanilla pudding with fresh banana slice, topped with homemade whipped cream, served on a crispy crust of graham crackers, brown sugar, butter, bananas and pecans (\$4.99); Warm Apple Tart, warm cinnamon apple tart, topped with Homer's vanilla ice cream and drizzled with warm caramel sauce (\$5.99); Chocolate Brownie Deluxe, warm double chocolate brownie topped with vanilla bean ice cream and hot fudge (\$5.99), and Key Lime Pie, fresh zesty creamy filling served on a crispy crust of graham crackers, brown sugar, butter and pecans, topped with a dollop of whipped cream and lime zest (\$4.99).

Catering Packages

Sweet Baby Ray's also offers an extensive catering program. According to Mike, "Our goal is to create memorable events that will deliver great satisfaction and enable our clients to wow their guests. Our courteous and professional staff works hard to exceed expectations so guests will enjoy some of the best tasting food and genuine hospitality, Sweet Baby Ray's style."

Corporate lunches, family dinners, pig roasts, luaus and picnics can be catered for parties as large as 1,000 people. Depending on the size of the event, the Sweet Baby Ray's catering staff will travel for event locations. Hosts have a variety of custom catering options they may select for their special events.

Catering packages include selections like The Michigan Avenue Barbecue, half slab smoked baby back or St. Louis ribs, choice of one smoked meat, two side items, fresh rolls and Sweet Baby Ray's Barbecue Sauce (\$16.49/guest); The Triple Play Barbecue, quarter slab portion of smoked baby back or St. Louis ribs, smoked barbecue chicken, choice of one smoked meat, three side items and fresh rolls (\$11.99/guest) and the State Street, Great Street, choice of two smoked meats, two sides items and fresh rolls (\$8.99/guest).

The catering menu also includes a selection of smoked meats, available by the pound and premium specialty meats like Smoked Whole Turkey, Smoked Pork Loin and Hickory Smoked Whole Bone-in Ham. Each of the Sweet Baby Ray's signature side dishes and desserts are available for catering. The catering staff works with each event planner to custom design the menu. Boxed lunches and delivery options are also available.

History of Sweet Baby Ray's

In the past two decades, the name "Sweet Baby Ray's" has become synonymous with barbecue. It all began simply in 1985. Dave (aka Sweet Baby Ray) and his brother Larry, entered Chicago's Mike Royko's Rib-off and earned second place from a pool of 700 contestants. Inspired by this impressive victory, the brothers decided to turn their passion for barbecue into a business, and so developed the well-known Sweet Baby Ray's Barbecue Sauce.

Incorporated in 1986, the sauce business operated more like a hobby until Dave's high school friend from Chicago's Lane Tech, Michael O'Brien, came on board in 1989 to help shape and grow the business into the national brand it has become. Today, Sweet Baby Ray's Barbecue Sauce is the number two best selling barbecue sauce brand in the nation, and enjoys more than a 40% market share in Chicago.

After achieving critical and mass success with Sweet Baby Ray's Barbecue Sauce, the partners were offered a buy-out opportunity from Ken's Foods, Inc., makers of Ken's Dressings and long-time manufacturer of Sweet Baby Ray's. In 2003, the deal was completed. Dave and O'Brien retained the rights to the Sweet Baby Ray's name for the purpose of opening restaurants.

In 2005, the first Sweet Baby Ray's Barbecue Restaurant opened in Wood Dale, Ill. The friendly, 36-seat establishment provided an opportunity to develop a strong staff and learn about the restaurant business. It was here that Dave and Papadopoulos first developed the Sweet Baby Ray's menu concept. Opening the larger, 185-seat location in Elk Grove Village less than two years later allowed the barbecue aficionados to expand their knowledge and experience.

About the Restaurant

Sweet Baby Ray's has a large wood-paneled dining room with 185 seats, with 13 seats at the bar that provides a full cocktail and beer menu. Weather permitting, Sweet Baby Ray's also offers outdoor seating, large enough for 68 guests. Private parties will enjoy the 36-seat private dining space in the back of the restaurant. Carry out is available with a separate entrance located on the east side of the building.

Sweet Baby Ray's Elk Grove offers weekly specials for barbecue loving patrons. Every Wednesday, enjoy "All You Can Eat Baby Back Ribs" for \$16.99/person. Monday through Friday, complimentary appetizers are available at the bar area 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Each Friday and Saturday, Sweet Baby Ray's offers a special Prime Rib Dinner for \$18.95/person. Daily drinks specials are also available. Call the restaurant at (847) 437-9555 for details.

Sweet Baby Ray's Barbecue Restaurant is located at 800 E. Higgins Rd., Elk Grove Village, Ill. (847) 437-9555. The restaurant is open Monday through Thursday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., Friday 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., Saturday 9:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. and Sunday 9:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Breakfast is served on Saturday and Sunday only. Sweet Baby Ray's also offers a private room for special occasions. To learn more about Sweet Baby Ray's, call (847) 437-9555 or visit online at www.sbrbbq.com

or www.sbrcatering.com.

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