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BY JAMES ANDERSON  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

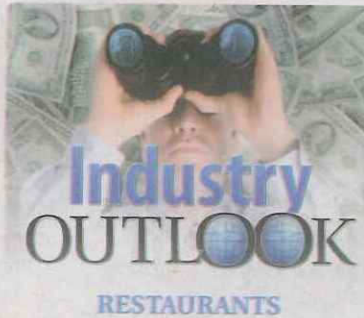
Kam Talebi is the owner and CEO of Eden Prairie-based Crave. Ranked sixth on the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal's* (MSPBJ) 2010 Fast 50 list, Crave had a two-year growth rate of 199.65 percent and 2009 revenue of nearly \$11 million. The restaurant company started a national expansion push in 2010 and now has five locations, three of which are located in the Twin Cities. Talebi plans to open a downtown Minneapolis location later this year, but recently talked to the *Business Journal* about what the year holds for the restaurant industry as a whole.

*MSPBJ: Is the restaurant industry still feeling the effects of the recession?*

Talebi: I believe it is. Customers are still looking for a value proposition. They're really being selective in choosing a restaurant that has quality at a given price point. At the same time they have not backed off their quality and value expectations.

*MSPBJ: Are consumer behaviors starting to change?*

Talebi: We've seen a greater confidence in spending and people are choosing to dine out. Compared to a year-and-a-half ago, there's more traffic in our restaurants and confidence levels seem to be higher.



## Kam Talebi

Owner and CEO  
Crave



*MSPBJ: Do you expect local hiring to pick up in the industry this year?*

Talebi: I do. Obviously for our restaurant specifically, we continue to grow and plan to hire hundreds of employees in the upcoming year. We should see an increase in hiring across the board, as demand picks up.

*MSPBJ: What other trends do you see happening in the industry?*

Talebi: Clearly people are looking for more offerings. The customer wants to have the selection power to choose from. For example, we're American based and we have a sushi offering. There's a greater appreciation for greater quality, food that's sourced locally, organic ingredients and gluten-free based menus. The appreciation of quality is something people are getting more selective on. The underlying theme continues to be: where's value?

*MSPBJ: What will we be talking about a year from now?*

Talebi: What I hope we're talking about is the continuous increase in the confidence level of the consumer. Hopefully there's more stability within the industry and natural growth for everyone in the industry.

If you have questions about this article, contact Assistant Managing Editor Kim Johnson at (612) 288-2114 or [kkj@bizjournals.com](mailto:kkj@bizjournals.com).