

Cracker Barrel CEO Julie Masino Steps Down After 'Woke' Rebranding Backlash

Cracker Barrel announced Monday that CEO Julie Masino will step down effective Aug. 10, less than a year after the company faced widespread backlash over a rebranding effort that many customers said abandoned the restaurant chain's traditional identity.

Masino will remain in an advisory role through Oct. 9. The company named former restaurant executive David Deno as its next CEO.

"Following a robust and thoughtful search process, we are pleased to welcome David as Cracker Barrel's next CEO," independent Board Chairman Carl Berquist said in a statement. He praised Deno's "strong track record of leading businesses through growth" and said the board is confident he can "continue building on the Cracker Barrel legacy."

Deno called Cracker Barrel a "truly iconic American brand" and said he looks forward to "unlocking the full potential of this remarkable brand" by focusing on "delivering delicious food and exceptional experiences for our guests, while driving profitable growth."



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The leadership change comes after Cracker Barrel's controversial 2025 rebranding removed the iconic "Old Timer" from the company's logo and introduced redesigned restaurant interiors. The changes sparked swift customer backlash, prompting the company to reverse course.

In an interview with Glenn Beck following the controversy, Masino acknowledged the public response, saying, "I feel like I've been fired by America."

She also admitted the company "messed up" and said executives failed to understand that customers "see themselves in the logo." Masino maintained the effort was not politically motivated, telling Beck, "We're not trying to make political statements... No, it's pancakes. Not even one time."

The controversy also fueled shareholder unrest, including the resignation of independent director Gilbert Dávila following the company's annual meeting and criticism from activist investor Sardar Biglari, who argued Cracker Barrel's leadership had become disconnected from its customer base.

Masino's departure marks another significant leadership change as the company seeks to rebuild momentum and restore confidence in one of America's most recognizable restaurant brands.

James Lasher, a seasoned writer and editor at Charisma Media, combines faith and storytelling with a journalism background from Otterbein University and ministry experience in Guatemala and at the LA Dream Center. A Marine Corps and Air Force veteran, he is the author of *The Revelation of Jesus: A Common Man's Commentary* and a contributor to Charisma magazine. For interviews and media inquiries, please contact media@.