

Co-owner of 'Nightmares' eatery might be deported

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Key Points

- Salomon and Amy Bouzaglo appeared on "Kitchen Nightmares" May 10
- Couple abruptly canceled a news conference Monday to give their side of the story about the episode
- Bouzaglos said Samy had served time in prison before immigrating to the United States 13 years ago%3B he has no criminal convictions in this country

The co-owner of Amy's Baking Company — a Scottsdale, Ariz., [restaurant that has been the center of controversy](#) since appearing on the culinary reality TV show "Kitchen Nightmares" 11 days ago — is facing deportation.

Salomon "Samy" Bouzaglo, who owns Amy's Baking Company along with his wife, Amy, is involved in a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement case to revoke his residency status, his lawyer said Tuesday. Scottsdale immigration lawyer David Asser said the case against his client started two years ago and was the subject of a removal hearing Monday.

Asser, speaking just hours before the Bouzaglos reopened their embattled restaurant, said he could not comment on the case. He also said Samy's immigration case has nothing to do with the television show. In fact, Asser said, he has not even watched the episode that has earned his client celebrity status.

"I didn't know they were going to go on (the show)," he said.

Amy's closed in the wake of the "Kitchen Nightmares" episode, which aired on Fox on May 10 and showed the owners yelling and pushing customers, taking servers' tips and firing one waitress on the spot, calling her a "poisonous, little viper." People across the country took to Yelp, Facebook, Reddit and other websites to express their disgust with the Bouzaglos' actions after the show.

The Bouzaglos hope to turn around their business with a weeklong grand reopening that began uneventfully Tuesday. The restaurateurs said that they had more than 1,500 reservations for Amy's this week and announced plans to donate 10 percent of the grand-opening proceeds to the Megan Meier Foundation, which raises awareness of cyberbullying.

On Tuesday, Amy's opened to a thin crowd and began serving those holding reservations at 5 p.m., using security guards to prevent gawkers, media and others without reservations from entering. The restaurant had a sign saying its patio was closed for security reasons. The reopening appeared to be running without incident for the first wave of diners. Some onlookers showed up hoping to snag a reservation, but most were turned away. The nearby Pita Jungle restaurant appeared to be drawing more business than Amy's.

Laurie Ferrere Vermillion, a Scottsdale blogger, was among the handful of people turned away in the restaurant's first hour because she had no reservation. Vermillion had hoped to dine at the restaurant Tuesday despite discouraging reviews from her friends.

"My friends who have been (to Amy's) said, 'Don't waste your money,' " said Vermillion, who has seen every episode of "Kitchen Nightmares" and was shocked by the show featuring the Scottsdale restaurant.

Leon Lucero, 19, said he was curious about Amy's and was hoping to get a reservation at the restaurant Tuesday night.

"Maybe this is a new start for them, a new beginning," said Lucero, a music major at Glendale Community College who said he expects food at the restaurant to have

improved.

Annie Dutoit, 42, who was at a nearby coffee shop, said she had dined at Amy's with her family five or six times in the past 18 months and generally had good experiences.

She said she was surprised at the way Amy and Samy were portrayed on "Kitchen Nightmares."

"I don't know if the editing was done to show horrible things," Dutoit said.

A native of Switzerland, she said she has dined all over the world and considered Amy's a decent restaurant. Amy did special orders for her children, making crepes for them, Dutoit said.

She said she was surprised to hear on the show that the servers did not get their tips and would not want to support a restaurant that did that.

"I would go back, but I want to know what the truth is" about Amy's, said Dutoit, adding that she is not sure what to believe about what was shown on a reality TV show.

Tuesday's reopening capped a tumultuous week for the owners of Amy's.

The couple was supposed to hold a news conference Tuesday at the restaurant to give their side of the story about what happened on the "Kitchen Nightmares," suggesting the broadcast was not an accurate depiction of their restaurant. The news conference was abruptly canceled on Monday.

A Scottsdale public-relations firm headed by Jason Rose explained in a news release that a law firm representing the producers of "Kitchen Nightmares" warned the Bouzaglos against making disparaging remarks about the show or its star, celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay.

On Tuesday, Samy and Amy talked about their past records and indicated Samy had served time in prison before immigrating to the United States 13 years ago. Reached by phone as they drove to their restaurant Tuesday morning, Amy and Samy each tried to talk over the other -- interrupting, yelling and even cursing one another as the conversation continued.

"We both made mistakes in the past. We have done our time," Amy said. "We can't comment. We know God is with us."

Samy said he could not talk about any past records but added he has not had any problems since immigrating to the U.S.

"The FBI knows all about me. ... The IRS knows," he said.

Samy said issues surrounding his immigration status were "a sensitive subject" that he did not want to talk about Tuesday.

But he indicated that he wanted people to know that he had nothing to hide.

"I want people to know about me," he said. "But not today, not tomorrow. I have nothing to hide."

Asser, the lawyer, said Samy is an Israeli citizen and was born in Morocco.

Amy, 40, and Samy, 63, live in Gold Canyon. Before coming to Arizona, they lived in Las Vegas. Amy also lived in Colorado and California.

Records show Amy has served time in federal prison and has a history of liens and judgments.

In 2003, Amy Bouzaglo pleaded guilty to misuse of a Social Security number when she applied for a \$15,000 bank loan. At the time, her name was Amanda Bossingham. She spent about a year in prison beginning in 2008.

Records show that prior to her conviction, Amy faced four judgments in Colorado in 1998 and 1999 totaling about \$14,000. She was also sued in Arizona in 2000 for \$3,229. The judgments appear to have arisen from unpaid debts that were turned over to collection agencies.

She married Samy in 2004. Records show he is from Los Angeles, where he lived upon arriving in the United States. Records indicate he has no criminal convictions or civil judgments in the United States.

"I am perfectly clean," he said.