

In-N-Out Burger

Stacy Perman

Kindle Notes by Dave kraft

Those at the front of the line ordered from In-N-Out's famously limited menu of three burger items, french fries, soft drinks, lemonade, and milkshakes—a menu that has barely changed since Harry Truman was president.

Rather, in a procedure that has gone unchanged since the chain first opened in 1948, a cheery associate hand-peeled, cut, and fried the raw Kennebec potatoes grown especially for the chain.

The family-owned, fiercely independent chain has remained virtually unchanged since its inception in 1948.

Baldwin Park is the spot where In-N-Out Burger began.

“Mr. Snyder stressed quality from the first day he opened for business,” his wife once observed. “No matter what the price, he believed that the customer deserved the best product he could produce.”

From the start, In-N-Out ran a customer-driven shop.

Harry Snyder had made a promise to himself that he had no intention of breaking: “Keep it real simple,” he always said. “Do one thing and do it the best you can.”

While his wife, Esther, hewed closely to a strong, unwavering faith in God, it might be said that Harry's faith was in hard work.

Harry drilled into his workers the singular importance of quality and simplicity. His maxim, “Do one thing and do it well,” was not only repeated with some frequency—it was strictly adhered to.

Harry didn't open a new shop until he had a manager who was ready to run it properly.

He didn't open another until he could afford to and had the trained managers to run it—that was the Harry Snyder way. He didn't take out a loan. He didn't take on debt. He was beholden to no one.

Early on, Harry Snyder had added another tenet to his management stockpile. He saw no point in sacrificing quality for profits. In the words of one longtime friend, “It really never was about the money for them.”

In these years, it was easy to see what made In-N-Out Burger a beloved, cult phenomenon; it was its unyielding simplicity and dedication to quality and fair practices, the principles that Harry and Esther had put into play from the start.

In-N-Out's enduring success stemmed from Harry's capacity to understand what he did best and focus exclusively on it.

Harry's business acumen had nothing to do with fancy management consultants or popular buzzwords and everything to do with his own core belief: "Keep it real simple," he said repeatedly. "Do one thing and do it the best you can." And he stuck to his word.

In 1973, after twenty-five years, there were only about a dozen In-N-Out Burger outlets. He owned each store and the land underneath them. The company's debt was negligible—and that was exactly how Harry liked it.

In-N-Out Burger stayed largely removed from the war zone; this was not In-N-Out's fight. The family-owned burger chain didn't advertise, didn't undercut on price, didn't sacrifice quality, and didn't change the menu. At In-N-Out Burger, there were no sideshows.

Rich remained quite close to his parents, and rather than abandoning his spiritual beliefs, he was drawn ever closer to his Christian faith.

A year later in 1976, when McDonald's posted \$3 billion in sales and opened restaurant number 4,000 in Montreal, In-N-Out opened its eighteenth store in Woodland Hills,

The Woodland Hills drive-through was the last In-N-Out Burger opening that Harry Snyder oversaw. He died on December 14, 1976;

Seven months shy of his twenty-fifth birthday, Rich Snyder was named president of In-N-Out Burger, and whatever reservations he had, he had quickly pushed them aside.

In the chain's history to date, it had only added one new product to its menu—and that was the soft drink 7-Up.

"If you are going to grow your organization," explained William Martin, who devised the University's initial training manual and curriculum, "you need a training program, and that's the bottom line."

On average, it took about five years to reach store manager from entry-level management—and within the company it was viewed as a significant accomplishment. "There was no overnight promotion," explained Martin. "You had to prove yourself."

“Rich was always a leader in communication,” recalled Jack Williams. “And by communication I mean really good follow-up. He developed a package that was clear in what you were expected to do, you were given training to do the job, and then there was always follow-up to see how you were doing it and if you could do it better.

Associates were never hung out to dry. They were given specific on-the-job training during slow periods and a considerable amount of feedback on their performance. The point was to make sure that each associate understood his job and how he could do better, and associates were given more of a customer load and more responsibility incrementally and according to their abilities. The elapsed time between starting in cleanup and working the french fry vats could be as long as a year and a half.