



In-N-Out: The making of a cult restaurant

How the chain built its iconic brand

By Tara Fitzpatrick

Some brands have it, some brands don't. But what if you could conjure up that lightning in a bottle? What exactly is it that compels us to worship at the order counter of certain brands of fast-food chains and not others?

Build authenticity

Sure, In-N-Out is famous now, but anyone can grasp that feeling of "I knew them when." In short, it's not pretentious, and it never has been.

Nostalgia is a powerful ingredient in creating In-N-Out's special sauce, according to Arlene Spiegel, founder and president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates, a restaurant, retail and foodservice consulting firm in New York City.

"They are not just selling a burger, but a nostalgic, comforting experience that adds that special 'emotional sauce,'" Spiegel said.

"In-N-Out in particular is very democratic, non-elitist in its accessibility and price point."

Presentation in everything

Americans like to look at gorgeous celebrities decked out in black-tie attire stuffing their faces with burgers after an awards show, specially In-N-Out burgers. (Stars... they're just like us!)

"Celebrities who want to appear like real, everyday people can't find a better place to be associated with," Spiegel said.



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You can't stand for everything

To create a cult brand, you must know who you are, what you stand for and be resolute in that sauce. Be for something.