In-N-Out Burger: A Behind-the-Counter Look at the Fast-Food Chain That Breaks All the Rules by Stacy Perman

Terrific

Amazon Best of the Month, April 2009: With In-N-Out Burger: A Behind-the-Counter Look at the Fast-Food Chain That Breaks All the Rules, BusinessWeek writer Stacy Perman presents a chronicle of how a family-run California hamburger joint went on to become an American pop culture icon. Founded in 1948 by Harry Snyder and his wife Esther in Baldwin Park, CA, In-N-Out Burger attracted a cult-like fanbase of cruising teens, surfers, and celebrities alike (who developed a secret shorthand for custom orders). As they expanded slowly over the years across California and into Nevada, Arizona, and Utah, they never sacrificed their core customer-service values and commitment to quality. Their made-to-order success story packs enough family drama to fuel an HBO miniseries. After Harry died in 1976, his son Rich took over the business (and was responsible for adding discreet Bible verses to In-N-Out cups and wrappers) until his death in a 1993 plane crash. His brother Guy, a drag-racing rebel with a dark side, stepped in to helm the business until his accidental overdose in 1999. If youve never had an In-N-Out burger, Permans book just might inspire you to find a good reason to get yourself to Southern California and seek out an off-the-menu 3x3 with a side of Animal Style fries. --Brad Thomas Parsons

Author Stacy Permans Guide to In-N-Out Burgers Secret Menu

Except for the addition of 7-Up and Dr. Pepper, In-N-Out Burgers menu has remained much as it was when the chain opened its first drive-thru in Baldwin Park, California in 1948. However, at some point in time, a secret menu emerged. Something of an insiders code, it is an off-menu series of variations on the chains standard fare (Double-Double, hamburger, cheeseburger, and french fries) that has been passed on entirely by word-of-mouth through the years.

Although the secret menus origins remain a mystery, part of its existence can be explained by the fact that In-N-Out Burger has always insisted on
cooking-to-order each individual burger any way a customer wanted it prepared. Over time, several of these variations gained traction and somewhere along the way a number of them were given their own names. While frequently steeped in rumor and apocryphal tales the secret menu is almost always used by those In-N-Out customers in the know.

These are the most popular secret menu items. In-N-Out Burger has listed them on their website (and even trademarked their names):

Double Meat: Two beef patties, lettuce, tomato, spread, (optional onions) on a toasted bun.

3x3: Three beef patties, lettuce, tomato, sauce, three slices of American cheese, (optional onions) on a toasted bun.

4x4: Four beef patties, lettuce, tomato, sauce, four slices of American cheese, (optional onions) on a toasted bun.

Grilled Cheese: Two slices of melted American cheese, lettuce, tomato, sauce, (optional onions) on a toasted bun.

Protein Style: Any burger served sans bun and wrapped in lettuce.

Animal Style: Any burger with mustard cooked beef, lettuce, tomato, extra sauce, pickle, and grilled onions on a toasted bun. (Note: the Grilled Cheese can also be prepared Animal Style)

A few more secret variations that have made the rounds for those in the know:

X x Y: Any number of beef patties with corresponding slices of American cheese (note on one memorable Halloween evening in Las Vegas a group of friends famously ordered and consumed a 100x100).

Flying Dutchman: beef patty or patties and American cheese slice(s) no vegetables or bun.

Veggie Burger (sometimes called a Wish Burger): no beef or cheese, just lettuce, tomato, or (optional) onions on a toasted bun. Extra Everything: just like it sounds--extra sauce, tomato, lettuce, and onions served grilled or raw.

Chopped Chilies: mild chopped peppers are added to any burger.
The secret menu also extends to a variety of french fry variations:

Animal Style Fries: an order of fries slathered in melted American cheese, sauce, and grilled onions.

Fries Light: reduced cooking time resulting in softer, chewier french fries.

Fries Well-Done: increased cooking time resulting in crispier, browner french fries.

Cheese Fries: french fries bathed in melted American cheese.

Onion Variations:

The usual scenario is a whole slice of fresh onion cooked with the burger but In-N-Out will serve onions grilled, raw, and chopped if asked.

For those really in the know:

If you ask an associate at the counter they will give you a serving of yellow chili peppers.

Pickles are added only upon request.

Features:
* ISBN13: 9780061346712
* Condition: NEW
* Notes: Brand New from Publisher. No Remainder Mark.
* Click here to view our Condition Guide and Shipping Prices

In-N-Out Burger was, simply put, fantastic. Stacy Perman has written a marvelous book about a family and a business that helped shape the modern landscape of Los Angeles. What I enjoyed most about her work is her ability to weave colorful family anecdotes, the history of a nascent Los Angeles and the evolution of In-N-Out from business to cultural movement into a rich and engrossing story. I'm not in the habit of eating hamburgers or reading books about businesses, but Perman's skilled writing made me crave a fresh patty from In-N-Out.

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