



## **Bartleby's Seitan Stand**

### **Quarterly Update**

**April 2019**

Service Period: January-March 2019

## SUMMARY

We took the truck off the road for the winter months, but turned our focus to several other major initiatives: the launch of our traveling cooking program, Bartleby's Seitan School; making party platters available for pick-up; and building up a new weekly service schedule and events calendar that will allow us to connect with more customers in 2019.

There are other food trucks in Boston that remain open during the winter months. We strongly considered doing the same, but decided it was not financially responsible while we're still building our base of customers. Plus, we don't have space for a heater on the truck and dang, these Boston winters are cold and sloppy.

## OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During our fourth quarter in operation (January-March 2019), Bartleby's Seitan Stand accomplished the following:

### *Sales*

Without the truck in operation, sales during the winter quarter rolled in only from catering orders and hosted sessions of the Seitan School. We fulfilled 35 pick-up catering orders, which were made primarily during the Super Bowl, Valentine's Day, and an edition of the Vegan Market. Offering pick-up at the Vegan Market was successful, so we'll be continuing that service for other events throughout the 2019 season. Stephanie led 20 students through the Bartleby's Seitan School program, sending smiles and seitan knowledge out into the world.

### *Social Media, Website, and Publicity*

Our gains across our platforms were modest over the winter months, but were gains nonetheless:

Instagram: 6% growth (2,233 to 2,370 followers)

Twitter: 17% growth (323 to 379 followers)

Facebook: 5% growth (926 to 971 followers)

## *General Business*

In March, we hired a prep cook and culinary lead, Scott Rawdon. Scott works side-by-side with Stephanie at the Commissary to mix and bake seitan, make our scratch-made sauces, and assist with all the other food-related work that needs to be completed before items and staff are crammed into the food truck. Scott's impressive culinary background (he once opened a vegan restaurant in Allston, named Root; works as a pop-up and personal chef, as well as a menu and operations consultant) and wicked lifestyle (he plays the guitar and adheres to a vegan diet) makes him a spectacular addition to our seitanic staff.

Bartleby's has also grown its food truck team, and is still reviewing and hiring applicants for weekday service as of the writing on this report. Stephanie is firm on having two staff on the truck with her for each shift this year. One comrade makes things manageable, but having two working members to fry and prepare foodstuffs allows Stephanie to manage sales, expedite orders, and ensure fast, accurate service for our customers.

Our beloved truck received lots of care over the winter. We made upgrades to the brake system and fixed the fryer that, while still operational, had sustained some damage after falling off once while driving. We installed a fresh fuel pump, electrical wiring, brand-spanking new tires, and a fancy back-up camera that will help us navigate tight city streets. You might remember that we were plagued with generator troubles last year, and had to cancel service on several days as a result. We switched repair shops and installed a new engine for the generator, so we are confident our truck will be mechanically reliable this year.

## **OUR GOALS**

### *Sales*

We have set a "50/50" sales goal for 2019. We want to increase our sales in two areas by 50%:

- **Sales per shift.** In 2018, we aimed to reach 100 orders (or sales) per shift on the food truck. In 2019, we aim for 150 orders per shift.
- **Meals served.** In 2018, Bartleby's served over 10,000 meals. In 2019, we aim to increase that number to 15,000. Meals served are counted as orders fulfilled on the food truck (during weekday service and for special events), pick-up orders fulfilled, and the equivalent proportions of food moved during private catering events.

After reviewing the full year of sales in 2018, and running cost comparisons with our peer food trucks, we've made a few adjustments to menu prices. Salads, which require additional assembly time and extra refrigeration space on the truck, will be priced \$0.50 higher. Sandwiches are also priced higher in 2019. We've seen from our plant-based peers that the market can bear a higher price tag, so we are pushing the customer cost of our sandwiches higher in hopes of generating a larger profit margin. These higher prices include taxes and also reflect overhead costs (like the transaction fees incurred with each swipe of a credit card). Plus, these modest increases allow us to pay our staff a more "livable" wage, offer creative rotating specials (with premium ingredients), and then reinvest our profits back into the business for continued good things.

### *Social Media, Website, and Publicity*

As stated in previous updates, we aim to build to over 3,000 followers on Instagram, 500 followers on Twitter, and 1,250 followers on Facebook before the end of the calendar year. We have scheduled one collaborative Instagram contest (where followers can interact and tag friends for a chance to win a Bartleby's gift card) and may host additional similar contests after reviewing engagement levels. A brief glance at numbers shows a 4% increase to followers on Instagram and a 3% increase to followers on Facebook since running the contest, but we will need take a look additional figures to determine efficacy.

### *Menu*

The core of our menu will remain the same in 2019, but we have lined up a series of monthly specials. These limited-time meals allow our staff to experiment with new recipes and gauge labor costs for producing them, and our devilish customers get to try fresh variations on our signature sandwiches. The first special for 2019 will debut in May. The Buffalo Ranch sandwich features our seitan patty drenched in a sweet-spicy buffalo sauce, stacked with crisp vegetables, and drizzled with our zesty Garlic n' Herb ranch dressing. That's a lot of sauce, boss! We've received many requests for a buffalo-style sandwich since opening, so we're really excited to introduce this special to our customers.

Our go-to graphic design queen, Jennifer Kirkpatrick, has been busy designing our new menu board for the truck. The weather-resistant board will feature magnetic menu items, that we can swap in and out as our offerings evolve, and can be clearly marked if items sell out during a service period. It will also highlight Jennifer's adorable illustrations of our foodstuffs (you will have seen Jennifer's previous work: she created the Bartleby's devil mascot, and drew all the food iconography that appears on our mission page and various posters, flyers, and other media).

### *General Business*

Stephanie navigated many applications and interviews for service locations in Boston and Cambridge. From the end of March through the end of May, we will debut the regular weekday locations, which total four this year:

- Tuesday, Kendall Square, Cambridge (Third Street at Binney Street), 11:30a-1:30p. Service began March 26.
- Wednesday, Liberty Square, Boston (Milk Street at Kilby Street), 11:30a-2:00p. Service began April 10.
- Thursday, Cambridgeport (Sidney Street at Erie Street), 11:30a-2:00p. Service begins May 2.
- Thursday, Loring-Greenough House, Jamaica Plain (12 South Street), 4:30p-dark. Service begins May 30.

The Cambridgeport location was earned, in part, by voting from the public. Even after technical troubles from the hosted voting platform, where all previously votes had been wiped, we were able to earn enough support from our local devils to win a service location.

We had a lot of devils request our presence along the Rose Kennedy Greenway (a one-mile inner city park that is dotted with clusters of food trucks), but our application was not granted this year. We'll try again! We also recognize there is some education to provide to our followers about permitting. We'd love to roll our food truck out anywhere at anytime, but we're restricted to what fits our service permits, allows us to adhere to our health and safety standards, and to those spaces that will physically hold our big ol' blue and orange truck.

## **CLOSING**

We've shined up the truck, welcomed new staff to the team, and restocked our pantry with delicious plant-based ingredients. We're ready to make Year Two a big, tasty success, and are so grateful for your support along the way.