

# Bartleby's

SEITAN STAND

**Quarterly Report**

**July 2018**

Service Period: April - June 2018

## OUR THANKS

We are so proud of what we've been able to accomplish during the first three months of service, and are keenly aware that it's due in large part to the support that you've provided.

We sent the last batch of rewards to our Kickstarter backers during the last week of June, so we hope you've received your swag items and are displaying them proudly. We encourage you devils to send us photos of Bartleby's magnets on your fridge, or of you sporting our wicked fashionable trucker cap. It warms our hearts to see Bartleby's merchandise out in the wild!

## OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During our first quarter in operation (April - June 2018), Bartleby's Seitan Stand accomplished the following:

### *Sales*

In three months, we served over 3,700 meals, each ringing up at an average of \$9.97 per ticket. That average ticket price is just pennies below our initial target of \$10.00. Our most popular menu items are the Wee and Wicked (5-piece nuggets) and the Demon's Deluxe (original patty sandwich with all the toppings). Both items were ordered just over 800 times each.

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

Bartleby's posts at least five days per week to three social media channels: Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. We established early on the voice of Bartleby (playful, mischievous, clever) and used regular communications to grow the numbers of followers in each channel significantly. Instagram followers are the most active and the most prolific.

Instagram: 1300% growth (from 84 to 1,184 followers)

Twitter: 2400% growth (from 8 to 200 followers)

Facebook: 1600% growth (from 40 to 687 followers)

Bartleby's has established a monthly newsletter, and has also distributed a few special updates via email. Our engagement levels with these email messages is quite high. We have an open rate of 57%

(compared to restaurant industry averages of 20-26%) and a click rate of 19% (compared to 1-3.5%). As we grow the number of newsletter subscribers, these rates will likely drop, but we will continue to deliver content strategically and at a modest rate, so as to not inundate our devils' inboxes.

### *Reviews & Recognition*

It was a great honor to be nominated by *Scout Magazines* as Best Food Truck in Cambridge. We have just one regular service day in Cambridge (Mondays in Kendall Square) and the field was tight. There is a bevy of great, established food trucks that operate in Cambridge, so we were head-over-heels excited to be listed alongside two elder statesmen of the city's mobile dining scene. Voting was open to the public, and polls closed on July 22. We anxiously await the results.

We were also one of ten nominees for the nation-wide Mobile Cuisine contest for Best Vegan-Vegetarian Food Truck. Voting was open to the public from June 25 through July 6. Bartleby's came in second place, behind the heavy-hitting Herbivorous Butcher in Minneapolis. As Stephanie's dad is quick to point out, this still makes us the best truck on the East Coast.

We were delighted to find that a Yelp review page for Bartleby's was started by our enthusiastic customers. We "claimed" the business in June, meaning that we can control some of the information and imagery that appears on the Yelp page, as well as respond directly to the users who leave reviews in that space. At the writing of this report, we have 5 reviews, but they are all are Five Stars, so we'll take it!

A selection of press coverage, which began before our April launch:

- [Meet Trailblazer Stephanie Kirkpatrick](#) (*Boston Voyager*, May 2018)
- [Podcast, Episode 56: Stephanie Kirkpatrick & Moving Forward](#) (*Eat Green Make Green*, May 2018)
- [Cambridge Food Trucks Look to Deliver More Diversity](#) (*Wicked Local - Cambridge*, May 2018)
- [Bartleby's Seitan Stand is Boston's Go-To Spot for Vegan Fast Food](#) (*Fitt*, April 2018)
- [Vegan Food Truck to Sell Chicken Nuggets in Boston](#) (*VegNews*, March 2018)
- [Boston's Vegan Scene Expands This Spring With a New Beer Hall and Food Truck](#) (*Eater Boston*, March 2018)
- [New Vegan Food Truck Rolls Out Seitan Nuggets and Sandwiches Across Boston Soon](#) (*Eater Boston*, March 2018)

## *Menu*

While the heart of Bartleby's menu has been stable (we sling southern-fried seitan), we've tinkered with the finer details over and over, seeking the best versions of our meals. Our nuggets have appeared as squares, sticks, and medallions as we measure the key "crunch to squish" ratio (i.e. that balance between the crispy breading and the chewy seitan within). We've experimented with the proportion of fiery cayenne pepper to the other spices in our secret seasoning blend, working to create a seitan that presents discernable heat, but not at the expense of flavor. The batter, too, has been iterated. We've adjusted the mix of wet (rice milk) to dry (mustard powder and flour) to improve the adherence of the batter to the shaped seitan. Now, we turn to ensuring these improved recipes are delivered consistently from day to day, to each devil who comes to the truck.

## *General Business*

We have hired and trained a small group a staff members who work both service hours on the truck and closing duties at the commissary.

We sold out of food on four regular weekdays. While it's great to say that our demand was greater than our supply during those days, it also reflects some growing pains. It took some trial and error during our first month of operation to determine how much food prep was required to meet our rapidly increasing popularity.

One arm of our three-pronged mission is to do right by the animals with which we share this planet. Choosing a plant-based diet, even just some of the time, can save the lives of thousands of animals. Bartleby's serves seitan, our favorite signature meat-alternative, in the form of nuggets, patties, and slices for our salads. Since opening in April, we have sold a volume of seitan equal to the meat of over 3,700 chickens. This conservative estimate (actual figures may be closer to 4,000 chickens) helps us to quantify our impact, and allows us to highlight for our customers the positive effect of their eating at Bartleby's Seitan Stand.

## **OUR GOALS**

### *Sales*

Three months of operations have helped us understand how best to price our menu items. As example, our salad costs aren't particularly high in terms of the ingredients used, but the assembly time and the

climate-controlled storage space required for those ingredients adds cost in other ways. We will be increasing the price of our salads in August, from a devilish \$6.66 to \$8.00. Along with the slightly higher price tag of the new special sandwiches and their coordinated meals (see “Menu” section below), we hope to increase the average ticket price to \$10.00 by the end of August.

On July 10, we made live our online merchandise shop. Hats, shirts, and three different swag items are now available for sale from our website, and can be delivered to any location across the globe. Tax and shipping fees are included for orders within the United States.

Our larger sales goals include breaking even on the purchase of our beloved blue and orange truck (inclusive of custom appliance installment and glamorous branded wrapping) by December 2018. Bartleby’s Seitan Stand is on track to operate at a profit by 2019.

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

We’ve surpassed the number of followers of many of our peer food trucks in the area, even those who have been in business for years. While we suspect there is a saturation point for a geographically limited food truck, we think we’ve still got room to grow. By the end of the next quarter, we hope to have reached 2,000 followers on Instagram, 350 on Twitter, and 1,000 on Facebook.

The followers who like our posts are the ones who come to the truck to eat, and the ones who bring their friends, and the ones who promote our name on their own social media channels. In July, we launched two regular promotional programs. These programs, which capture the silly and teasingly fiendish spirit of Bartleby are brand-building efforts that we expect to drive traffic and grow customer loyalty. We coopted the hashtag “Wicked Wednesday” some months ago, but began using it as a title for a weekly contest on July 11. We invite our followers on social media to leave a comment explaining how they are being wicked on each Wednesday. The response that the Bartleby’s team decides is the most dastardly is awarded a prize: the author of the comment can pick up a free Wee & Wicked (5-piece nuggets) the next time they visit the truck on a regular service day. The second promotional program, launching late July, is akin to the well known cartoon caption contest of *The New Yorker*. The larger-than-life-sized figure of Bartleby on the side of the truck has a speech bubble next to his head. We will be encouraging fans and followers to submit their wittiest phrase to appear in the speech bubble. The winning submission will be shown in the speech bubble during regular service days for two weeks, and the author of the submission will be provided a free meal, and some selected small swag items.

## *Menu*

At the tale end of our first quarter, we began introducing scratch-made beverages during weekday services. We have presented a few variations on lemonades (mint and rosemary infusions), and plan to experiment with some flavored waters and iced teas as well. The beverages with the best customer feedback (and those we are sure can be prepared consistently and stored properly) will become permanent additions to the menu.

We are now serving a special menu item monthly, which will act as the heart of the “Meal of the Month”. The first of these was dubbed “The Big Rig,” and was co-created with one of our major Kickstarter backers. The Big Rig, which debuted on July 9, features a double-stacked patty, and is served with a side of our seasonal slaw, and a house lemonade. The August special, still in production, is tentatively titled “The Kursed Katsu Sando.” Also co-created with a Kickstarter backer, the katsu sandwich will cover a regular patty with shredded cabbage and tangy-salty-sweet tonkatsu sauce. The Kursed Katsu Sando will be paired with sweet potato fries and a house beverage.

## *General Business*

As we train and install more staff, Bartleby’s will be able to add more regular weekdays to our service schedule. Many of our customers have suggested adding a service day along the Rose Kennedy Greenway, in Dewey Square, or on the highly coveted plaza outside the Science Center at Harvard University. Our fearless leader, Stephanie, has thus far worked every single hour of service. Even though she loves feeding people and interacting with customers, having additional staff on the truck and at the commissary would allow Stephanie to take a break from service and focus on other elements of her business.

Bartleby’s would like to grow its catering services. We can accommodate groups of up to 500 in locations within a 90-minute driving radius of our commissary in Stoneham, MA. Related to the catering business, we’d like to partner with some of the many fabulous breweries, cideries, and distilleries in the Boston area to offer pop-up service during their normal hours.

We will also take time over the next quarter to measure our environmental impact and determine our nutritional facts. We serve all our food in biodegradable, recyclable, and compostable packaging. Plenty of research has already been conducted on the benefits of such packaging (such as a reduced carbon footprint), but we would would like to present to our customers our particular contributions. Similarly, we know that seitan packs the most grams of protein per ounce, as compared to the other popular

meat-alternatives, but we would to provide our customers with full and specific nutritional facts for each of our menu items.

Our big-but-achievable dream for Bartleby's is to open a brick-and-mortar location. We've been scoping out locations in the Boston area, in neighborhoods like Jamaica Plain, Allston, Inman Square (Cambridge), and Davis Square (Somerville). We're also considering locations further outside of the city, where extra space allow for a drive-thru window to better serve our devils on the go.

## **CLOSING**

We know that opening a new business involves many risks, but Stephanie's crystal-clear vision for Bartleby's Seitan Stand allowed her and supporting staff to knuckle down on defined tasks with very particular methods. While we approach our work with a sense of joy and good cheer, there's nothing casual about the work ethic. We are encouraged by the sales and customer engagement of our first three months, have set into motion processes for testing and evaluating our work, and will continue to move toward our goals of turning a profit and growing our service hours and service locations.

And we'll keep you up to speed on all our developments. Thank for your continued support of Bartleby's Seitan Stand.