



Bartleby's Seitan Stand

Quarterly Update

July 2019

Service Period: April-June 2019

SUMMARY

We celebrated our first birthday in April by returning to the streets of Boston and Cambridge to sling seitan from our big blue and orange truck. New truck team members, a vehicle that's mostly free of mechanical issues, and some killer sandwich specials have made this quarter a big success.

OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During this quarter in operation (April-June 2019), Bartleby's Seitan Stand accomplished the following:

Sales

Sales have been great this quarter! We are up 60% from the same time last year, and reached our highest-yet number of meals served at 4,106 (totaled from 7,288 individual items sold). Our average ticket price made a big jump, up nearly 20% to a healthy \$12.56. That increase is due in part to the adjustment to certain menu item prices (as outlined in the previous Quarterly Update) and to our customers enthusiastically purchasing multiple items in a single order. Our top three menu items are the same as the previous quarter of street operations (October-December 2018): sweet potato fries, and the two deluxe sandwiches (original and spicy patty).

We showcased special sandwiches in both May and June:

- The Buffalo Ranch: "We're drenching our signature seitan patty in scratch-made buffalo sauce (rich, sweet, and spicy), topping it with crisp vegetables and drizzling the whole thing with our cool and tangy ranch dressing."
- The Double Down: "We've swapped out our usual bun for two crispy seitan patties with all the fresh veg stacked in between. It's twice as devilicious and available only during the month of June, so GET READY, DEVILS!"

We served 377 special sandwiches during those two months, which represents about 12% of the total meals served May-June. Our yearly goal is to reach a total of 15,000 meals served. We are on a good pace to meet or exceed that figure by the end of 2019.

Social Media, Website, and Publicity

Our gains across our three channels were significant this quarter:

Instagram: 42% growth (2,370 to 3,354 followers)

Facebook: 27% growth (971 to 1,237 followers)

Twitter: 7% growth (379 to 406 followers)

We exceeded our 2019 follower goal for Instagram already (3,000) and nearly hit our goal for Facebook (1,250), so the Boss Lady says we need to set some new ones. See the following Goals section for revised numbers. Continued growth on Instagram will open up additional platform tools. By becoming a verified user, or by reaching ten thousand followers, Bartleby's will be able to access features like "swipe for more" links and shopping options.

We keep our marketing email frequency low, usually distributing a newsletter just once monthly, and occasionally sending another blast when we have extra special news (like an award nomination). This thoughtful pace has not worn out our welcome with subscribers—our engagement levels with email messaging is high. Over this April-June span, our open rate has ranged from 38-60% (compared to restaurant industry averages of 20-26%) and our click rate has ranged 9-19% (compared to 1-3.5%). We began the quarter with 294 newsletter subscribers. That number has increased 42% over the last three months, and now rests at 388.

Events Completed

During this quarter in operation, Bartleby's scheduled participation at 10 events, markets, and festivals. We had to cancel one visit to Bully Boy Distillers at the last minute because of mechanical issues on the truck, but otherwise had a successful string of seitan slinging.

- April 28: New England Veg Fest, Worcester
- May 4: Taza Chocolate Annual Block Party, Somerville
- May 12: The Vegan Market (Mother's Day Edition), Somerville
- May 26: Matchstick Market (Garden & Plant Edition), Clinton
- June 1: Bully Boy Distillers (Cocktail Garden Season Opener), Roxbury
- June 9: Matchstick Market (Vintage Edition), Clinton
- June 10: Mini Vegan Market at Winter Hill Brewing, Somerville
- June 15: Feast of the East, Arlington
- June 23: Vegetarian & Vegan Food Festival, Cambridge
- June 29" Bully Boy Distillers, Roxbury > *cancelled, mechanical issues*

For the larger events and festivals, we post a recap on our blog. Readers are welcome to visit our website to see some photos and get the on-site report from our fearless leader, Stephanie.

General Business

Bartleby's has some fresh new faces working on the truck this quarter. Wednesdays in Liberty Square have been our busiest service day, so Stephanie works the truck with three additional teamsters. With four professional devils taking orders, frying, and expediting items, we're able to keep long lines moving quickly and increase our daily sales.

If you read our Quarterly Update at the close of 2018, you'll know that Bartleby's wanted to reduce the number of service cancellations. We had 52 services scheduled between April and June (including both regular weekday service and special weekend pop-ups/events), and lost just 7 of those due to one fender-bender, a couple mechanical issues, and a *lot* of springtime rain. That's an 87% successful service rate. Last year's troubles were a major learning opportunity. Stephanie now schedules regular maintenance days into the monthly schedule to avoid most mechanical issues (or at least catch them early), and she has a better sense of the permitting and health/safety inspections required for special events. As a result, Bartleby's is able to spend more time serving our devils, and less time scuttling around managing administrative tasks.

Scott Rawdon remained on staff as our Culinary Lead through the end of June. He spearheaded the design of two of our major monthly specials, including the Buffalo Ranch (for which he crafted a wildly popular sweet, smoky, spicy sauce). Scott also helped shape a one-night-only special for a pop-up we held at Winter Hill Brewing: the Bartle-beer Burger with Beer Cheese Sauce.

For the first time, we held a session of our Seitan School in a public location. Our commissary, Food Revolution, was the host space for the "Seitan Summer School" on June 2nd, a session that sold out well in advance of the event date. We have scheduled and promoted two additional sessions at the Food Rev kitchen in August. Both those events sold out within a week of making tickets available. We're delighted to learn that our devils are interested in our cooking program, and that our Stoneham kitchen is a convenient space for students.

We served lunch on Thursdays in Cambridgeport through the end of June. We're always happy to be serving Cantabrigians, especially at a spot what we earned via public voting through the City of Cambridge. However, we weren't a popular option at the location (Sidney Street at Erie Street), and we weren't able to serve our sandwiches in our usual style (on the fabulous Pretzilla pretzel bun), but were

required to nestle the seitan in wraps. Our daily average of meals served at this location was half that of our other lunchtime spots, so after a few months, we decided to drop Cambridgeport to make room for more fruitful opportunities.

Reviews and Recognition

A selection of recent online reviews, and ratings, plus feedback provided via our point-of-sale system, Square:

- Best vegan chicken sandwich I've had. Not a vegan myself but the sandwich is good enough to eat regardless of dietary habits. (James D. via Google)
- Great food, great people! (Courtney C. via Google)
- Excellent. (Peter F. via Google)
- I'm not vegan or even vegetarian and I love your food! (R.H. via email)
- Good sammy. (via Square)
- Delicious! And everyone was really nice to boot. (via Square)
- Not sure what was better, the food or the folks from this rig! (Steven K. via Facebook)

For the second year in a row, we were nominated for Vegan/Vegetarian Food Truck of the Year by Mobile Cuisine, which is an online resource for the mobile food industry. There was a dramatic flurry of voting by the public at the very end of the contest, but (just like in 2018) we ultimately fell behind Herbivorous Butcher in Minneapolis.

We have been nominated for two awards by *Scout Magazines*. The Scouts Honored program recognizes local businesses in a wide variety of industries, and the community votes on their favorites. In 2018, we won the Best Food Truck in Cambridge. This year, we are again nominated for Food Truck, plus Best Vegan or Vegetarian Food in Cambridge. Voting was open through July 24, and winners will be revealed in a subsequent issue of the magazine.

OUR GOALS

Sales

We are working with a “50/50” sales goal for 2019. We want to increase our sales in two areas by 50%:

- **Sales per shift.** Last year, we aimed to reach 100 orders (or sales) per shift on the food truck. In 2019, we're aiming for 150 orders per shift. Currently, we're serving at the 100-120 range on

clear days, and noticing the positive effects of our free sample program and our brand-spanking new menu board. The fresh board uses larger text and more concise language to describe our menu offerings—both aspects we hope will attract the curious passersby, vegans and non-vegans alike.

- **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. Current stats are hovering close to 4,300; we are on pace to meet our annual goal.

We are also watching our speed of sales. In 2018, truck staff used an average of 60 seconds to fulfill an order. So far in 2019, the average rate is reduced to 40 seconds per order.

Social Media, Website, and Publicity

At the writing of this report, we have exceeded our previously set annual goals for followers on Instagram and Facebook. We are setting new stretch goals for the year as a result. We aim to build 4,200 followers on Instagram; 1,500 followers on Facebook, and will retain the goal of 500 followers on Twitter. Our thoughts on Twitter, and its relatively paltry number of participants? The brevity of the posts on Twitter lend it an ephemeral quality, that is best served with frequent messages and multiple posts per day. We retain our account to extend the sharing of our schedules and daily messages, but prefer to spend our time bolstering the popular Instagram channel.

Menu

Monthly specials are fun for our staff (conceiving a new item and executing it with particular ingredients for a short period) and they are an excellent tool for keeping our followers and customers engaged. Bartleby’s Seitan Stand is always on the move, and we want our devils to feel the effort of finding us was worth it. Having a chance to catch a short-lived special sandwich lends good feelings, and we receive a lot of feedback on these items. Our goal is to create a monthly special through December of this year. The top five specials, in terms of sales, will be brought back in 2020, along with new creations.

Stephanie is exploring par-frying techniques and will experiment with using that method to partially prepare seitan in advance and then reheat the items on the truck when ordered. Currently, Bartleby’s truck team breads the seitan by hand and then fries it fresh, and we believe that “à la minute” care sets us apart from other food truck and fast food purveyors. The process is also time consuming

and requires a lot of clean-up at the end of the shift. If it's possible to retain the quality of our fry (which customers describe as outrageously crispy, amazingly craggy, and generally *so good*) by using the time- and effort-saving par-fry method, Bartleby's may make the switch in the future.

Bartleby's has collaborated with other businesses this quarter, and has a handful of additional partnerships on the horizon. Collaborations are not actively sought, but when an opportunity arises to work with other small business owners with inspiring or similar missions, Bartleby's is ready to jump! Stephanie is a firm believer of the idea that "a rising tide lifts all boats," and the exposure and mutual support provided during collaboration helps elevate the work and missions of both parties.

General Business

We are exploring myriad avenues of additional income: a store front, a brick-and-mortar location; additional catering; a second truck; bottling and bulk sales of the housemade sauces. Nothing is off the table, but Stephanie is weighing which options best reflect the spirit and mission of Bartleby's, and which will strengthen its brand and provide financial growth. In terms of revenue, Bartleby's business dropped significantly during the winter months (when the truck was off the road), so we are turning our focus to cooking classes, bulk catering orders, and pop-ups or one-time collaborations. Stephanie hopes concentration on these efforts will not only ease our way through winter, but strengthen the overall structure of the business. Diversified channels of income will make us resilient to fluctuations in sales, and prepare us for larger projects and developments.

We are in the most nascent stages of planning for a "Devils' Day" in September: a celebration of Bartleby's, a show of appreciation for our wicked customers, and an appeal to the non-vegan and non-vegetarian eaters in our fair city. We are brainstorming how to distribute free batches of nuggets to customers during regular service days during the month, and considering one particular day for a special bash. Ideally, Devils' Day will happen annually, so customers will associate the name with a Bartleby's bonanza and fresh, free nuggz.

CLOSING

We're wicked happy with the trajectory of this quarter and our return to the streets after our winter hiatus. As we grow sales, we also grow our reputation. Stephanie has been invited to recent events (to represent the local vegan scene) and asked to consider participating in some new industry programs, which is a signal that Bartleby's has established itself as valuable and recognizable part of the community. The recognition means a greater ability to amplify our mission: to empower people to do good for themselves, the animals, and the planet—one meal at a time. We want to serve tasty, compassionate, and sustainable food to everyone and we are grateful to you and all the ways you support Bartleby's in this work.