



Bartleby's Food
Quarterly Update
April 2020

Service Period: January-March 2020

SUMMARY

Welp. This was an interesting quarter. Each of the three months of service played out very differently. In January, we were still running our regular operations: multiple days on the streets slinging from the food truck, dinner pop-ups, brewery pop-ups, etc. In February, we began preparations to shutter our business in Boston and relocate our headquarters to Fayetteville, AR. And then March hit, and like everyone else, we were waylaid by COVID-19. Schedules and plans went out the window; we encouraged snuggling with nuggz instead. Suffice it to say, we've got a lot to cover in this Quarterly Update.

OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During this quarter in operation (January-March 2020), Bartleby's Food accomplished the following:

Sales

This quarter included just about 5 weeks of service opportunities, so sales figures were modest. The number of meals served was 1,266, which is about 25% of the number served in the final quarter of 2019. Total items sold were 2,312, which is about 60% of the number served in the previous quarter. In contrast to the drops in these numbers, the average ticket price was a whopping \$20.28, up 56% from the previous record-making mark of \$12.99. The high ticket price reflects the bulk ordering that our customers did prior to our closing up shop in Boston.

Our top three menu items were the Sweet Potato Fries, the Spicy Deluxe Sandwich, and the Big & Beastly (10-piece nuggets). Other popular items this quarter were Frickles (our deep-fried pickles), and the biggest version of our nuggets, the 13-piece Devil's Dozen.

Social Media, Website, and Publicity

It is not too surprising, but we saw a slowing in the growth of followers across our three social channels. We even lost a couple followers on Twitter, our least active platform:

Instagram: 1% growth (4,127 to 4,134 followers)

Facebook: 6% growth (1,537 to 1,635 followers)

Twitter: 1% loss (461 to 458 followers)

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 a relocation notice). Even so, we lost a few newsletter subscribers, dropping to 487 names (as compared to 495 in the previous quarter).

Regular Service Completed

Regular services are repeated weekly at the same locations. After a return from our winter break, our schedule was Wednesday lunch in Post Office Square, Thursday dinner in Stoneham, and Saturday lunch in Harvard Square. Our last day in the food truck was February 15, 2020 and we had just 10 regular services scheduled prior to that point.

Special Events Completed

There were just two special events on the calendar for this reduced quarter.

- January 26: Veg-Fest, Turtle Swamp Brewing, Jamaica Plain
- February 20: Mini Vegan Market, Turtle Swamp Brewing, Jamaica Plain

The Mini Vegan Market became our swan song in Boston. We collaborated with our plant-based peers Littleburg and Miss Vegan on some special dishes, including an absolutely immoderate maple-glazed-donut-plus-fried-seitan sandwich, braised chickpeas, “The Greek” gyro-style seitan sandwich, and popcorn broccoli. We saw huge numbers of devils lined up in the cold to get our goods. It was a raucous, warm-hearted, and perfectly devilicious way to finish up service in our home state.

We also held a whopping eight sessions of Bartleby's Seitan School over the course of two and a half weeks in February. All sessions were sold out well in advance. We wanted to cram as many people into our Stoneham commissary as possible, so that we could make sure our southern-fried legacy would live on in the Boston area, even after we left.

Total Service Rate

Of the 20 total services scheduled this past quarter, Bartleby's slung seitan at all 20. That's a successful completion rate of 100%, which marks a continued climb up from the previous two quarters (90% in Q3 2019 and 93% in Q4 2019). We joked then about moving closer to perfection, with no aspirations of actually being perfect, but lo! Here we are. Perfect, professional devils.

Special Catering

Our former commissary, Food rEvolution, is home to a handful of outstanding plant-based businesses. It has the hub for special catering programs over holidays and other notable calendar dates. At the start of February, Food rEv made available special Super Bowl catering. Bartleby's sold cutlets and big party sized batches of nuggets at an amount that represented 239 meals.

OUR GOALS

Normally, we'd use this space to gaze into the future, and lay out our goals for sales revenue, plans for expanding our menu and service reach, and general business growth. But these days are strange and uncertain, and it would be purely aspirational to assume we'll be open for business and earning revenue any time soon. So instead, we'll outline the steps we need to take—when the economy is functional again—to restart Bartleby's Food in its new headquarters.

General Business

Bartleby's Food relocated from its birthplace in Boston, MA to Fayetteville, AR at the end of February. Our overarching goal is to outfit a new kitchen space so that we can serve customers our signature, southern-fried seitan via two main channels: our beloved sixteen-foot food truck and our online shop. Both outlets will be fed via a commissary space.

Old or new? We are weighing our options regarding commissary space. We can either (1) refit an existing kitchen space or (2) build a space from the ground up. Working with an existing space has benefits, such as the likelihood that some or all of the equipment and electrical/plumbing systems we need will already be there, and social cachet from the local community: recognition of a food space that already serves the people. Building a space from the ground up would ensure the kitchen is precisely our dreamiest dream space, and we could tackle additional larger goals, like hosting co-working space for fellow food business in the area, and creating room for wholesale operations, a possible retail area, and a community gathering space for classes and special events.

That's a lot already just regarding the walls and floors of our physical space, but there's even more to tackle in terms of operation:

- **Testing.** We'll re-open our testing request with the Arkansas Food Innovation Center. This will provide us more specific information about the shelf-life of our products, and generate expanded nutritional facts.

- **Suppliers.** We'll find the food suppliers that best support efficient operations and are cost effective. We need to rebuild our pantry completely, right down to shelf-stable staples like the vital wheat gluten, salt, and spices in our scratch-made seitan recipe.
- **Packaging.** We use a lot of packaging to serve food from our food truck, and a different set of packaging to ship patties, nuggz, and sauce via our online shop. As ever, we are committed to making choices that support a healthy planet, so using compostable or recyclable materials whenever possible.
- **Business Certification.** Acquiring a Woman-Owned Small Business certification (WOSB) will make it easier for us to access certain resources and programs to grow our business.

The big blue and orange food truck was shipped south with all its equipment intact. After we can restart food production, the additional tasks required to sling seitan to the Fayetteville devils are:

- **Map out ideal service locations.** Fayetteville has a handful of established food truck courts, like Shulertown, the Yacht Club on College Ave., and Quick Town. We'll scope out these areas, and more, for regular service opportunities, plus start researching events, festivals, concerts and other larger community gatherings.
- **Secure permitting and licenses.** For each service location, we need to secure an operations permit. This is true for regular/repeating locations, and for any singular/one-off locations (such as an event or festival).
- **Complete inspections.** A health inspector needs to come and review our service setup in the truck for food safety, and a certified mechanic will inspect the truck itself to ensure it's safe to operate on the road and while parked for service hours.
- **Staff.** We'll meet and interview new Truck Teamsters, who will take orders, prepare and serve food, and act as real-life ambassadors for all things Bartleby's.
- **Promote.** We'll be connecting with the local communities in Fayetteville, and the surrounding cities of Rogers and Bentonville. Social media will be a major component to interacting with this tri county area, but we'll also do in-person promotions (read: free samples!) to boost appetites.

CLOSING

It's hard to keep spirits up during the Great Pause we find ourselves in as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We're itching to batter nuggz, spin the wheels of our truck, foster relationships with our new community of Fayetteville devils, design a fresh catering menu, and so much more. We'll keep planning ahead, and keep feeling grateful for your support along the way.