

CHEF



INSPIRED



Order Up!

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Cheese Curds Gourmet Burgers + Pouterie is an up-and-coming gourmet food franchise based out of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. First founded in 2012 by entrepreneur Bill Pratt, whose culinary experience includes the Canadian Navy for almost 30 years, Edmonton's prestigious Fairmont Hotel, as well as appearing on the television show Iron Chef America. The core values of the franchise remain focused on preparing their food from scratch as often as feasible; reducing their effect on the environment; and supporting local businesses to help their community thrive. Cheese Curds Gourmet Burgers aim to bring more than just world-class flavour; the goal is to deliver a unique gourmet experience with every menu item, leaving customers satisfied and eager to return.

With two locations currently open in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, and poised for further expansion with franchising opportunities, the company is equipped for success with advancing technology and impressive leadership.

"We are by far the fastest growing restaurant company East of Montreal," says Bill Pratt, Chef and Owner of Cheese Curds. "With nine restaurants opening in three years, it's critical that the team growing and managing this company has

the proper tools, technology, and expertise to sustain this growth properly."

"The Executive team has extensive knowledge of food production, menu creation, kitchen design, interior decorating, food sales, delivery execution and corporate financial management." explains Pratt.

Pratt himself won the 2013 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year in Atlantic Canada for an emerging entrepreneur.

Bringing Efficiency to Quick Service

In virtually any industry, technology is an

integral part of a advancing a business, and Pratt embraces the changes within the service industry, utilizing IT advancements to improve the day-to-day operations of the business. "Some still insist on using a pencil and paper to do the same thing. Our point of sale (POS) provider, East Coast POS in conjunction with A LOHA and NCR can calculate my daily sales up to the minute on my iPhone. I can easily see my food and labor costs from my mobile device whether I'm in Paris, Dubai or simply sitting on my couch at home," says Pratt.

" You can track who our customers are



Cheese Curds Gourmet

through loyalty programs," he continues. "Track your inventory and re-order systems or simply monitor your labor whenever you need it. I have to ask myself, 'Why wouldn't you want to invest money into this technology if it's only going to help you understand your business that much more?'"

Along with improving the processes in which they run the business, Cheese Curds is also dedicated to upgrading their equipment to increase their efficiency with energy consumption. "We invest heavily in modern energy efficient equipment that will reduce our operating costs throughout the year,"

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Cheese Curds Gourmet



Pratt explains. "If you've got an old piece of equipment in the kitchen burning excess fuel which adds to your monthly costs, wouldn't it seem obvious to re-invest in efficient equipment that's going to save you money in the long run?"

In the same vein as energy efficiency, Cheese Curds is committed to being an eco-friendly franchise. From maximizing the design of their physical locations, right through to the day-to-day operation of the restaurants, reducing their impact on the environment is a top priority.

"Quick Service restaurants are notorious for generating garbage and waste," says Pratt. "So we continually look at initiatives to reduce waste by sourcing earth friendly wares whenever we can. We buy as much local products in order to reduce our carbon footprint, and have been outfitting our restaurants with energy efficient equipment."

Though the financial aspects of upgrading equipment may be off-putting to some, Cheese Curds is willing to put forth the time, effort and money to upgrade in hopes of benefiting the environment, as well saving more money long-term. With the ex-

pert help of local suppliers such as Big Eric's, Pratt understands the savings to be found in certain equipment. From the use of sustainable building materials in the construction of their locations, including bamboo floors, to biodegradable utensils and napkins made from recycled materials.

"There are a lot of operators that simply look at the initial cost of a piece of equipment because they're saving a few bucks on the front end," he says. "However, the real savings for years to come is by investing a little more on the front end to reduce your monthly costs."

A TEAM EFFORT

Strong relationships with partners and suppliers are key to a business succeeding and growing their market share. Loyalty goes a long way with partners says Pratt, sharing their success thus far with those who have helped make it possible. "If you work with your suppliers to build loyal relationships it's only going to help you grow," says Pratt. "Both my Coca Cola Rep and Gordon Food Service suppliers have stepped up to help me grow with incentives that help reduce costly construction bills. We both win as long as I continue to grow so why wouldn't we want them to be part of our success?"

In addition to their key partners and suppliers, relationships are vital within the workforce and having the right people aboard the team is paramount. On how to succeed as a Cheese Curds employee, Pratt says, "For those individuals willing to work hard and prove themselves, the opportunity to grow and succeed in our organizations is leaps and bounds ahead of our competitors."

"My philosophy has been to promote from within for those willing to go above and beyond the individual that simply does the job," he continues.

Pratt emphasizes that for true motivation, the work environment must be fun, and one that inspires pride in the business as a whole; not simply a means to an end. "Although most people think that money is a motivator, ask yourself 'How many people are stuck in a job because they have to be there to pay the bills?'. Wouldn't it be great to come into work and have fun or be proud of the reputation of your company?'"

EXPANDING THE CHEESE CURDS BRAND

Marketing the franchise and developing



your brand is a key factor in the success of any restaurant, as Pratt puts it best, "You can be the best chef in the city with the best food, however, if nobody knows about you then you're simply dead in the water."

The changing landscape of marketing, specifically the influx of social media, has influenced a shift in how businesses interact with their patrons. Maintaining an online presence for Cheese Curds meant the addition of staff with the specific task of engaging with clients on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

"In my generation it was all about word of mouth and advertising," explains Pratt. "Today, social media is a critical component to marketing yourself. Although I do not have a Facebook account or active Twitter account, I recognize that I need it so we employ two people full-time to manage our accounts."

First and foremost, Cheese Curds' product and dining experience are the key selling points. With a wide range of gourmet burgers to choose from - including 15 different burgers ranging from a 6 oz Black Angus Beef Burger, to the more exotic Thai Chick-





en Burger- patrons can try something new while knowing they're receiving the highest quality ingredients and preparation. In addition to their varied roster of burgers, Cheese Curds offers up a selection of specialty pou-



tines that can't be beat, including a Maritime favorite; the Donair Poutine with House Spiced Meat.

"A huge proponent to our success has also been the outstanding product and reputation we have built over the past three years," Pratt says. "All you need to do is try us and you'll understand why we're so popular. With that said however, we still need to constantly be doing something to market ourselves to our followers and being creative and bringing new ideas to our customers to always keep it fresh."

As for the future of Cheese Curds Gourmet Burgers + Pouterie, Pratt says the focus is on controlled growth and the addition of new franchises in 2015. Opting for an approach which emphasizes quality over quantity allows them to offer focused attention and support for franchisees. "We'd much rather take a conservative approach and grow our company with realistic targets while ensuring that our franchisees are successful," says Pratt. "I'd rather have 20 stores that are suc-



cessful than 100 that are mediocre. At the end of the day, we're in business to make sure our franchisees are successful and have spent the extra effort to ensure this happens."

"If they're successful then we're successful," says Pratt.



Cheese Curds

GOURMET BURGERS + POUTINERIE