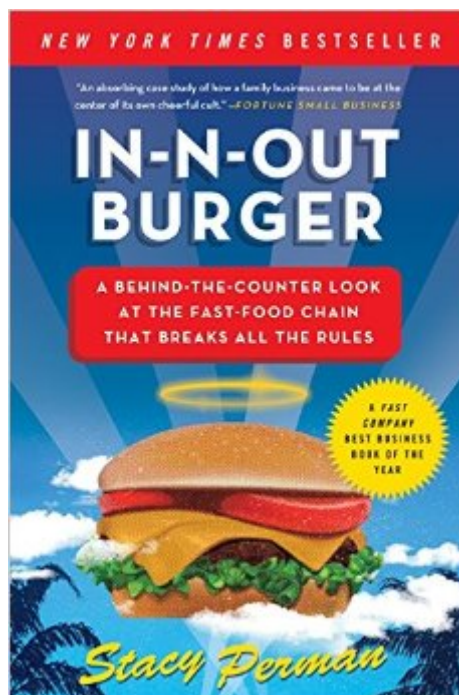


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# In-N-Out Burger: A Behind-the-Counter Look At The Fast-Food Chain That Breaks All The Rules



## Synopsis

• This book grills up an enjoyable read for both avid foodies and novice diners alike! Perman's sneak peek into the fascinating history of In-N-Out is as good as the delicious burgers themselves. • Mario Batali, celebrity chef and author of *Molto Italiano* A behind-the-counter look at the fast-food chain that breaks all the rules, Stacy Perman's *In-N-Out Burger* is the New York Times bestselling inside story of the family behind the California-based hamburger chain with a cult following large enough to rival the Grateful Dead's. A juicy unauthorized history of a small business-turned-big business titan, In-N-Out Burger was named one of Fast Company magazine's Best Business Books of 2009, and *Fortune* Small Business insists that it should be required reading for family business owners, alongside Rich Cohen's *Sweet and Low* and Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*. •

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Lots of people love In-N-Out hamburgers, and Stacy Perman would tell its history. Although well written with a fine job of documenting the company after Harry Snyder's sons, Rich and Guy, took over, it omits the story of the risk and drama of its origination and contains errors and omissions. For example, Perman only alludes to Charles Noddin but, without him, there would be no In-N-Out. She says, "it was just Esther and Harry. The Snyders did everything themselves." Not true. Charlie and Edith Noddin devoted as much time and effort as Esther and Harry. Although Harry, being younger, did more labor. As to the secret sauce, after some minor adjustments, Harry never "spent years

perfecting" it. But the greatest omission is the lack of explaining why the first In-N-Out was built in a place as isolated as Baldwin Park. It was a desperate place to start a business. And the story is untold. She states that, "in all probability it was the country's first (drive through)". That's not so either. Enterprises evolve and the lunch wagons of the 1890s passed food to carriages driving in the street and to customers on the sidewalk. Surprisingly, about 1898, there was a drive up for carriages. Harry Snyder did invent the two-way speaker. The reason he installed it was because when two or three cars were lined up, ordering by hand signals and shouting just didn't work; it was not so "motorists could order at one end" and "pick up their food at the other end." Also, the speakers were installed later, about two years when the need arose. Perman states that Snyder was a savvy businessman who established Snyder Distributing. He actually divided the business into several independent units but it wasn't his idea; it was suggested by a CPA. Her statements about making a burger are not factual either nor that "five-wide tomatoes in a special designed box" were used. He used five by sixes and they were cut thinner in winter when the price escalated. Harry was a frugal man. Snyder did not own the property of No. 1; it was leased. When the I-10 freeway was built over No. 1, the state offered Harry some surplus property across Garvey Blvd. He happily bought it for a song. Perman says that when Snyder and Noddin broke the partnership, Snyder kept the In-N-Out name. Not true. There were four stores then and each took two, and each had the In-N-Out name. She says that Noddin opened another burger chain in Pasadena but he didn't. Snyder took over the Baldwin Park and Pasadena stores. Noddin took the San Gabriel and Azusa units and did not build any others. In spite of such errors and omissions, the book provides a fine history of fast food and is well worth reading.

A few years ago I read "Behind the Golden Arches" which was the story of McDonalds. That book spent a lot of time talking about developing the great systems that McDonalds put in place in order to expand world wide. Until I went to In & Out I thought McDonalds had the best fast food system. However In and Out puts McDonalds (and all the others) to shame. The simplicity of the menu, being able to observe the preparation, not allowing long lines before taking the order, having a spare trash container next to the existing ones, the layout of the restaurants (I could be blindfolded in a new In & Out and find my way around), paying employees a bit more to get the good people. I'm dissatisfied because this book doesn't address any of these in any detail. Who developed these systems? How long did it take? How have they changed over the years? In & Out is my favorite place to eat, but this book is not worth reading unless you like family gossip.

This is the life story of Harry and Esther Snyder and their family... and their one of a kind AMERICAN-SUCCESS-STORY IN-N-OUT-BURGER. The reader is taken from the Snyder's humble family beginnings... their falling in love... both their military service... the birth of their children... and their personal doggedness that led from one small fast food burger shop... to the current "cult-classic" chain that numbers over two-hundred locations. And it all started with Harry's mantra... do just one thing and be the best at it... and his entire system was based on three simple words: "QUALITY, CLEANLINESS, AND SERVICE". The author's exhaustive research pays off in spades as this is not only a tale of the amazing growth and success of "IN-N-OUT-BURGER"... but an insider's look... right from the middle of the action in the unparalleled escalation of the fast food culture in the United States from 1948 to the present. The Snyder's were not only right there with the birth of McDonald's, Burger King, Carl's Jr., etc. but In-N-Out beat them at their own game in the local market place that In-N-Out competed with them in. In fact even though they competed in the same area as Carl Karcher the owner of Carl's Jr. ... they were lifelong friends to the day they died. As the rest of the industry spent every waking moment and dollar on lowering costs... whether through automation... or figuring out how many different ways they can freeze meat and potatoes... Harry refused to worry about lowering costs... he worried about "everything"... and I mean "everything"... being fresh. Only fresh meat... only fresh potatoes that they peeled and cooked themselves... every single day. They made their own buns... and made their own "secret sauce"... and they never spent money on advertising (not until the next generation of Snyder's... and then only minimally.)... because they didn't have to. The unbridled love of a meal from In-N-Out Burger... was passed from customers to their relatives... from relatives... to friends... from friends to mere acquaintances... like sharing a secret treasure. Lines of customers would wrap around the block and cause traffic jams. As they grew Harry got his own butcher to actually prepare the meat that came directly from a farm. Harry took care of the product and Esther handled the bookkeeping. Harry built a reputation with all his suppliers that his word was his bond. He never pressured them for better prices... he just let them know if he needed their help in a crisis they better be there. He inspected every truck of potatoes and meat. One bad potato and the whole truck was sent away. I can personally vouch for the Snyder's integrity that the author writes about, because in the early 1970's I was the sales manager for a computer company in Los Angeles that sold In-N-Out Burger a computer system to handle their burgeoning accounting needs. They were very happy with our system and wrote us a letter of recommendation on their "famous" In-N-Out-Burger letterhead. We put it in a nice frame in the lobby of our Wilshire Blvd. showroom so every potential customer that came to our office for a demonstration could read how we helped automate this unbelievable fast

food hamburger company that was literally taking Southern California by storm. As In-N-Out grew there were always rumors that they were going to sell the company to a conglomerate or go public but that was never the case. They also were only interested in very slow controlled growth. The Snyder's were always very private and kept things close to the vest. After Harry died... the younger son Rich took over and did a tremendous job. Unfortunately Rich died early in a plane crash and the older brother Guy who battled drugs took over and subsequently lost his fight with those demons. Esther's will and trust were changed so only a blood heir could inherit her stock... and there was only one such heir... Guy's young daughter Lynsi Snyder Martinez... who was not yet an adult. Regrettably... an ugly legal battle broke out between the trustees and Lynsi... and a company that kept family business private for over forty-years... was exposed through the media in ways that they had totally avoided through two prior generations. Just as important as their unique "always-fresh" product is to In-N-Out Burger's storybook success... is the way they always treated their employees like family. In fact Harry and Esther never let anyone call them employees... and they would literally interrupt you in the middle of a sentence and tell you "THEY ARE NOT EMPLOYEES... THEY'RE ASSOCIATES!" This is an absolutely engrossing story that weaves together an All-American-family... business... fast-food-mania... tragedy and success... and I am glad I dealt with this wonderful family personally... and I'm also glad I read this book... and even though I live in Northern California now... there is an In-N-Out Burger seven-tenths of a mile from my front door.

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