



September 18, 2000

Jack in the Box Tacos: As American as Baseball and Apple Pie

SAN DIEGO - The Mayans might have invented the taco, but Jack made it a cult hero. With its crispy shell, special blend of beef and spice, half slice of American cheese, and zippy taco sauce -- there's nothing in the world like a Jack in the Box® taco. It's one of a kind, made from a recipe that hasn't changed since the taco first appeared on the Jack in the Box menu in the mid-1950s.

Ask anyone who grew up with Jack in the Box and they'll tell tales of late-night trips to the Box to satisfy their taco craving. Much like White Castle's "Slider" in the East, Jack's tacos have developed a fanatical following and a reputation for curing whatever ails you, especially after an overindulgent night on the town.

"Our tacos have a cult following that even we can't explain," said Janet McCulley, product manager for Jack in the Box. "They're a craved item with phenomenal customer loyalty, especially among our target audience of men age 18-34."

The Tao of the Taco

With approximately 10 percent of Jack in the Box food sales coming from tacos, the taco trade is big business for the burger baron. So what makes Jack in the Box tacos so irresistible? The secret isn't in the sauce, it's in the special manufacturing process developed by the chain.

"Making a Jack in the Box taco is 50 percent art and 50 percent science," said Alan Cline, director of purchasing at Jack in the Box. "All the components have to be just right, from the texture of the tortillas to the seasoning of the meat. If something's not right, it's not a Jack in the Box taco and we won't sell it."

Until 1982, Jack in the Box tacos were produced in manufacturing facilities at the chain's corporate headquarters in San Diego. After closing the taco assembly line in San Diego, the company moved the operation to Specialty Brands food processing in Lampassas, Texas. Then, with demand continuing to rise - to the tune of 600 tacos being purchased each minute - the chain enlisted an additional manufacturing facility, Winchester Food Processing in Hutchinson, Kan., in 1998.

Both plants follow Jack's time-tested taco-making process, beginning with tortillas made from fresh, stone-ground corn. "Many fast-food chains make their shells from a mix, but we ship in truckloads of corn each week, steam cook the corn and then stone-grind it into masa," said Cline. "The masa is then pressed into sheets from which the tortillas are cut and sent into a 700-degree oven."

Jack in the Box grinds its own taco beef at both plants before cooking it in a special spice mixture. The fully cooked meat is then deposited onto fresh-from-the-oven tortillas by a machine that fills 60 tacos a minute, an improvement over the old days when the meat filling was applied by hand with teaspoons.

Once filled with meat, the tortillas are folded and sent down the line where employees inspect the tacos for tears and holes, then hand-pack the tacos in trays. The trays of tacos are shrink-wrapped, flash-frozen and sent off to Jack in the Box distribution centers for delivery to restaurants.

Placing the meat in the tortilla in the factory not only contributes to the taco's unique flavor and appearance, it also increases speed of service in the restaurants.

"Stuffing the taco before it goes to the restaurant streamlines the taco-making process significantly," said Cline. "All employees have to do is drop the taco in the deep fryer, top it with cheese, lettuce and taco sauce, and serve it to the guest."

Touting the Taco

Since 1995, the chain has offered two regular tacos for 99 cents, a very popular promotion. "Jack in the Box tacos are seen as a high value," said McCulley. "Two tacos is a lot of food for 99 cents."

The popularity of Jack's tacos is so great that minimal advertising is required for the product. In 1997, the chain aired a

commercial titled "Auction," which featured usually staid blue bloods giddily sharing their favorite taco memories. But for the most part, the chain relies on in-restaurant signs to promote its tacos.

So, thanks to Jack's ever-growing taco tribe, the Jack in the Box taco has marked its place in fast-food history. But unlike the Mayans, who went the way of the Yugo, Jack's tacos are here to stay.

Jack in the Box Inc. (NYSE: JBX) operates and franchises more than 1,600 quick-serve restaurants and has systemwide sales of \$2 billion. With headquarters in San Diego, the company has approximately 42,000 employees and operates in 15 states.

© 2012 JACK IN THE BOX INC.