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From the Drawing Board to the Menu Board

How Jack in the Box® restaurants created the Western Cheeseburger, the newest addition to its 99-cent lineup

SAN DIEGO - Hamburgers aren't rocket science. Grill a beef patty, slap it between a bun, and voila - you've got a burger, right? Well, not exactly. Building a new Jack in the Box® burger takes months of research and hard work, deciding on everything from the number of pickles to the price.

Take the new Western Cheeseburger that Jack in the Box introduced this week, as an example. As the latest addition to its 99-cent menu, the Western Cheeseburger might be new to customers in Texas, Arizona, Idaho, Oregon and Washington, but the burger has been in development for more than a year.

"Creating a quality burger that meets our guests' expectations takes time," said Janet McCulley, product manager for Jack in the Box. "Most importantly, a burger has to taste great, particularly to our target audience, men age 18-34. But we also have to be able to prepare it fast to meet our guests' expectations for quick service."

At Jack in the Box, building a burger begins with an objective - in this case, creating a quality product for the chain's popular 99-cent menu. With that goal in mind, the company's "99-cent team" - staffers from operations to marketing to quality assurance - began the ideation process in March of 1999.

"Research told us our target audience wants big, tasty burgers, so we wanted to create one full of western barbecue flavor," said McCulley.

From ideation, the team moseyed into the kitchen to test burger concepts. The team not only worked on getting the taste just right, but they also studied each burger to see how it would work in a real restaurant kitchen - whether it required new equipment, new ingredients, and how quickly it could be assembled to order without compromising quality.

Next, the team took its top burger concepts to typical Jack in the Box customers to taste test Jack's newest creations. More than 1,000 participants rated the products on purchase appeal, likability, value, believability and uniqueness.

With a jumbo beef patty, a slice of American cheese, two pickles, onions, mayo-onion sauce, and a tangy barbecue sauce, the Western Cheeseburger broke out from the concept herd during tests.

In March, it was corralled into several restaurants in Boise, Idaho, to test as a limited-time offer. Customer response to the Western Cheeseburger was so great that the chain decided to add the burger to its menu.

Currently, the Western Cheeseburger is only available in half of the chain's markets, but the company plans to have the burger stampeding into all Jack in the Box restaurants next year.

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