

An Inside Scoop on Dugg Burger



There's something new under the sun in the better-burger category, and it's as simple as digging out the bun.

The first Dugg Burger opened last month in Dallas under the ownership of industry veterans Jeff Braunstein, Martin Hennessy, Jeremy Samson, and Scott Spence. Spence, who previously held senior marketing positions at Taco Bell and Church's Chicken, says Dugg Burger's method of hollowing out buns to make extra room for toppings was born out of efficiency.

"We're really dedicated to the idea of simple done exceptionally," he says. "And letting people choose their toppings as they move down the line was just a natural extension of that. Then making a space for the toppings allows customers to easily eat, and it keeps things moving."

This sense of intuitive simplicity is present in the rest of Dugg Burger's small menu, where the only dessert item is a bread pudding made from the buns' carvings. Not only does this creative recycling save Dugg in food costs, Spence says, but customers also like the idea of every ingredient going to use.

"I haven't seen anyone else doing what we're doing," Spence says. "People love the simplicity and seem interested in seeing the process. They are responding really well."

Customers are also responding to Dugg's crowdsourcing social media initiative, Lucky 13th, through which customers can suggest a 13 topping to the current selection, known as the "Dugg Dozen." So far, diverse items such as avocado, pastrami, and fried egg have been featured as the Lucky 13 ingredient, which changes spontaneously.

"It's fun to mix it up that way, even if it requires a little more effort on our part in terms of planning," Spence says. "For instance, my mother and grandmother make this sweet-and-savory pear relish once a year, and when I had two extra jars, we went ahead and made that the extra topping—for the few hours it lasted."

Spence is confident that he and his partners can take the burger concept to just about any market and find success, not only because of the burger's popularity, but also because of Dugg's focus on efficiency. The small menu ensures customers walking in the door are almost always going to order a hamburger, allowing employees to get orders on the grill immediately.

"There are so many great burger competitors out there, but the one thing that's been missing from this better-burger category is someone who can really do it with speed," he says. "Speed is so important for so many customers."

As the brand expands, Spence says, Dugg will remain committed to its internal mantra of "simple done exceptionally" in every new market.

By Emily Byrd