



The Culver Story

***OUR MISSION: "WE GENUINELY CARE, SO EVERY GUEST WHO
CHOOSES CULVER'S LEAVES HAPPY."***

Culver's co-founders Craig and Lea Culver, and Craig's parents George and Ruth Culver built their restaurant business by following this principle. But there is a story to tell on how this all came to be, one that starts on the banks of the Wisconsin River in a southern Wisconsin town called Sauk City.

Craig, his brother Curt and sister Georgia grew up immersed in the restaurant business. His parents George and Ruth owned and operated supper clubs and eateries throughout the Sauk County area, and Craig became fascinated with the world of quick fare. Craig's parents first purchased an A&W Root Beer property in 1961 and sold it in 1968. While they didn't know it at the time, this site would one day provide fertile ground for the Culver family's ultimate success.

In 1968 his parents purchased the Farm Kitchen resort at Devil's Lake. Craig worked there during his college breaks and summers. It was there he met his wife Lea. They married and over time became the proud parents of three daughters.

Craig graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh in 1973 with a biology degree but wasn't really sure of what he wanted to do with his life. His interest ultimately returned to the restaurant business. Over the next several years Craig worked at McDonald's, took a shot at running his own restaurant, and ultimately went back to helping run restaurants owned by his father and mother.

In 1984 the Culver family had a chance to purchase the same Sauk City A&W property it owned almost 20 years before. They jumped at the chance to return to their roots.

Frozen custard was a longtime favorite tasty treat for the Culver family, who frequently made trips to Milwaukee (the unofficial custard capital of the world) for their favorite dessert. But running a typically summer business year-round would require menu variety. Burgers were their first menu item and they needed a name. Craig remembered when his mom would butter the top of a bun and lightly grill it until toasted. From this, the "ButterBurger" was born.

On July 18, 1984, the first Culver's Frozen Custard and ButterBurger restaurant opened for business. Craig ran the restaurant, remembering one of his dad's many sayings: "Don't mess with the quality." Through this wisdom, guidance, coaching and teaching, the business started to thrive.

Culver Franchising System, LLC
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As with any new business there were some successes and learning opportunities along the way. In 1990 the rights to a Baraboo, Wisconsin, restaurant were drafted and sold. The first successful franchised restaurant opened in December 1990. In the years that followed, a speckling of new restaurants opened throughout Wisconsin and then expanded beyond the state line.

In an effort to support the growing restaurant chain, Culver Franchising System, LLC. (CFS) was created. The goal of CFS is to ensure that franchise growth coincides with proper training, education, and personal and professional growth. In 1999 CFS opened offices and a Learning Center in Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin, just a mile or so from the original restaurant. In 2009 CFS opened a new 47,000-square-foot support facility in Prairie du Sac. Culver's strategic growth plan includes restaurants from the Midwest south to Texas, west to Arizona and Utah, and east to South Carolina and Florida. According to Entrepreneur Magazine, Culver's is the largest frozen custard chain in the United States.

Culver's is proud to call Sauk City home. This is a place connected to the farms that produce the dairy and grow the food that has made Culver's a family favorite nationwide.

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