



Cafe Society

Evol Burritos give new life to frozen food

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Once upon a time, a man named Phil Anson, who enjoyed rock-climbing in Eldorado Canyon and made a killer burrito, stumbled upon a business idea: He packed his homemade burritos into a cooler to sell to his fellow climbers. And they were good.

But Anson realized this wasn't the best way to do business, so he started selling his burritos wholesale to corner markets in the area. "He got really great at developing the flavors, and he came up with his first packaging," explains Danielle Winslow, marketing director at what is now Evol Burritos. "But around 2005, he discovered that doing fresh burritos wasn't the most profitable way to grow his business."

Enter the frozen-food market, often vilified (and often for good reason). But these frozen burritos are different.

"In 2008 when he debuted the frozen burritos, it was called Phil's Fresh Foods," says Winslow. "He was kind of stuck, though, because he was in this category with other foods like Amy's and Cedar Lane, and people view frozen burritos as kind of a last resort for a meal."

In early 2009, two more characters enter the scene: Tom Spier and Brendan Synnott, who had just sold off their granola company, Bear Naked. "They thought they could make a lifestyle brand out of the freezer section," Winslow continues, "so they met with Phil, and Tom and Brendan came on board, and they rebranded to Evol Burritos."

(The name, in case you're curious, is "love" spelled backwards -- chosen because people really do love these burritos.)

"Although most of the recipes have stayed the same, Phil was able to make some really significant changes," Winslow adds. "He changed the meats to sustainably raised meat and lowered the sodium. We're putting rBST-free cheese in our burritos, too. And now we're at the brink, where we took Phil's original eleven products. They're in the #2 market share for frozen burritos in the country, and in February, we launched our first line of deli-wrap burritos." The deli-wrap versions are sold hot in convenience stores and coffee shops, and include some flavors not found in the frozen variety, such as bacon, egg and cheese or veggie, bean and cheese.

"And we have individually quick-frozen burritos going into school districts, Boulder Valley," Winslow says. "About twice a month, they serve an Evol burrito lunch. It's kind of a cool way to bring healthy food that kids actually like." (Are you listening, Jamie Oliver?)

In the future, Evol plans to expand with more flavors -- including some ethnic-inspired burritos -- but for now, the lineup includes 70 percent organic veggie fajita and tofu & spinach saute burritos (both vegan); 80 percent organic cilantro lime chicken and basic bean-and-cheese burritos; and an all-natural lineup featuring chicken, bean and rice; shredded beef; pork and green chile; bean, rice and cheese; egg and green chile; egg and sausage; and egg and potato burritos.

The burritos are microwavable (and taste even better if you toast them with a panini press before munching); you can also pan-fry them or pop them in the oven. Find them at Whole Foods, King Soopers, Vitamin Cottage, Sunflower Market and Sprouts. Visit www.evolburritos.com to learn more.