



Introduction

The setup: Rutabagas is a successful vegan restaurant in Lincoln, Nebraska that has recently rented space in Omaha's Old Market in the hopes of launching a second location. Our challenge is in establishing Rutabagas as a go-to for vegan-friendly fare in what has sometimes proved to be an inhospitable environment for plant-based diners and the companies who serve them.

Restaurants can be risky endeavors. Growing a vegan restaurant in the land of Omaha Steaks, "beef passport" programs and an increasingly polarized populace? May be riskier still. After all, for some in the Middle West, meat is more than breakfast (lunch and dinner). It's identity.

For the carnivorous set, plant-based has been known to evoke feelings of resentment, or, at the least, a little light scoffing. And ethical vegans, too, have been called out for something like sanctimony, with an ideology oftentimes at odds with Nebraska's farmers, ranchers and other salt of the earth types.

I have been a vegetarian for just over a decade; I live, work and play across Lincoln, Omaha and (occasionally) beyond. That said, I am familiar with the current dining limitations for plant-based eaters, gaps in the market and even a few success stories. Modern Love, for example, a vegan restaurant founded in Omaha in 2014, has since seen success in the biggest apple of them all—New York City.

I am always interested in exploring how one might build campaigns that bypass bad feelings (and bring vegans, Meatless Monday-ers—and maybe even a skeptical carnivore or two—to the table). As this project kicked off, I imagined my target audience to be established, middle class, educated, millennial women from neighborhoods like Midtown, Downtown, Dundee and Blackstone. I assumed, also, that these women would likely be flexitarians (or adventurous eaters) dining out alongside the University of Nebraska at Omaha's 20-something students (potential customers, too, based on Rutabagas' proximity to campus, changing attitudes toward the meat industry and price point). I wasn't terribly far off, but there were certainly a few surprises to come.

Situation Analysis

COMPANY

Basics

- According to their company website, the Rutabagas mission is to “serve nostalgic comfort food in Lincoln, Nebraska. Each dish is inspired by plants and made with love.” Former iterations, as reported by the *Lincoln Journal Star* added, “everyone is welcome at our table—meat eaters, plant eaters and crayon eaters alike (Korbelik, 2020).
- As reported by Kubert (2021), Rutabagas’ owner-operator and Lincoln-native Sara McArdle,

“...grew up around the restaurant industry and worked in several restaurants during her school and university years. After graduating from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, she worked at the American Heart Association, during which time she transitioned to a vegan diet. As her interest in vegan dishes grew, so did a desire to share her knowledge and meals with people.”

A combination of education, experience and lifestyle inspired McArdle to build a business centering a plant-based experience.

- Guided by the company’s mission and plant-based menu, we can infer that Rutabagas values (heart) health, inclusivity and environmentalism.
- As succinctly described by McArdle herself, Rutabagas is known in the community as the place to go for “conscientiously curat[ed] vegan comfort food” (Lange-Kubick, 2019).
- According to Dun & Bradstreet data, Rutabagas’ annual revenue is approximately \$106,872, with seven employees including management as well as front and back of house (“Business Directory,” n.d.).

Strategy

- Rutabagas falls under the food service umbrella. The company self-selected “comfort food” and “restaurant” when developing their Facebook business page, based on available categories (<https://www.facebook.com/rutabagasvegancomfortfood/>).
- The *Lincoln Journal Star* describes Rutabagas as a “fast casual” eatery (Korbelik, 2021). Elaborating on the dining experience, Korbelik (2021) goes on to say:

“Patrons order at the counter and then are given a sign to place on their table so the kitchen knows where to deliver food. Drinks are handled at the counter... Patrons retrieve their own tableware and paper napkins from the counter.”

- According to YPulse (2021) data, “forty-seven percent of 13-39-year-olds say they drink plant-based beverages and/or eat plant-based meat regularly.” As plant-based eating and dining continue to grow more mainstream, a vegan restaurant experience appeals to both dedicated vegans and curious consumers, who may be new to the meat-free market.
 - Rutabagas’ website is simple, clean and to-the-point with a full menu and online ordering option.
 - Earned media from their hometown daily, the *Lincoln-Journal Star*, featured Rutabagas first as a top story (when the restaurant was established in 2019), and again later, in both the “Dining Out” section and “L Magazine.” Coverage such as this is helpful in raising overall brand awareness and connecting with potential diners.
 - Rutabagas’ social media spaces of choice are Facebook, Instagram and (recently) TikTok, with similar light-hearted, silly-sweet (sometimes sassy) content across all platforms (think PG-13 bachelorette brunches and lunch with your “bestie” vibes).
 - Rutabagas currently has 5,316 Facebook followers, 5,643 Instagram followers and a small retail shop linked to the company’s website.
 - Less than 50 Yelp reviews indicate low engagement overall. The company averages 1-3 posts per day on their social profiles, with anywhere from a handful of likes and replies to nearly 250 likes on an Instagram post featuring Ann, Rutabagas’ resident sweets-maker.
 - Rutabagas’ IG grid features primarily menu items, including specials, cocktails and mocktails.
 - The company’s Facebook page displays a handful of promotions, specifically “Husker Game Day” and brunch specials. Data from Google Trends, as reported by the *Washington Post*, indicates that brunch is on the rise, with internet chatter and interest on an upward trend since 2004 (Ingraham & Ferdman, 2019).
 - Interestingly, “a review of Google search data...shows how heavily talk about brunch is concentrated around the coasts—and how barren the Midwest brunch scene is. Any Midwesterner who tells you otherwise is likely an outlier, an urban transplant” (Ingraham & Ferdman, 2019). It’s possible that the team at Rutabagas is attempting to capitalize on a trend that hasn’t made its way to the Middle West set quite yet.
 - Alternatively, game days in Lincoln greatly increase overall traffic. According to the Nebraska Department of Transportation, Memorial Stadium operates at “an extended capacity of more than 85,000 people” and is “commonly referred as the ‘third largest city in Nebraska’ on game days” (Nebraska Department of Transportation, 2019). While Omaha’s Husker fans are certainly seen and heard, it’s more metropolitan than college-town, and this is something to keep in mind when developing strategies and promotions at the new location.
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CATEGORY

- Market research indicates that the popularity of plant-based products is growing—and will continue to grow. Currently, sales in plant-based meat are outpacing growth in meat sales. “In the United States,” one Statista report shows, “retail sales of plant-based meat have grown by 10 percent in 2019. By contrast, retail sales of animal meat have only grown by 2 percent” (“Forecasted market value,” 2020). Following vegan trends, “U.S. consumers spent nearly \$1.9 billion on plant-based milks in [2019] and an impressive \$3.3 billion on plant-based foods in 2018” (“Vegan restaurants,” 2019). The demand for meatless alternatives has motivated major restaurant chains like KFC, White Castle, Burger King, and Carl’s Jr. to introduce plant-based options to their menus (“Vegan restaurants,” 2019).
- According to *Forbes*, “plant-based companies in the U.S. raised \$741 million in the first three months of 2020,” and “investors are becoming more and more interested in helping the sector thrive” (“Investors are looking toward,” 2021). Shifting priorities regarding health and the environment, for example, are motivating meat-eaters to reconsider their diets, and with options ranging from flexitarianism to full-on veganism, projected growth can impact a variety of demographics. “Consumers want to know where their food comes from. This is shining a light on animal abuse issues, environmental issues, unsafe business practices, and dangerous working conditions within the legacy meat industry” (“Investors are looking toward,” 2021). As consumers begin to buy plant-based, they’re likely, too, more apt to choose vegan-friendly dining options—like Rutabagas.
- The *Harvard Political Review* cited multiple sources that would indicate plant-free business ventures are emerging. From retail to dining, public interest in going meatless continues to grow.

“Once considered to be a fringe diet only followed by animal rights activists and health enthusiasts, the number of vegans in the United States has increased from 290,000 to 9.7 million over the last 15 years, and Google Trends data reports that interest in veganism in 2019 was 10 times what it was in 2004” (Keselj, 2020).

Restaurants are working to keep up with these trends by diversifying their menus. “With an increasing number of vegans and vegetarians out there, restaurants whose menus lack plant-based diversity will soon find that they are passed over for more vegan-friendly competitors” (Greene, 2018).

- Many larger companies, such as Burger King and KFC, have built campaigns around specific vegetarian/vegan-friendly menu items as they are added. The typical focus? Taste. This idea that the plant-based product is indistinguishable in taste and appearance from the “real thing” is critical to winning over customers who might be on the fence, but open to a new experience—if it’s coming from a trusted brand. Bottom line: no matter the social, political or environmental motivations for being meat free (or meat

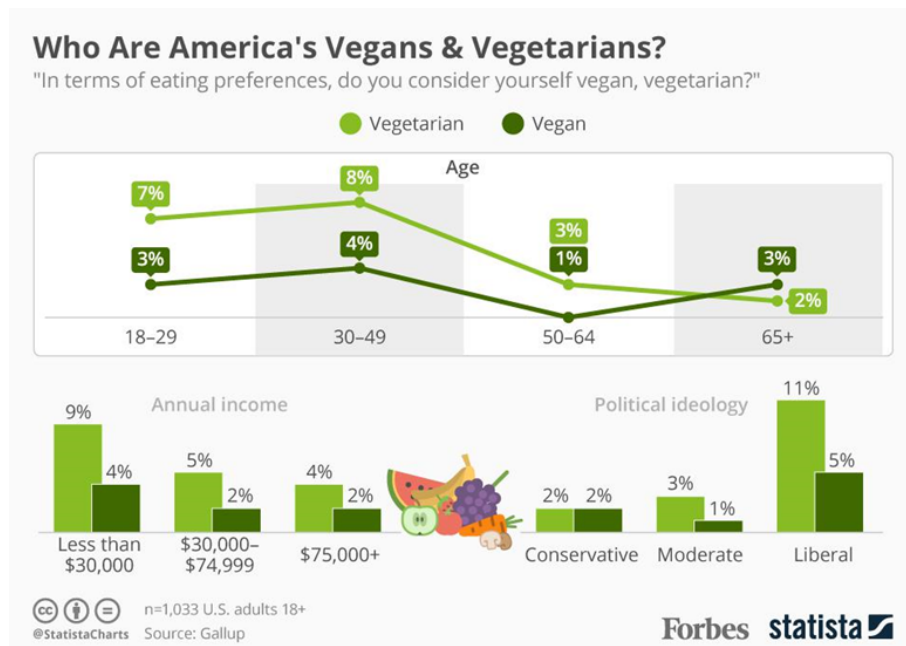
questioning), if it doesn't taste good, they're not buying. And for a lot of consumers, "good" is...meat.

- In a 2020 *Ad Age* feature, KFC's chief marketing officer said in reference to their Beyond Fried Chicken, "I think we have gotten to a product that our customers are going to believe replicates the experience of having Kentucky Fried Chicken" (Wohl, 2020).
- In Burger King's 2021 Impossible Whopper advertisement, a voice over declares, "These are confusing times. Which is just about the right time to have the Burger King Impossible Whopper. A Whopper made without beef that tastes just like...a Whopper" (Burger King, 2021).
- The "tastes like the real thing" strategy appears to be quite popular with chains firmly established in the carnivore's consciousness.
- As younger generations become leading consumers and as climate science becomes common knowledge, the zeitgeist could shift to conservation. Certain key issues like health, diet and climate may continue to move more consumers to plant-based purchases.
- Rutabagas essentially bucked the trend in 2020, relocating and reopening in the midst of a global pandemic that left many restaurants shuttering their doors for good. "More than 110,000 eating and drinking establishments in the United States closed for business—temporarily or permanently—last year, with nearly 2.5 million jobs erased from pre-pandemic levels" (King, 2021).
- According to the Nebraska Beef Council, "Nebraska has the top three beef cow counties in the U.S., including the nation's No. 1 cow county – Cherry County, with nearly 166,000 cows. Custer County is No. 2 (100,000) and Holt County is No. 3 (99,000). Also among the top counties in the nation is Lincoln County at No. 12 (69,000)" ("State & National Facts," n.d.). Rutabagas' home state is also the beating heart of cattle country—something to consider when introducing a vegan restaurant into a relatively conservative community, both in terms of possible ideological differences and profitability.

CONSUMER

- In an article from January 2021, WARC names six cultural shifts for marketers to consider. Among them, "body debates," covering everything from vaccines to veganism ("Six cultural shifts," 2021). As body and culture wars continue to rage, it's important to consider local attitudes. While nationally "forty-seven percent of 13-39-year-olds say they drink plant-based beverages and/or eat plant-based meat regularly," a Gallup poll takes a closer look ("3 charts breaking down," 2021). The important distinction? "Midwesterners are less likely to be reducing their meat consumption than adults in other parts of the country" ("Nearly one in four in U.S.," 2021). For Rutabagas, this may present a challenge.

- According to data from Girlpower Marketing, “Facebook, Pinterest and web searches are among the most common ways consumers digitally engage with food culture. About half of all shoppers engage with food digitally through social media – especially younger generations” (“Statistics on the purchasing power,” 2017). Not only are women critical to Rutabagas’ overall success (they “control or influence 85% of consumer spending”), but they are also the most likely to engage and interact with brands online—“more than half of women use social media to show support and access deals or promotions from brands, compared to just 36% of the men online” (“Statistics on the purchasing power,” 2017; Vermeren, 2015).
- The sale of plant-based products is indeed on the rise, yet “the percentage of vegetarians has remained stable over the past two decades” (Hrynowski, 2021). The 6% of the total U.S. population who currently identify as vegetarian, and their vegan counterparts, is perhaps too niche to build a business on, especially considering the attitudes and inclinations of Lincolniters and their greater-Nebraska neighbors. As one *New York Times* reporter reminds us, “in Nebraska, a place where cattle outnumber people, vegetarians are sometimes accused of undermining the state economy. The owner of what was billed as the lone vegetarian restaurant in Omaha said it had several pounds of ground beef thrown at its doors shortly after opening” (Sulzberger, 2012). Engaging the meatless Monday-ers, flexitarians, foodies and other adventurous carnivores, while highlighting the “comfort” in comfort-vegan, might be the key to effectively marketing to a potentially skeptical populace.
 - For those choosing a plant-based lifestyle, health and environmental concerns are largely cited as key factors in the move toward meatless (“Nearly one in four,” 2021). Many more meat-eaters are choosing to integrate plant-based meals into their diets for similar reasons.



- In 2018 those most likely to be vegetarian or vegan are liberal-leaning millennial and Gen-Z women earning less than \$30,000 a year (Reinhart, 2018).
- According to a recent Gallup survey:
 - Nonwhite Americans (9%) are three times as likely as white Americans (3%) to describe themselves as vegetarian.
 - 11% of self-identified liberals identify as vegetarian, compared with 2% of conservatives and 3% of moderates.
 - Vegetarianism is less prevalent among older Americans: 2% of adults aged 55 and older say they adhere to a vegetarian diet, compared with 8% of 18- to 34-year-olds and 7% of 35- to 54-year-olds.

COMPETITION

- Omaha (and now New York City)-based vegan restaurant Modern Love has had a strong following in the city for nearly a decade now. Their secret to success is two-fold: incredible vegan cuisine that appeals to vegans and carnivores alike, and popular food-blogger (of “Post Punk Kitchen” fame) and cookbook author, Isa Chandra.
- When it comes to conflicting information or an altogether antagonistic force, a recent report from the Associated Press says it all,

“Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts is ramping up his crusade for the meat industry by endorsing a new ‘beef passport’ program to promote meat eating, a few weeks after he blasted Colorado’s governor for a resolution encouraging its residents to eat less” (U.S. News & World Report, 2021).

Nebraska’s ranchers, farmers and “regular folk,” many of whom might be potential Rutabagas customers, could be convinced that supporting a vegan restaurant is tantamount to treason.

- Rickett’s ‘beef passport’ program is selling an ideology while propping up meat-heavy menus on behalf of local restaurateurs and meat-producers. “The beef program requires restaurant patrons to order a beef item off the menu to earn stamps, which they can submit to the Nebraska Beef Council for the chance to win prizes, including a high-end cooler full of meat” (US News & World Report, 2021).
 - Rickett’s campaign stands in opposition to plant-based business endeavors in every conceivable way. Not just denigrating the customer’s dinner order (“Who wants to eat three cups of quinoa anyway?”), but also questioning their very loyalty to home and country (“If you do away with the beef industry, you’re going to be devastating Nebraska.”)
- In the case of Modern Love, much of the work of building brand loyalty has been done. They continue to regularly engage with their audience, and even after a change in

location and a global pandemic that shuttered their indoor dining for months, their commitment to quality does not yield.

- Like Modern Love, Rutabagas would be wise to appeal to the community of vegan, vegetarian and flexitarian foodies interested in quality ingredients and conscientious business practices.

Key Findings

While the percentage of individuals self-identifying as vegan and vegetarian has remained largely the same over the last two decades, there has been an increase in demand for access to vegan and vegetarian options, both in retail and in dining that appears to be largely in response to concerns over personal health and the environment. Businesses large and small are searching for ways to appeal to not just plant-based eaters, but the vegan-curious, too. Marketers are focused on taste over any divisive political or environmental concerns to persuade hesitant carnivores to bite into plant-based. Nebraska may be a difficult market for vegan, as the state economy is based in beef. It is not unheard of, however, for vegan cuisine to go mainstream in larger Midwestern cities like Omaha, and Modern Love is a local example of how to break into a chilly market.

Target Audience Profile

Target Audience Info

Basic Demographics and Behavioral Data

- Target audience: liberal-leaning, middle class to upper-middle class, college-educated women, age 35-44 (millennial) who are open to plant-based diets but are not necessarily self-identifying vegans or vegetarians. Though Black people and people of color are more likely to identify as vegan or vegetarian (and more likely to elect to reduce meat consumption), 77.5% of Omaha's population is white. For a multitude of reasons, a racially inclusive and diverse campaign is critical ("American dietary preferences," 2018; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).
- According to 2020 Census data, Omaha has a population of 478,203. Of these 478,203 individuals, a cross section of the below will fall within our target market:
 - 15% are 30-39 years old, and 11% are 40-49 years old.
 - 51% are women.
 - 34% earn \$50K - \$100K, and 21% earn \$100K - \$200K.
 - 57% are married couples.
 - 39.7% hold a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).
- In 2018, those most likely to identify as vegetarian or vegan were liberal-leaning millennial and Gen-Z women earning less than \$30,000 a year (Reinhart, 2018). But--and it's a big but--the most likely to *purchase* plant-based products are "consumers ages 35 to 44, consumers with graduate degrees, households with children, and households with income over \$100,000" (Torella, 2021). Also, important to note: "vegetarian diets are generally considered to be less masculine than meat-based diets, and omnivores exhibit more prejudice against vegetarian men than women" (Modlinska et al, 2020). Women are more likely to flex toward plant-based diets, making them our primary consumer.
 - "Sales of plant-based food grew 8.1%...and exceeded \$3.1 billion [in 2017], and plant-based alternatives to dairy products are soon expected to account for 40% of dairy beverage sales. Increased sales of plant-based foods, without a corresponding increase in the percentage of Americans who say they are vegan or vegetarian, likely indicates a greater overall interest in these products. Based on the growth of the market and Gallup's latest readings on vegetarianism and veganism, it appears Americans are eager to include alternatives to animal products in their diets but are not willing to give up animal products completely" (Reinhart, 2018).
- According to a recent Gallup survey:
 - Nonwhite Americans (9%) are three times as likely as white Americans (3%) to describe themselves as vegetarian.

- 11% of self-identified liberals identify as vegetarian, compared with 2% of conservatives and 3% of moderates.
- Vegetarianism is less prevalent among older Americans: 2% of adults aged 55 and older say they adhere to a vegetarian diet, compared with 8% of 18- to 34-year-olds and 7% of 35- to 54-year-olds (Hrynowski, 2021).

Unique Lifestyle and Psychographic Characteristics

- Our target diner is at least peripherally aware of the environmental impact of animal agriculture, animal welfare, and the overall health and wellness benefits of a plant-based diet.
 - She is liberal-leaning, and likely politically engaged.
 - She is adventurous and enjoys the occasional evening out with girlfriends.
 - She is family-oriented, and likely considers the health and wellness of her family when dining out or grocery shopping.
 - She favors quality over economy.
- Perhaps even more so than eating well, she wants to look good, she wants to feel good, and she wants to do good.
- According to data from the University of Southern California, American Millennials are:
 - “a key consumer demographic for online marketers, thanks to their tech savviness and ability to consume web-based content” and,
 - “more likely to spend money purchasing goods and services compared to Gen X and baby boomers” (University of Southern California, 2020).
 - Moreover, millennials are “more likely to use social media daily with 62% reporting that brand engagement is more likely to make them a loyal customer” (University of Southern California, 2020).
- Engaging the meatless Monday-ers, flexitarians, foodies and other plant-curious carnivores online and in the community, while also highlighting the “comfort” (taste) in comfort-vegan, is key to an effective marketing campaign. Our potential customer may be vegan or vegetarian, or, more likely, she’s a carnivore, open to buying plant-based (but not likely to forgo animal products altogether).
 - For those choosing a plant-based lifestyle, health and environmental concerns are largely cited as key factors in the move toward meatless (McCarthy & DeKoster, 2021). Many more meat-eaters are choosing to integrate plant-based meals into their diets for similar reasons.
 - “Twenty-seven per cent of respondents in [an *Economist*] survey say they have made an effort to reduce their consumption of meat in the past year. Here the partisan divide is stark, with 35% of Democrats but only 21% of Republicans trying to cut down,” (“American dietary preferences,” 2018).
 - “Democrats tend to be younger and better-educated. Democrats are also more likely to be women and live in big cities. All of these traits are correlated with greater apprehensiveness about eating animals,” (“American dietary preferences,” 2018).

- In an article from January 2021, WARC names six cultural shifts for marketers to consider. Among them, “body debates,” covering everything from vaccines to veganism (“Six cultural shifts,” 2021). As body and culture wars continue to rage, it’s important to consider local attitudes.
 - A Gallup poll shows that “Midwesterners are less likely to be reducing their meat consumption than adults in other parts of the country” (McCarthy & DeKoster, 2021). For Rutabagas, selling vegan may present a challenge if we fail to home in on a receptive audience.
- The sale of plant-based products is indeed on the rise, yet “the percentage of vegetarians has remained stable over the past two decades” (Hrynowski, 2021). The 6% of the total U.S. population who currently identify as vegetarian, and their vegan counterparts, is perhaps too niche to build a business on, especially considering the attitudes and inclinations of Omahans and their greater-Nebraska neighbors.
 - As one *New York Times* reporter reminds us, “in Nebraska, a place where cattle outnumber people, vegetarians are sometimes accused of undermining the state economy. The owner of what was billed as the lone vegetarian restaurant in Omaha said it had several pounds of ground beef thrown at its doors shortly after opening” (Sulzberger, 2012).
 - Clearly, our target market is more metropolitan than Wrangler-wearer (though the mom jean has reached an apex). Even so, it is important to keep in mind that (government sponsored) negative messaging may inhibit growth.

Creative Narrative Profile of the Target Audience

The Occasional Vegan

...is anxious. Kat is 37, white, upper-middle class. She shops at the local co-op and carries her produce in a handwoven basket she bought at Anthropologie for \$90. When lounging or traveling, she wears Birkenstocks, even though they always set off the alarms at airport security. She grew up in rural Nebraska but moved to Omaha in her early 20’s, where she earned her B.S. in Medical Humanities and, later, a master’s in Public Health from the University of North Carolina. She’s a hospital administrator earning \$95 thousand annually, and she loves vegan vanilla bean ice-cream, houseplants and her 12-year-old mutt called Tenenbaum.

Kat has one child, a four-year-old daughter, who she raised on Baby Einstein and feminist lit for “grrls.” Early on, she tried cloth diapers but gave up because individual accountability is a farce (corporate America? Bueller?) and she’s “quick to queasy,” according to her now ex-husband. (She’s recently

divorced, but successfully co-parenting.) She kept their house in Dundee, though she might downsize.

She still makes jokes about dumpster fires and impending doom over red wine with her girlfriends, but many of them have small children now and things feel less funny these days. When she goes home for the holidays, the family table still features a big, oven-roasted bird, a honey-baked ham and assorted casseroles (sweet, savory, fluffy, gelatinous). She brings heart-healthy sides, which her mother graciously accepts, but almost always forgets to feature on the buffet. Her parents smile and nod when she talks about legalization, immigration, defunding the police, and the prison industrial complex.

Kat hopes that her daughter still has a planet and a right to choose in twenty years. Her doctor prescribed Lexapro during the divorce, but she never picked it up from the pharmacy. She can't sleep because she's thinking about all the ways she's already failed as a parent, but she does buy organic, and that's a good start. (Low-hanging fruit.) She imagines if she doesn't find love again, she'll retire with her girlfriends, somewhere temperate (intergalactic space?), and drink mojitos on a lanai.

Creative Brief



Challenge. Rutabagas is a successful vegan restaurant in Lincoln, Nebraska that has recently rented space in Omaha's Old Market in the hopes of launching a second location. The challenge is in establishing Rutabagas as a go-to for vegan-friendly fare in what has sometimes proved to be an inhospitable environment for plant-based diners and the companies who serve them.

Situation/SWOT Analysis.

Strengths: Comfort-vegan cuisine will serve a largely untapped market and the budget-friendly fare will provide a low-risk option for curious diners.

Weaknesses: The fully vegan menu is a limiting factor and may be easily dismissed by diners who are accustomed to a meat-centric experience.

Opportunities: While ranchers, Ricketts and beef are all big in Nebraska, plant-based provides an opportunity to partner with local farmers to offer fresh, local produce while also countering the narrative that plant-based is "bad" for the local economy (Sulzberger, 2012).

Threats: A polarized national climate has turned vegan political, and the governor is on the anti-plant-based bandwagon (Sulzberger, 2012). Additionally, a thriving Modern Love (Omaha's centrally located vegan hotspot) will prove stiff competition with a long-established fanbase and ties to the popular food blogger Isa Chandra.

Target audience.

Demographics/psychographics

Our target diner is liberal-leaning, middle class to upper-middle class, college-educated women, age 35-44 (millennial) who are open to plant-based, but not necessarily self-identifying vegans or vegetarians (Reinhart, 2021). She is adventurous and enjoys the occasional evening out with girlfriends. She is family-oriented, and likely considers the health and wellness of her family when dining out or grocery shopping. She favors quality over economy.

Insight into target audience.

While the percentage of individuals self-identifying as vegan and vegetarian has remained largely the same over the last *two decades*, there has been an increase in demand for access to vegan and vegetarian options, both in retail and in dining that appears to be largely in response to concerns over personal health and the environment (Hrynowski, 2021; McCarthy & DeKoster, 2021).

Unique Selling Proposition. You should buy Rutabagas because it is the only vegan option that aims to deliver the benefits of plant-based while still satisfying your comfort-food cravings.

Gap Analysis: The current impression is that plant-based can only ever be a poor substitute for the "real thing" (Wohl, 2020). The desired image is that you don't have to sacrifice flavor to enjoy the benefits of meat-free meals and meat-alternatives.

Strategy: Occasional Vegan, you should choose Rutabagas because we'll serve up plant-based comfort food that can positively impact your health, and the health of the planet, while providing a new, meat-free twist on old favorites.

Assignment/Advertising Medium.

1. Out-of-Home (Wheatpaste Wildposting Campaign, featuring crossover social/promotion)
2. Social Media – IG and YouTube to reach the 30+ demo (target market consumes media primarily digitally)
3. Event Sponsorship – *Ope!* Vegan Market

Tone of the ad: Adventurous, brave, clever, cool, curious, entertaining, feisty, free-spirited, playful, quirky, sassy, silly, sincere, smart, thoughtful, unconventional, wild, witty

Things to Consider. Vegan doesn't automatically meet all the standards of "healthy" eating. Rutabagas is comfort food; we must simultaneously satisfy the demand that plant-based taste just as good as "the real thing" while also honoring what brought the occasional vegan to the table—health concerns.

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Omaha's First Outdoor Vegan Market Set to Launch *Ope! Fest Promises 'No Apologies' for Nebraska's Sometimes-Vegans*

OMAHA, Neb. (May 1, 2022) – Ope! Fest, Omaha's first vegan market, will launch this weekend, providing local farmers and businesses an opportunity to connect through vegan food, products and culture.

Ope! will feature pop-ups from partners like Rutabagas, Modern Love, M's and other area institutions putting a plant-based twist on old favorites. A portion of event proceeds will go to Legal Aid of Nebraska's Farm and Ranch Project, offering free services to individuals and families throughout rural Nebraska, with an emphasis on agriculture.

Ope! is the brainchild of Sara Brown, founder of Omaha's newest plant-based eatery, Rutabagas Comfort Food, and her response to the growing interest in veganism, vegetarianism and all things in between.

"I think there can be this all-or-nothing approach to plant-based eating that might intimidate some people," Brown said. "Ope! says come as you are, no apologies. Plant-based isn't a life-sentence. It's not a crime, either—but it can be a great meal, and that's a good enough place to start."

Named for that Midwestern nicety ("Ope, let me just...sneak past ya!") and an insider-acronym for "Occasional Plant Eater," Ope! founders like Brown insist that the relationship between plant-based eaters, occasional vegans and Nebraska's biggest industry—cattle production—need not be an antagonistic one. Gov. Pete Ricketts might disagree. In 2021, Ricketts launched the "beef passport" program in an effort to promote the cattle industry, while offering some unsavory opinions on plant-based Nebraskans ("Who wants to eat three cups of quinoa anyway?" he said.).

Others look to Ope! as new way forward.

“There’s a real opportunity here to spotlight our small farmers, to make small-town connections in big-city spaces and to explore how we can find common ground to grow on,” said Michele Soll, Legal Aid of Nebraska’s Farm and Ranch Project Manager.

Nebraska, according to Legal Aid, like many other rural states, has witnessed an out migration from rural communities as many leave the farm for education or work and do not return to that community.

Alongside local food vendors, live performances from co-sponsor and neighborhood label Saddle Creek Records will round out the weekend, and ticketholders are encouraged to explore booths from local makers, as well as health and dietary partners.

“We want Ope! to be a one-stop weekend,” Brown said. “A gateway to new products, new dishes, new music—and a new way to experience so much of what we love about this state and its connection to our food and our farmers.”

For additional information on Ope! Fest (or for a sample, copy or demo), contact Sara Brown or visit www.eatrutabagas.com.

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ABOUT THE COMPANY: Rutabagas is comfort-casual vegan dining in Lincoln and Omaha. Our dishes are inspired by plants and made with love. Everyone is welcome at our table—meat eaters, plant eaters and crayon eaters alike.

Blog Post



RUTABAGAS
- COMFORT FOOD -

Dating with Different Diets *7-Degrees of Not Eating Bacon*

This is definitely not my Hinge bio.

Hi, we're Rutabagas. We like long walks along the [Sandhills](#), the way a bonfire embers out at night and holding hands in the back of an Uber, just because—but maybe this is the wrong blog for that? (Bagas—can you help me with some edits later?)

Ahem, anyhow. We were just talking about dietary-diverse dates here at Kitchen HQ, and it made us wonder—with all the ways to eat (vegan, vegetarian, lacto-ovo and on and on)—do you find it hard to keep track of who eats what and why? Do you want everyone to feel happy, safe and full?

Us, too. Maybe we could talk it out in the form of an absolutely non-exhaustive listicle? Let's!

***Digital Element: Three customer date-night photos/testimonials; "I bring my hubs to RCF—he's a steak and potatoes guy, but he loves the spinach dip!" etc.**

The rundown.

1. **Vegetarian:** Many sub-groups to speak of, but simply put, vegetarians are meat-free. We have lacto-ovo vegetarians who avoid meat products but do consume dairy and egg products. And lacto vegetarians who avoid meat and eggs but do consume dairy. And ovo vegetarians...and, you get the idea.
2. **Pescatarian:** Meat free, but fish is fine.
3. **Vegan:** No animals, no animal products. Veganism can be considered a dietary practice, a lifestyle, a philosophy—sometimes all three. An ethical vegan, for example, follows a plant-based diet *and* opposes the use of animals for any purpose.

4. **Gluten Free:** What is gluten, you ask? [Great question!](#) Essentially, it's a combination of two proteins, and, well, it's not for everyone. Many gluten-free-ers suffer from Celiac disease, wheat allergy or non-celiac gluten sensitivity (NCGS). For them, the ingestion of gluten leads to damage in the small intestine and other GI complications. Gluten-free means certain types of grains are off limits, and that means no beer—and no bread either.
5. **Flexitarian:** Also called semi-vegetarian. For our flexi friends, animal-products are okay on occasion. Keeping your options open!
6. **Freeganism:** Did you dumpster-dive in college? Then you should know all about this anti-capitalist, anti-consumerist ideology. More on that [here](#).
7. **Breatharians:** It's...hard to explain. Essentially, it's heavily "universal energy" and not so much food. In fact, zero food is involved. Jump to [GQ](#) for the full scoop.

***Digital element: Short video montage (featuring front and back of house staff) speed-date style getting to know you questions including dietary category.**

To me, you are perfect (I know this romcom didn't age well, I'm so sorry. But I stand behind the sentiment).

Once, several year ago, I went with a group of friends to a small mountain town, off-season. There wasn't much for dining, but we stopped at the first "open" sign we could find. We three walked in, sat and stared at the menu for a good long time. And then back up at each other. One vegan, another gluten-free and a third, mostly just picky (but possibly eats only pasta?), and not a single standard-menu option between us. We ordered, ashamedly—no meat, hold the bread, all noodles—as the server scratched away at her order pad with a raised brow.

At Rutabagas, we aim to please. No raised eyebrows. We hope that you and all your favorite humans can find a warm meal and good conversation at our table. Ask us about modifications and jump to our [menu](#) to plan your next night out.

Until then, Bagas.

xo RCF

Advertising Tactics

Part 1: Tactics

Out-of-Home (Wheatpaste [Wildposting](#) Campaign)

Why Out-of-Home? Because the Rutabagas target market tends toward millennial, middle to upper-middle class earners, an OOH campaign will meet them where they are as they commute to work, walk to dinner or catch drinks downtown. Wildposting has a markedly less corporate feel than the traditional billboard or mall display (apropos, considering millennials tried to “kill the American mall,” according to Bloomberg, anyway), and something a bit more guerrilla should appeal to our out-of-the-box, liberal-leaning customers (Holman, 2019).

Keeping in mind that our target diner is at least peripherally aware of the environmental impact of animal agriculture, the climate crisis and other socio-environmental concerns, a wheatpaste application (being both free of harmful chemicals *and* bio-degradable) aligns with the demographic’s key ideologies (“A Cascadia Field Guide,” 2018). (Crossover social posts could feature short videos of the graffiti-style application and explain the environmental impacts of wheatpaste marketing.)

Where we’ll run: Twenty to forty “wildpostings” would run throughout select walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods, including the Old Market (Rutabagas’ new home; median age 31, 77% white collar), Blackstone (median age 32, 78% white collar), Midtown Crossing (median age 36, median income \$76,000), Benson (median age 33, 78% white collar) and Dundee (median age 33, 87% white collar) (“Household income,” 2019). Rutabagas’ target market already lives, works and plays in these key neighborhoods, and they’re within a reasonable commute (fifteen minutes or less) to the restaurant’s Old Market location.

When and how long? A month-long “flight” would run beginning the month prior to Rutabagas’ Omaha opening.

Who we’ll target: The month-long OOH campaign will go “where most other media can’t go to surround and immerse consumers out of home, where they spend 70 percent of their waking hours” (“OOH Advertising,” 2021). The chosen neighborhoods are frequented by local millennials and white collar workers, as well as tourists and other visitors.

Look and feel: “Street media is generally considered one of the ‘hottest’ sectors of the much broader out of home media marketplace,” (“The Original OOH Medium,” 2021). With that in mind, the campaign will have a clean, modern look, fit for Rutabagas’ quirky, silly (sometimes edgy) millennial market.

Social Media Ads (Instagram & YouTube)

Why social media? “Seventy-two percent [of millennials] state that social is an essential part of their lives, the highest of all age groups” (“How different generations,” 2021). Similar to our OOH strategy, we are aiming to reach our Occasional Vegan where she is--and she’s online. A lot. According to Girlpower Marketing, “56% of women in the US use social networking sites,” and millennial moms “have 3.4 social media accounts on average, vs. 2.6 for all other moms” (“Statistics on the purchasing power,” n.d.).

Where we’ll run: Specifically, we’ll campaign on Instagram (grid and reels) and YouTube with engaging images and video content that engages Rutabagas' quirky consumer. Where we can, we’ll develop high-quality videos that tell a story about our food, our philosophy and our customer: independent, unconventional, wild and witty. “In an age where social media feeds are oversaturated with well-designed, high-quality, eye-catching static content, video advertising is the last remaining medium that can truly grab a millennial’s attention and hold it long enough to procure an engagement,” (O’Shaughnessy, 2020).

When and how long? A four-week long “flight” will run beginning the month prior to Rutabagas' Omaha opening, featuring a (gentler, but equally as cheeky) [Billy on the Street](#)-style series that serves to build brand awareness and introduce Rutabagas to its Omaha audience. We’ll fluff the grid with select stills of top-rated menu items, and close out the month with a contest for one lucky couple (romantic, platonic or otherwise) to receive the Chef’s Table treatment, on us. The winner will submit a personal photo and story answering, “what puts the ‘comfort’ in comfort food?”

Who we’ll target: Select ads and videos will be incorporated into a paid campaign geotargeting (Old Market, Blackstone, Midtown Crossing, Benson and Dundee) women, 30-45 years old.

Look and feel: For reaching 30-somethings in particular, “employing comedy when interacting...can help solidify the connection” (Tabaka, 2020). And in social media spaces especially, there is room to test the limits--if something doesn’t hit, we can make changes quickly, and at less cost.

We’ll implement a variety of strategies, from woman-on-the-street-style videos and interactive contests to sleek food photography, in an effort to define the Rutabagas philosophy while also building connections with our potential customers. To effectively integrate the campaign, we’ll also incorporate a month-long scavenger hunt (followers must “sight” and share three wheatpaste wildpostings for a chance to win dinner for four on opening night) and videos featuring wheatpaste applications around town.

Part 2: Out-of-Home Design

Wildpostings will incorporate block print designs created by local artists and feature “menacing” vegetables snacking on beef burgers, imploring passersby to “eat vegan.” A QR code will drive

traffic to a temporary webpage, to include a full menu, with details on how visitors can post and share to Instagram for a chance to win the social media “sightings” scavenger hunt.

*Placeholder images by Matt Butler (carnivorous carrot) and Erin Weitzell (broccoli monster and radish pirate).



Version 1

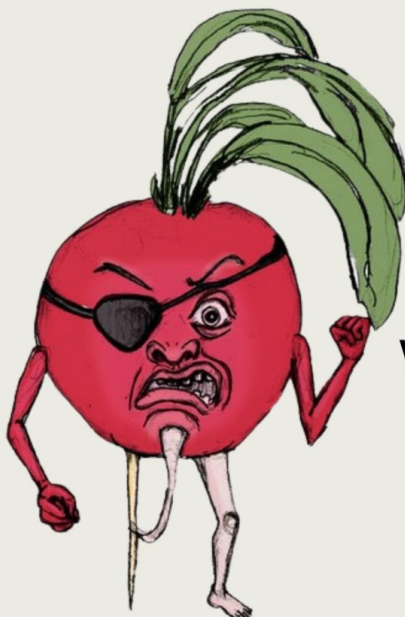


Version 2



RUTABAGAS
- COMFORT FOOD -

EAT MORE
VEGAN,



WE DON'T
BITE.

COMING MAY 2022

Old Market Location:
555 Market Street
Omaha, Nebraska

What's on the menu?



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