



*Army Navy's Bullyboy burger, Classic burger*

## TOP OF THE FOOD CHAIN

THIS SEASONED RESTAURATEUR SHARES HOW HIS BRAND HAS STOOD THE TEST OF TIME

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Maintaining a food business looks easy from the outside, but it takes blood, sweat, and tears to cope with its demands. To keep their businesses relevant, restaurateurs must be aware of the foundations of their brands to keep up with the evolution of the industry. Culinary expertise alone isn't enough; it also needs to be balanced by business savvy. Eric Puno, owner of Army Navy Burger + Burrito, a chain known for their unique burger-and-burrito concept, shares how he survives a continuously evolving market by leaning into what he has learned through the years.

### LEARNING AS YOU GROW

In sustaining a business, Puno emphasizes the necessity of knowing your own story well as you maneuver through a competitive industry. "Different processes work for different companies, so their respective experiences will give them the advantage," he says. On the importance of outsourcing, he

notes that lessening the burden at the core helps develop the brand, as operations get to be manned by experts. "There are different schools of thought on this matter, but it does simplify everything. With outsourcing, we can concentrate on the front end of the business." There's no one-size-fits-all business scheme, and brand owners should have an understanding of how their services meet the demands of the consumers.

### REAPING THE REWARDS

Despite the challenges, maintaining an enterprise is undeniably beneficial in many aspects. For one, restaurateurs can manage the time they get to spend with their families and their hobbies. In fact, self-care needs to be prioritized in this line of business, as brand commitment has its fair share of physical and mental demands. As for the jobs that his company is able to provide, Puno admits, "It is challenging



Smallwares provided by Technolux



The Army Navy team headed by Puno (standing, 3rd from right) with Jenny Carlos, Technolux Vice President, Smallwares Division (standing 4th from right)

to keep employees, but the fulfillment that comes with providing the workforce with livelihood choices is also remarkable."

### BEING MINDFUL OF THE COMPETITION

Businesses must be sustainable and scalable. Given the tough competition, consumer insights are invaluable when crafting new ideas for establishing the brand's identity. While originality is often touted as one of the higher business values to aim for, Puno counters that the most valuable element of a food brand is not just its recipes but how these formulations survive the market. "The name of the game now is efficiency. *'Pag tumawag sa 'yo or um-order sa 'yo sa phone, kailangan i-deliver mo na.*" Sustaining a business requires an understanding of the Filipino taste and, most of all, efficient and quality service. Partnering with Mall of Kitchens, for instance, has been a rewarding business decision for him. "The more stores we open, the more we have a relationship with Mall of Kitchens. Our needs are increasing, and they're expanding their lines, including the hospitality line." Reliable partners are necessary to stay at the top of the game, and Puno's business relies

on high quality food preparation utensils, tableware, and containers, all of which come from Technolux. These details add up to his consumers' enjoyment whenever they dine at Army Navy, manifested through artful food presentation and a safe dining experience.

It takes guts to enter the food industry and years of practice to become a master of the field. In the process, aspiring restaurateurs should consistently monitor their brands' growth, their gains, and their stance in the game. In order to evolve with grace, a *mélange* of skills, consistency, and the willingness to adapt is essential to transform a business into a leading brand in the country.

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*Mall of Kitchens offers high-quality kitchen and laundry equipment, small wares, and hotel room supplies and amenities.*

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