

Dear Taco Bell,

It's been 2 years since the last nationwide promotion of the Beefy Crunch Burrito. That's 730 days. As a consumer, a single day without it is too long. As the representative of the Beefy Crunch Movement, I can appreciate the difficulties that must be faced when trying to bring this back. As both a consumer and the leader of the 18,300 people on Facebook, I have to draw a line in the sand, and I have to inform you that this line was crossed long ago.

This letter is not a plea to bring it back, or offer suggestions on ways to bring it back. I wrote *that* letter nearly 3 years ago which you politely returned, although it is great to see some of those suggestions actually being used in the recent testing in Louisville, KY. No, this letter is simply to remind you that the Beefy Crunch Movement is still here, fighting with the same passion that it started with over 4 years ago back in May 2011 and we are not going anywhere.

Unlike other "Limited Time Only" items, the Beefy Crunch is unique, not only in its ability to amass and maintain an obsessive, borderline cult-like fan base on Facebook, but in its role in the success of Taco Bell that followed in its wake.

In 2010/11 the Beefy Crunch Burrito pioneered the Frito-Lays partnership paving the way for what was to become the most "successful" menu item of all time, the Doritos Locos Taco. There's no doubt in my mind that the popularity and success of the Tacos overshadowed that of the Beefy Crunch, and nor do that even surprise me. While I very rarely get Tacos from Taco Bell, the clue is in your name that this is the most purchased item to begin with. Having 3 new and co-branded tacos is the innovation needed to separate Taco Bell from the rest of the industry.

With the Beefy Crunch going through 3 limited time rollouts during 2011 to 2013, it became clear to me that something was stopping Taco Bell from keeping it permanent. The demand was there, but there wasn't a reason to keep it on the menu, and it's not hard to infer that money is a key reason. I could see that, as you read in 2012, and I've always wanted to work *with* you to solve these problems. I understand you have a staff dedicated to that, but the consumers can't see behind the scenes and this where the feeling of being ignored stems from.

Up until the summer of 2013 Beefy Crunch promotion, it had become expected to see it at least once a year, so for 2014 we stayed relatively quiet. We had a grumble around the 1 year mark, but were still optimistic for a 2014 release. It wasn't until around August when you released the Beefy Fritos Burrito that our patience had ran out. It being permanent from the get-go left a bruise that still hurts to this day. In fact, the Beefy Fritos Burrito has had more air-time on the menu than all the Beefy Crunch Burrito promotions combined. With our hopes crushed, and anger beginning to simmer, little did we know that this was only the beginning of a series of events that would begin to question the genuineness of the relationship between the company and its consumers.

Here are just a few of the notes I had taken throughout the last 6 months.

- 12-20-14 A few months after the Beefy Fritos Burrito was released, the Crunchwrap Sliders debuted. These were mini CrunchWrap Supremes with regular Frito Chips inside.
- 1-4-15 Taco Bell asks its social media followers for help to sign a petition for a Taco Emoji "Taco Bell fans everywhere have been asking for a Taco Emoji for years and now we finally have the chance to help get the people what they want."
- 1-29-15 Triple Stack Steak returns after being going LESS time than the Beefy Crunch Burrito. Where is the social media demand? Top comments on Facebook post are primarily Beefy Crunch Burrito demands.
- 2-13-15 Taco Bell tweets "Something tells us America wants the Quesalupa", quotes a few other tweets and buys billboards.
- 3-3-15 Taco Bell uses Beefy Crunch Burrito tattoo in its Sriracha Quesarito commercial. "Thanks to the true fans of the bell" "Without all of you, we never would have thought of this".
- 3-21-15 Taco Bell announces Frito Taco to begin testing sometime in 2015.
- 3-27-15 Customer spots Daredevil Menu testing in Ohio. 3 different sauces, Chipotle, Habanero, and Ghost Pepper. Is this in response to the cries for the Lava Sauce? Note, the red tortilla strips.
- 4-6-15 Taco Bell announces press-release saying it is responding to the "number 1 request" to offer delivery.
- 4-16-15 Reports of testing of TWO new Frito Burritos

Then Taco Bell finally posted on Facebook and Twitter asking us what we'd do to bring back the Beefy Crunch Burrito! The last time they had asked this question it came back months later, so suffice to say, we got excited. Really excited. Looking back, we can see that this was a baited question to get some commercials out for the testing going on in Louisville, KY. Not knowing this at the time, we were all expecting a nationwide release. In late May it was spotted by a fan in Louisville and being close to the Frito Lays Distribution center we thought this was just the beginning. However hopes were once again crushed when Taco Bell called me to tell me it was only a local promotion in the Louisville area.

I was devastated. The idea they would be testing it again was NOT a consideration. The Beefy Crunch Burrito has been dominating the comments of Taco Bells Facebook Page. The demand was clear. Why would they test something they've already released 3 times before?! But what could we do?

Taco Bell would go on to tell me that there would be no official announcement, no media attention apart from local television ads. A far cry from the Quesalupa testing they did just a few months prior with Billboards, and social media posts, and press releases, a plug from Conan and flying Daym Drops to HQ for a review. It's no surprise that the test results from the Quesalupa "exceeded" all expectations. I told Taco Bell that this would be a David vs Goliath test comparatively but what happened next even surprised me.

A Beefy Crunch Movement member suggested pooling money together and donating it to people in Louisville to go and buy Beefy Crunch Burritos to help boost sales! While we probably didn't make a dent in sales numbers, the gesture was made and through a GoFundMe campaign, we raised over \$300 and gave away over 150

burritos. Phillip, a Beefy Crunch fan in the testing area, took to Periscope and gave away 30 burritos LIVE on the Big Four Bridge in Louisville. But of course you would know this as you WATCHED IT as it happened!

Then came the road-trips. People drove thousands of miles, literally, to get their hands on the Beefy Crunch Burrito. Becca drove 2,300 miles from San Francisco, Patrick drove 600 from Williamsport, PA, Noah drove 500, Angie, 280 miles, Arvin, 160 miles. Even today I was told that someone drove 800 miles from Connecticut just to get one. I have never seen this much dedication by so many people for a single Taco Bell item. The fact that all this has gone on with no social media influence from Taco Bell should say something that you can't find at the bottom of the balance sheet.

And this brings me to my main point, which circles back to the title of this letter. The Beefy Crunch Burrito is more than just a profit-margin. Over the last few years it has instead turned into a symbol of consumer demand. We get the difficulties you are facing and we love the brand and don't want to see it fail. But we also want to feel that we are a part of your success, not just a transaction. Other items have come and gone, but with the Beefy Crunch Burrito we will not let go and we will not stop speaking.

You say, at the end of the day, "Being focused on the consumer is what it's all about." We are the consumer and this is what we want.

You say, "Instead of sitting behind glass and listening to a focus group, we now have access to 20 million consumers and can be inspired by them and connect with them and have real relationships with them." Talk to us. We have left hundreds of comments and we don't hear anything back. I'm sure you can imagine how alienating this must feel.

We know you are doing something behind the scenes for the Beefy Crunch Burrito but as long as we are out of the loop, all we can do is jump to conclusions. At the moment there is no guarantee that the test results will meet your expectations, and it's quite possible that it may have to go back to the drawing board. On the other hand, all the locations could be selling out and it's so successful that it'll come out in 2016! But how are we meant to know how to feel when there's no communication? After all, you did announce the Quesalupa test was successful and would rollout nationwide months in advance.

Right now you have a fan-base that is extremely tired of waiting and is feeling ignored. Add on to that the upcoming Dare-Devil Menu with the red chips with the hot sauces, followed by what is rumored to be "Volcano" sauce, you have the recipe to create some very upset fans. 2 years of waiting is way too long, and at the end of day for us, we want to be heard, and if we don't feel like we are being heard then we will continue to speak louder and expose the irony and hypocrisy that we can't help but interpret from your actions and words.

Here's my ending thought. The story isn't finished. As they said in the Terminator, "The future is not set. There's no fate but what we make for ourselves." Let's finish the story together. Let's join forces on the ThrowBack Burrito promotion. It's not the final answer, but it's a great first step. Right now the silence and inaction is tearing us apart. You have the opportunity to close the divide between us, and be inspired by what we can do together! You said it yourself, "The job of the social team is much easier when they have something to talk about. You can really break through with a little budget." Well let's talk! A Facebook post or a tweet is free.

You have my number, you know how to reach me.

Sincerely,

Richard