

Life in the Valley



In-N-Out customers wait in a drive-thru line snaking down Keizer Station Boulevard one week after its opening at Keizer Station, on Dec. 18, 2019. MADELINE COOK / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Local Facebook group tracks In-N-Out wait times

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In-N-Out Burger opened a month ago at Keizer Station, but the excitement hasn't completely died down. Lines continue to form, both to walk into the restaurant and also in the restaurant's drive-through lane, spilling out into the turning lane of Keizer Station Boulevard.

Though not as intense as the two to three-hour waits of opening day, waiting in some kind of line often remains a feature of dining at the northernmost location of In-N-Out. Especially for those on a lunch break, the difference between a 15 to 30-minute wait and one that stretches to more than double that is critical.

Longtime Keizer resident Janelle Lidtke saw this issue unfolding in her Facebook groups, so she started a group of her own to crowdsource minute by minute information.

What's the wait like at In-N-Out?

On December 15, just a few days after the burger restaurant opened, Lidtke started a private Facebook group, called In-N-Out Keizer, Oregon. In it, burger fans are sharing their experiences by posting wait times, In-N-Out memes, and photos of their much-anticipated orders.

In less than a month since it's creation, the group has swelled to more than 2,500 members.

Many of the member posts are requests, users inquiring at all hours whether anyone knows what the wait is like. Others are triumphant accounts.

On Tuesday, January 7, a user named Danna E. Garcia shared the full breakdown of their half-hour visit; "went into



Janelle Lidtke, who started a private Facebook group about Keizer's In-N-Out Burger, is pictured at the restaurant Jan. 9, 2010.

EMILY TEEL/STATESMAN JOURNAL

the drive-thru line at 11:35 am, paid at 12:04 pm, got my order at 12:05 pm, ate my burger by 12:12 pm."

The evening prior, a user named Gina Winkelman Olson had announced: "only about 5 cars up at the drive-thru."

Besides these time reports, the group is also emerging as a space where long-time fans share advice with first time In-N-Out visitors on what to order and how to navigate the chain's secret menu.

A member named Ariel Vee posted a video of In-N-Out's drive-through lane workers singing her Happy Birthday.

A family from Eugene requested ad-

vice on timing their drive to Salem for the best shot at not waiting too long. Another user requested more food photos, while in another thread others debated how to get the best version of In-N-Out's controversial fries.

Who started it?

Surely the person behind a secret In-N-Out Facebook group is a superfan, right? She's not.

We met up at In-N-Out to talk while waiting in line at 5 p.m. on Thursday, January 9. To our surprise, there was

hardly any line at all.

"I didn't expect to order so fast. I got the double double and I did animal style," Lidtke said, "What even is that?"

Born in Salem, Lidtke had eaten at In-N-Out on trips to Las Vegas and California and Arizona. "I like it, I enjoy it, but I wasn't counting down the days until it opened." Lidtke and her husband live just a few miles from Keizer Station. The couple went to the In-N-Out in Keizer a few days after it opened in the midst of doing some Christmas shopping.

"It was fun, actually, being in line and talking to people."

She started the Facebook group, she said, on a whim.

"I'm on these other Salem-Keizer community groups and everybody was talking about it. I was getting sick of seeing it. I said somebody should start a page."

She started the group, almost as a joke, but didn't bother to promote it. Requests rolled in nonetheless. Lidtke said by the end of the year the group was up to 1,000. As of this writing, it's up to 2,517, about 100 new requests each day.

The group's content is visible only to members, but it's not difficult to join. Make a request and a notification pops up on her Facebook app. During our conversation, she admitted at least three more people to the group. She decided to keep the group private, to create a space where people can share in the collective excitement.

"If it's public you can just see everything, but I think it's more fun to have a group, more of a community."

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Silverton

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ers said, an administrator can spend 60 seconds in a classroom and call it a formal observation for purposes of a teacher's evaluation.

"Just as teachers spend countless hours gathering evidence of student learning before grading their performance, we expect administrators to spend quality time in classrooms so they can really get a feel for what is happening in their school," Stadel said.

The union also has requested the district limit involuntary transfers of teachers to no more than once every ten years.

They argue this will ensure a "conti-

nuity of strong student-teacher relationships across school sites," citing multiple research studies that point to the necessity of teacher-student relationships for student success.

To date, the district has not agreed to this proposal. However, district officials said they want to continue mediation efforts.

District seeks more mediation time

Derek McElfresh with the district's communications office said the district "remains hopeful and ready to continue mediation as soon as we get the call."

As for specifics of what is still being negotiated, McElfresh said the district will be "releasing something hopefully in the coming days," but could not offer

more at this time.

"The district stands at the ready to get back to the table as soon as possible and is waiting for a confirmed date from the association," he said.

Union leaders said teachers have felt afraid to speak up for fear of retribution for years, coming to a head in 2017 and 2018 when two educators were "run out of our district."

"The courage of those two educators to stand up and speak out inspired others to come together and demand better treatment," Stadel said. "Ultimately, our concerns about our working conditions were validated by a neutral arbitrator from out of state, who found that some administrators had engaged in retaliation for lawfully protected union activity."

The union also said its teachers are

underpaid, compared with teachers at similar-sized districts across the state.

Some of these issues come from the district's past administration. Former Silverton superintendent Andy Bellando and assistant superintendent Dandy Stevens resigned effective July 1, 2019.

Bellando had two years left on his contract after 31 years with the district. He has since been hired as the interim superintendent for the Dallas School District.

For more information about the Silver Falls School District, go to silverfallsschools.org.

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