

Fosters Freeze

Fosters Freeze is a strictly California chain, but it has a special significance to me, on several levels. My one-time neighbor owns the one here in Auburn; my daughter worked there while in high school; and it happens to be right next to the school I teach at. Sooooooo, I've been an off again-on again customer there for over 35 years.

Interestingly, I found more Fosters Freeze history at Wikipedia than at the official site. In 1955, the first Foster Freeze franchise was started in Tulare, California. It was first owned by two people named Clarence and Margarite Fries. Months later it was sold to Lee and Maxine White. When the White's took over ownership, they bought three trucks that they would sell ice cream out of all over town and in other surrounding cities as well such as Exeter, Lindsay. Since ice cream is a taxable product and food is not, they had two separate windows. Customers could purchase their ice cream at one window and their hot dogs, burgers and fries at another window.

In 1972, Clyde and Barbara Blackburn purchased Foster Freeze in Tulare, California, and in 1996 moved the location to 1330 East Tulare Ave., where it still remains. According to Linda Ruminer, Foster Freeze's new site is where business really picked up, and on January 1, 1997, Foster Freeze had to close its doors so that they would be able to restock their merchandise to better serve their customers. Foster Freeze's business was doing so well that they could afford to hold Cruise Nights to get their community together to have a good time. Cruise Nights is a classical vehicle show that displays as many as three hundred classic vehicles. It started at Auburn, California's Foster's Freeze in 1984 when, showing off classic vehicles became popular. People such as Flip Wilson, Steve Perry from the rock band Journey, and Robert Conrad have been spotted at the Tulare location grabbing a bite to eat.



The Foster's Freeze franchise in Hawthorne, California is known to be the Hamburger joint, where Beach Boy band member Dennis Wilson saw the girl in the Thunderbird he sang about in his song titled "Fun, Fun, Fun." Recently the USA softball team was seen eating at the Salinas location before heading off to Beijing to participate in the 2008 Olympics. Also, the Atwater location was used in a scene of the movie, *Pulp Fiction*, where Bruce Willis' character runs over Ving Rhames. The historical significance that Foster's Freeze has is what attracts patrons and unites community members to try to keep developers from taking away a piece of nostalgia from them. In 2006, the neighborhood of Menlo Park, located in northern California, presented to their city council a petition with about 800 signatures to avoid demolition of their local Foster's.

After 60 years in the business, Fosters Freeze has 92 locations in California as of 2010. Some of the company's first locations in California included Sunnyvale, Mountain View, and Palo Alto. The Palo Alto location, across the street from Stanford University's Campus on El Camino, remains virtually unchanged since c. 1950. The oldest locations are historic landmarks. In its humble beginnings it was bigger than McDonald's, Del Taco, and other chains. The shelf life of the ice cream made expansion to other states challenging. The mixture only lasts 17 days and that made it difficult to transport it to other states. That is why the chain has been limited to California and is a contributing factor that has resulted in many store closures and the lacking of staying power in the field of fast food. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fosters_Freeze]