

Ouuuuuuu! A&W Root Beer!

Hmmm...high school, warm summer nights, hanging out at the A&W Drive-In...

One hot day in June of 1919, in Lodi, California, an entrepreneur named Roy Allen mixed up a batch of creamy root beer and sold the first frosty mug of this delightful beverage for one nickel. Now, 88 years later, A&W Root Beer is the world's number one selling root beer and is still made fresh daily and sold at hundreds of A&W Restaurants.

Allen purchased the formula for his root beer from a pharmacist in Arizona. To this day, the unique blend of herbs, spices, barks and berries remains a proprietary secret. With the success of his first root beer stand in Lodi, Allen soon opened a second stand in nearby Sacramento. It was there that what is thought to be the country's first "drive-in" featuring "tray-boys" for curb side service, opened up. In 1922, Allen took on a partner, Frank Wright. The two partners combined their initials - "A" for Allen and "W" for Wright and formally named the beverage, A&W Root Beer. Three units were opened in Sacramento, then onto other northern and central California locations and to the states of Texas and Utah. By 1933, the creamy beverage was such a success that Allen had over 170 franchised outlets operating in the mid-west and west.

To ensure uniform quality for the namesake beverage, Allen sold A&W Root Beer concentrate exclusively to each franchise operator. His profits were derived from the sale of the concentrate and a nominal license fee. During World War II no new restaurants were opened and despite governmental sugar rationing (this affected supplies of bottler's sugar, a necessary ingredient of root beer) and employee shortages (also a result of the war) most A&W units remained successful. After the war the number of A&W restaurants tripled as GI loans paved the way for private enterprise to flourish.



In 1950, with over 450 A&W's operating nationwide, founder Roy Allen retired and sold the business to an aggressive Nebraskan named Gene Hurtz, who formed the A&W Root Beer Company. The post war era, with the rapidly recovering economy and popularity of the automobile, provided the right environment for Hurtz's company to prosper. Drive-in's were becoming increasingly popular and A&W had the privilege of being one of the few nationally established drive-in restaurant chains. By 1960 the number of A&W's had swelled to over 2000.

The first A&W restaurants outside of the U.S. opened in 1956 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada (the Canadian division eventually became a wholly owned subsidiary of A&W and in 1972, was sold to Lever Brothers, LTD., an international conglomerate. In 1963, the A&W Root Beer Company was sold to the J. Hungerford Smith Company, the firm which had manufactured A&W Root Beer concentrate since 1921. In that same year, the first overseas A&W Restaurant opened its doors. Located in Guam, the international division quickly expanded to the Philippines.

[http://www.awrootbeer.com/hist_hist.htm]