



#1
DUTCH
FOOD RETAIL
BRAND

FRESH PLACE

Why people love La Place

Rupert Parker Brady • Maarten Beernink

FRESH PLACE

WHY PEOPLE LOVE LA PLACE

‘Who doesn’t love La Place?

**To be perfectly honest, there are hardly
any haters of the brand. It carries values
that can help us make the brand manifest
in areas where we see
opportunities to grow.’**

Bart van den Nieuwenhof, CEO La Place



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La PLACE

WHY THIS BOOK?

Good things take time, like good wine. The same applies to the food concept La Place. After growing solidly over the past 27 years in its home market, La Place is living up to its potential. Ready to conquer the world with its formats La Place Restaurant, La Place Express and La Place Café. Being the authors of a widely read business book exploring the entrepreneurial philosophy of La Place founder Paul Bringmann, we decided to publish an updated edition in English, 2,5 years after the first edition appeared. The fact that Google has contracted La Place to open the restaurant-concept in its New York office offers a great opportunity to tell the story of La Place to an international audience.

‘At every level, the people behind the concept of La Place drive the push for real food. They are doing it very well and in a balanced way. La Place is a very engaging experience, serving great food. It is a concept that fits in with Google’s culture and Google Food’s mission and values.’

Michiel Bakker, director Global Food Services Google Inc.

La Place is a truly unique phenomenon in the Netherlands. Ever since its start in 1987, the restaurant concept has been breaking the mould, changing the rules of the game on how a casual dining concept should be experienced. In terms of offering customers delicious and nutritious food in a homely, informal environment.

‘Copying is absolutely the wrong word for what we do. We look everywhere and bring home the basic idea. Subsequently, we translate that into the pillars of La Place. We slowly submerge an idea into the organization, because the idea needs to become part of the work our people do. We want it to become their baby; they need to embrace it, experience it. That method takes more time, but in the end, it’s more efficient.’

Droes Prinsen, director buying and marketing La Place

La Place has inspired many entrepreneurs to start copycats of the food retail concept, but none have been able to match the commercial success of La Place. What really can be considered a compliment, is that many medium and large casual dining brands have been forced to improve their presentation, product quality, food offering and match prizes. La Place has improved the taste of the Dutch consumer over a quarter of a century. Right now La Place is ready to internationalize, already taking it to customers in Belgium, Germany, Bali, UAE and the United States.

Fresh concept

La Place is very determined to keep on opening outlets outside the Netherlands, showing a preference for leasing properties and working with different franchise models. The concept thrives at pedestrian traffic flows

because La Place is familiar to shoppers, families, commuters and travelers. The concept is distinctive in being the right alternative for all those consumers who are requesting fresher, more natural, low-calorie and more sustainable and organic food. La Place offers healthy and wholesome food, designed for everyone at an attractive price, without making concessions to quality and taste.

Marketing restaurant

One of the things La Place hasn't been renowned for, is marketing. Especially the first 20 years of its existence it kept a low profile, being almost too modest, considering La Place has to compete with McDonald's, delivery formats and local casual dining restaurants who spent much more on advertising.

Things change. La Place can no longer afford to stay modest. Since Bart van den Nieuwenhof took over the position of CEO in October 2012, the focus has changed to positioning La Place more as a marketing restaurant, telling what the brand is all about. The past two years the interior design of the restaurants and cafes have been modernized, and an instore advertising campaign has been launched to inform customers about the (hidden) qualities of La Place. In recently opened outlets the brand logo is much more dominant. La Place is promoting breakfasts at a very low price, attracting more customers at early hours where the traffic is low. The first cross media loyalty programme for the Dutch foodservice business was introduced by La Place in October 2014. "La Place Extra's" was immediately in popular demand with customers.

The idea is simple: customers do not have to save points to receive extra's, they get them for free each time they buy a meal or a drink at La Place. Research showed that Dutch consumers are sceptical about loyalty pro-

The La Place Extra's loyalty app.



'La Place is a beacon for suppliers who care to deliver healthy and real foodproducts on a small scale. The organization is always the first picking up new food trends, which means that other restaurant concepts have to follow La Place. Paul Bringmann is world champion building casual dining-concepts. He has made La Place into a leading indicator for tasty, pure, honest and cosy eating-out moments.'

Jan-Willem Grievink, founder and managing director
FoodService Institute Netherlands

grammes who promise a lot but don't deliver. Members of the La Place loyalty programme receive extra's at every visit to a cafe, restaurant or express store. This can be a free cup of coffee, a free refill or a discount for a meal. Within two weeks 15.000 guests claimed their extra meal or drink in store. The more visits, the better the deals.

'By using "La Place Extra's" we make our guests more aware of the good, 100% natural food we have on offer, and we can stimulate consumers to choose more often our 100% natural assortment', says Kim Kleine Staarman, senior manager Marketing & E-commerce of La Place.

Customer-driven entrepreneurship

One thing is sure, La Place wouldn't exist albeit for one person. And that is pioneer Paul Bringmann, who back in 1987 was brave enough to take the risk to offer the Dutch public a completely new food experience. He pulled it off and the rest is history. The former CEO of La Place is a game changer and innovator. Colleague Dries Prinsen, director Buying and Marketing, worked with him for more than 25 years. 'Paul gives other people room to move, but he makes heavy demands too, both on others and on himself. He is inspiring, a perpetual pioneer. That fits his will to change things. Paul is very detail-minded. He makes sure that people feel they have profited from talking to him. Wherever Paul visits a location, local management can milk that for weeks. Paul is a forceful visionary, he only wants the best. He has this amazing sense of quality. Taste is king. The quality of the products has to make the difference. He is a good thinker who opens up new horizons. And he doesn't see any obstacles on his way there. He's not hindered by operational challenges, and where it matters, he is a decent human being.'

‘Paul Bringmann is a food lover and a fanatic of everything that has to do with freshness.’

Gretel Weiss, international food trends analyst

The foundation for the concept and the enormous success of La Place in the first 25 years was laid by the 66-year old Paul Bringmann, who holds very strong business principles, which are laid out in this book. Under the leadership of 43-year old Bart van den Nieuwenhof, La Place is becoming a global brand, growing worldwide while holding on to its unique identity. La Place is a strong promise which millions of customers outside the Netherlands will learn to discover and taste its offering.

The board of directors of La Place are persistent in their efforts to improve and innovate the range of products and services. The more than 5500 employees are united in a passion offering tasty, wholesome food to consumers, aiming to cultivate an even bigger fan base. The laid-back, homely ambience of the interior design of La Place Restaurant and La Place Café are valued by tens of millions of customers. A glance around any outlet and free standing restaurant reveals diners from every walk of life: families, pensioners, business people, friends, tourists, students and young couples. The brandhouse of La Place is based on five pillars: innovation, pure, hearty, passion and home.

La Place Management Team:

Top from left to right: Ben Munster, Jeroen van den Biggelaar, Bart van den Nieuwenhof, Angelo Mans, Karin de Vries and Dries Prinsen.
Front row: Patricia da Silva, Otto Peters, Ad Willemsen, Kim Kleine Staarman and Freek van der Linden.

Profile La Place company

La Place is by far the most successful restaurant chain of the Netherlands. With over 250 sites in town and city-centers, shopping malls, train stations, airports, exhibition centres and sports and recreational facilities, La Place attracts tens of millions of customers each year. The concept is all about a strong believe in using 100% natural ingredients in its home-made fare, fresh day-in, day-out, sustainably -preferably organically- produced and locally sourced. The food offering is calorie conscious with nutritious, low-calorie ingredients, offering customers a choice of calorie-controlled meals, all clearly identified by the use of the calorie conscious' icon.



La Place Formulas

La Place Restaurant

The original format presents world cuisine using original recipes. Throughout the day a variety of fresh dishes are prepared. Customers have a wide choice of sandwiches, salads, pastries, juices, shakes and authentically prepared dishes. La Place Restaurants can be found in mall and department store locations, at roadside locations, outlet centres, out-of-town centres and special sites.

La Place Café

A compact version of the La Place Restaurant. Ideal for breakfast, lunch or a short break with a cappuccino, pastries, a freshly baked roll or a cup of soup. La Place Cafés are often located in busy shopping areas.

La Place Express

This format offers a full range of bread rolls to take away, or to eat on the spot. These sandwiches are freshly prepared throughout the day to Italian recipes. The customer can choose his or her preferred filling. La Place Express can be found in busy town centres, in shopping malls, lively suburbs and transport hubs.

La Place Food

This private label format offers a broad range of take-home products. For example, bread, salads, quiches and fresh meals. The customer can choose from coloured sweets, confectionery and dollups of chocolate at the chocolate counter. Over the coming years, La Place aims to expand and broaden its range of own branded products like kitchen utensils. Already on sale are organic coffee, tea and wines and La Place gift items.

Fresh

Nowadays there are many global casual (fast) food brands who have discovered 'fresh' as an appealing consumer proposition, i.e. Subway, Starbucks, Domino's and McDonald's. Defining when fresh is really fresh is, however a completely different ball game. La Place can truly claim to be a member of a very exclusive club of fresh food concepts worldwide. Only the likes of Vapiano, Marché and Eataly are at par, taking freshness serious. Vapiano (2002) is a fresh casual restaurant chain, originating from Germany, and growing fast with more than 100 outlets in Australia, USA, Middle East and Europe.

'I have great admiration for Paul Bringmann.'

Mark Korzilius, food visionary and founder of Vapiano,
La Barraca en B.Easy.'

Marché (1948), owned by Mövenpick Group, claims to be the originator of "front cooking", and is one of the three concepts of Marché International - one of the leading gastronomy companies specializing in high quality dining restaurants at highly frequented locations in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Croatia and Norway.

Eataly (2004) is a high-end Italian food market/mall chain comprising a variety of restaurants, food and beverage stations, bakery, and retail items. The New York Times has described it as a "megastore" that "combines elements of a bustling European open market, a Whole-Foods-style supermarket, a high-end food court and a New Age learning center. The chain has 10 locations in Italian cities, New York City, Chicago a few

in Japan, one in UAE and one in Turkey. Founder Oscar Farinetti is also exploring a masterfranchise of Eataly in the Netherlands, where many fans of fresh Italian cuisine live.

The case for La Place in the US

Back in 2011 Bloomberg Businessweek Magazine framed a significant change in the US market as 'The Great Casual-Dining Upheaval'. American's millennials are snubbing the restaurant chains their parents took them to as kids. Chili's, Applebee's, Ruby Tuesday, and other so-called casual-dining chains are already struggling to revive sales in the wake of an epic recession. Now they risk losing an important consumer demographic group unless they remake themselves. 'If you have a little bit of money and you're educated, you want a boutique feel, less chain,' says Brad Swanson,

Film about La Place: www.retaildenkers.nl/fresh-place



who runs the restaurant group at KeyBanc Capital Markets, an investment banking and equity research firm. The casual-dining chains, which serve reasonably priced sit-down meals, are losing customers to such “fast-casual” upstarts such as Five Guys, Chipotle Mexican Grill, and Panera Bread, which offer counter service, trendy menus, and not much else. Chipotle, with its stripped-down menu and industrial interiors, continues to attract long lines at lunch. Panera is winning over yuppie crowds with fresh salads and artisanal breads and Five Guys is showing customers the origins of its veggies. The upstarts are expanding rapidly.

La Place, firmly placed in the category of casual dining, could make an lasting impression on American consumers. The restaurant and cafe concept blends in with the contemporary appeal of the fast-casual chains, offering fresh foods, local sourcing, focus on organic and boutique feel, less chain. Moreover, La Place is renowned for its young staff, the average age being 21 years. La Place will offer a interesting alternative, blending the Restaurant and Café format with the take-out format La Place Express.

Rupert Parker Brady and Maarten Beernink
January 2015

Comments?

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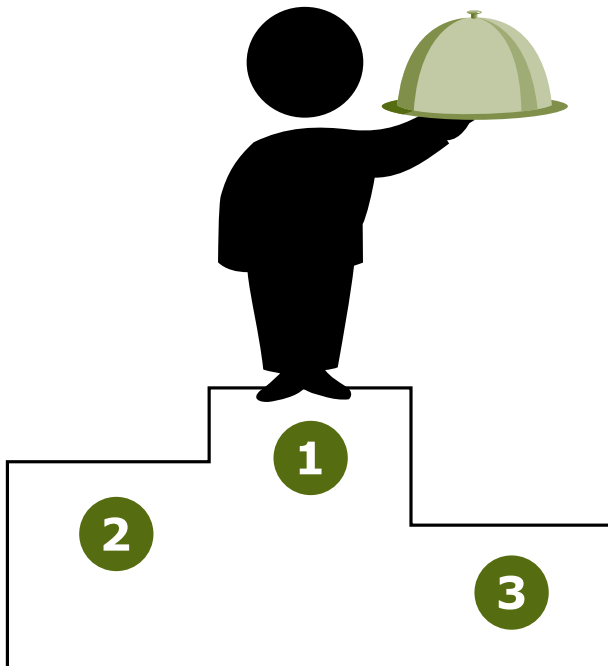
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Paul Bringmann's maxims

5. Good people make good products



Select the right people

If you hire people, the thing to look for most of all is a winner's instinct. The will to win is very important. People who work from nine to five don't have that spirit. They need to have passion. That has nothing to do with education. People who have the will to win, build the best organization. We don't get through a lot of people, so in that respect we do all right.

Always be ready

One Sunday, I got a wake-up call at eight o'clock from a foodservice manager in the city of Lelystad. He couldn't reach our emergency phone numbers. I took action and was patched through to the CEO of our supplier, Vroegop-Windig, within 30 minutes. Isn't that great? Keep your word and always be ready, that is part of our business.

A yo-yo policy with the price is not desirable. And if you stick with that, a relationship lasts a long time with us. We fully realize that a lot of people depend on us. Probably about a third of Vroegop-Windig's sales come from La Place. Our butcher is 90 per cent dependent on us, and there are many other instances. We certainly don't play that off, but it does please me, even if I sometimes hear different reactions from our organization.

Focus on the people, and good products will follow automatically

When I started working at La Place, I thought, if I have good products, I'll be successful. And of course I did look at the people as well, but they were not crucial to me then. Now, I first assess whom I ask to do something. Do I have the right people to do it? Lack of education doesn't mean you can't be passionate I'll allow for a lack of education, as long as someone has passion, does the job with gusto. With good people you can make good products. I've learned that in the course of the years. When I compared these figures with the people running the restaurants, I've seen enormous turnover and performance differences between the various restaurants.

On Sundays, I often have a coffee with Saïd Darkaoui, one of our managers. I'm not worried about him. He's doing great. In the beginning, I just thought, out with those croquettes and those hamburgers, let's get the good stuff in; actions speak louder than words, guys, so come on. Let's go for it. Now, I first look out for good staff. They make life easier and improve the organization. In our trade, where products are made on the spot, we are very dependent on people. In that respect, restaurant managers are crucial. Our basic vision started with the products, and the people were somewhere on the right hand side in the picture. Now I'd turn that around. At La Place two things are important: the people and the products. I don't care about the rest.

Spend enough time focusing on people

The fact that you go back to an outlet unannounced after you've paid a visit really matters to the people working there. I always go to a restaurant before it opens. Being there is important, and it helps people to commit to the organization. Obviously, it is time-consuming. There's lots of other stuff that goes on at the same time. It would have been easiest for me to stay at home and phone around at the end of the day, asking how everything went. But I don't. I just pop in. If you want to discuss something with other people, you need to have been there to see it with your own eyes. That's just the way it is. As a managing director, you need to be willing to spend a lot of time on location. You actually only need to be at headquarters one or two days a week. At headquarters, money is spent, not made. The latter happens in the outlets. This is people business. You connect with people socially; that is really valuable. The people make the business; the people make the difference.



The Dutch restaurant concept La Place wants to become a global retail chain. Owner Sun Capital has the ambition to expand the brand. La Place has won the hearts and whet the appetites of millions of Dutch customers through all walks of life, young and old. Now La Place is hungry to conquer the hearts of consumers in Europe, USA, South East Asia and the Middle East. A La Place branded restaurant has opened in Google's New York office.

Over 28 years La Place has received international acclaim from food lovers, retail experts and competitors. Its restaurants and cafes promise freshly prepared products, front cooking, natural ingredients, local sourcing and dedicated staff. This book presents unique insights, based on extensive conversations with founder and food pioneer Paul Bringmann and ceo Bart van den Nieuwenhof. Additionally Google explains its vision on food and why La Place helps the global brand give its employees fresh, healthy and nutritious food.

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'What makes the La Place concept unique, is its overall transparency and the level of engagement between the cook or server who's helping the customer in making his choice.'

Michiel Bakker, director Global Food Services, Google Inc.



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