Story: George Culver grew up in a family where his father was a cheese maker, his wife raised the three children and his grandfather was a Wisconsin farmer. George started as an inspector and graded dairy farms for the Wisconsin Dairies Cooperative. Ruth was able to instill the small-town, Midwest values she had grown up with in Sauk City, Wisconsin into the three children. One of which was Craig. When Craig was still fairly young, his parents, George and Ruth Culver opened a restaurant in 1961. With no experience at working in a restaurant, Ruth used her experience with warm and gracious hospitality, where George used his experience from his own kitchen. This combination proved to be an impressive team and groundwork to a great admiration to serving others by the Culver family. In the beginning, the three children, including Craig, would help serving guests and eventually cook delicious food. This family approach to the restaurant became the model for many successful family restaurants for the future.

Over two decades later in 1984, the ultimate idea entered the mind of Craig Culver. He combined a love for his mom’s homemade hamburgers with his favorite childhood vacation treat, Fresh Frozen Custard, Which created Culver’s signature combination: Culver’s ButterBurgers and Fresh Frozen Custard. For over three decades now, Culver’s has maintained a similar product that has earned its reputation for deliciousness by cooking every ButterBurger to order. The freshness and perfection of the ButterBurgers has been consistent ever since Craig’s mother, Ruth, made it for the first time at the old restaurant in Sauk City, Wisconsin. While it may take a bit longer to get your food at Culver’s because of how they cook each ButterBurger from scratch, the wait is definitely worth it. The 100% Midwest beef, seared to perfection and served on a lightly buttered toasted bun is the epitome of a delicious burger.

The small local restaurant has grown quite rapidly over the past three decades currently they are spread throughout over 20 states and has over 500 locations. The franchising company, which is located in Prairie du Sac oversees all of these locations. In the summer of 2015, Craig Culver stepped down as Chief Executive Officer of the franchising company when he turned 65. Taking over as the new CEO was the previous President and Chief Operating Officer, Phil Keiser, who had been with the company for roughly 20 years.

Values: There’s no value that is more prominent at Culver’s than the hometown hospitality. While the ButterBurgers are delicious and the Custard is incomparable, nothing compares than when it’s served with a smile, a “please” and a “thank you.” Hospitality is in the hearts of every Culver’s employee and stems all the way back to the first restaurant where Ruth Culver had a special way about her that made everyone who came to Culver’s feel welcomed. It’s routine for every team member to check in with customers to ask, “How’s your meal?” or responds, “It’s my pleasure.” At Culver’s, the true measure of success is the ability of instilling Ruth’s spirit of genuine hospitality across all the restaurants. The mission statement at Culver’s hasn’t changed since day one: That every guest who chooses Culver’s leaves happy. It’s also important to remember all the farmers dairy farms of Wisconsin who produce the wholesome food that is used at all the Culver’s locations. Culver’s is apart of the National FFA Organization, which has been dedicated to providing resources and education to the farmers of tomorrow, a network that now spans all 50 states. Culver’s cares so much about what they serve and what the customers eat that they strive to empower the future generations with the same knowledge that each homegrown Wisconsin dairy farmer has acquired throughout the years. Sustainability is also very important to Culver’s, whether it’s to maintain the original recipe for ButterBurgers or keeping the crinkle cut fries tasting so great. But at Culver’s sustainability is more than just with the food, the bags, napkins, spoons, wrappers, etc. are getting “greener” every day.

Take away: Craig Culver grew up in a small Wisconsin city where his parents, George and Ruth, opened a restaurant and sold delicious burgers with outstanding hospitality. Craig took this idea and partnered it with his favorite summer dessert, frozen custard. Which was the start of Culver’s, who maintained the same ButterBurgers and amazing hospitality that Ruth instilled into the original restaurant. Culver’s has now expanded to over 20 states and more than 500 restaurants.