



BRANDS WE LOVE

P.F. CANDLE CO.

In a way, Kristen Pumphrey's vocation started with a theft. As a kid, she swiped a candle-making kit from her sister, who was making them for a school fair, and used it to make some candles of her own. That led to after-school classes at a craft store. Several years later, after graduating from college, Pumphrey noticed that Etsy—the online marketplace that connects buyers with independent sellers of handmade, curated goods—was on the upswing. Eager to start a storefront of her own, she began making candles again. In 2008, at just 22, Pumphrey founded P.F. Candle Co. as a one-woman Etsy shop under the name Pommes Frites Candles, a moniker from Pumphrey's last name.

Pumphrey and her husband Thomas Neuberger now run the multimillion-dollar home fragrance company from Los Angeles, with help from more than 60 employees. P.F. Candle Co. is still independent, residing in a 22,000-square-foot headquarters and production facility that has been home since 2018. The company's signature



amber jars are now instantly recognizable, and the product range extends well beyond candles to air fresheners, incense, reed diffusers, air and linen sprays, and related accessories.

The original, 2008 recession-era version of P.F. Candle Co. operated out of Pumphrey's second bedroom in Austin, Texas. Five years after opening, she received a large order from home décor retailer West Elm. The order catapulted the company beyond Etsy, which it left in 2016.

While growth was rapid in the early years—sales reportedly jumped by a mammoth 75% in 2018—Pumphrey and Neuberger (who joined in 2013) were deliberate about the company's expansion. To this day, P.F. Candle Co. has not taken any outside funding to accelerate growth, instead building intentionally without sacrificing the brand's soul.

A multichannel distribution strategy that includes direct-to-consumer, independent shops, and international accounts and larger retailers such as Whole Foods and Urban Outfitters has kept sales consistent and well-balanced.

The P.F. Candle Co. marketing playbook reads like a company that understood its clientele before any social media algorithms did. A bit of great timing didn't hurt either. The brand rode the late-2010s wave of slow, decorative living and home design that saw millennials use candles, oil diffusers,

and incense to turn their apartments into cozy, "Instagram-worthy" living spaces.

P.F. Candle Co.'s own Instagram account is a worthy place for such inspiration. Products are cleanly displayed in desirable living spaces with premium lifestyle photography. Reels show employees making products by hand in the company's LA factory. One reel shows the office coordinator making papier-mâché candle stands that would be used as in-store displays.

On TikTok, P.F. Candle Co. has 12,000 followers, and the content is incredibly authentic. Many videos feature Pumphrey herself narrating on or off camera. In one clip, she announces the soft opening of the company's Brooklyn store while helping with its setup. In another, she teaches viewers about a home's "base formula"—the everyday scent that defines a space—and explains how

candles, room sprays, incense, and diffusers can influence it.

One central theme across P.F. Candle Co.'s various content pieces is the way the brand highlights its employees. In one TikTok video, Pumphrey starts by telling viewers they will see how the candles are placed onto the labelling machine, then she hands off the video to the team member responsible for that task. Other collaborative videos with outside creative influencers explain how to "level up" your living space.

KRISTEN PUMPHREY
CEO
CREATIVE DIRECTOR
CO-OWNER



**IN-PERSON
EVENTS DRIVE
PERSONAL
CONNECTIONS,
AND PRODUCT
COLLABORATIONS
PUSH THE BRAND
IN FRONT OF NEW
AUDIENCES.**

While professional and detail-oriented, the brand's website still gives off the vibe of an independent, founder-led company. At pfcandleco.com, the company proudly touts its "non-irritating fragrances formulated for everyday use" being made in the USA. The website allows visitors to shop by product, by scent, and by best sellers. It also makes it easy to search for gift ideas and immerse yourself in fragrance families if you have a nose for what you're after. "Fragrance is an extension of home design," says the About page, "so P.F. goods are crafted with high-quality materials at accessible price points." Products range in price from \$22 for individual candles to \$192 for candle bundles.

The website also boasts an up-to-date Events page that invites people to come into their various shops for gatherings, such as a Vinyl Swap and Listening Party, a free Plant Potting DIY, a Closet Sale, or a Matcha Pop-Up. While those activations don't reach thousands of customers at once, such face-to-face encounters clearly drive loyalty and create personal connections.



Meanwhile, product collaborations do an effective job pushing the brand in front of new audiences. A collaboration page on the website details one limited-time partnership with Haricot Vert, a Brooklyn-based group of artisans who specialize in handmade, wearable poetry. The idea is to celebrate their shared retail store presence in the Williamsburg neighborhood just two blocks from each other. P.F. Candle Co. has also partnered with Grillo's Pickles for National Pickle Day, turning Grillo's 100-year-old recipe into a soy candle. Other partners have included Peanuts, skate brand Toy Machine, and LA-based alt-rock band Wallows.

Even as new product categories come on board, the company says it continues to make all its home fragrance goods in-house at its LA facility. It's also committed to using minimal packaging, domestically grown soy wax, and vegan, cruelty-free blends of natural and synthetic fragrance materials free from parabens or phthalates (synthetic chemicals often called "plasticizers"). If visitors want to dig deeper, the company offers a web page with detailed product ingredient lists.

P.F. Candle Co. says it monitors its carbon footprint and sets yearly reduction goals. Serving its local community is also part of the brand ethos. In 2025, for example, the company donated time and



contributed over \$50,000 to support wildfire relief in Los Angeles.

For staying close to the community that helped foster its growth and bonding with its consumers through content, collabs, and clever communal events, P.F. Candle Co. is a Brand We Love.

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