Uber Eats, Bradley Cooper, and the Art of Running with a Good Idea

Uber Eats and Special U.S. are doing something most brands can’t resist undoing: staying with an idea. Three national spots into their “Football is for Food” conspiracy campaign, they’re still finding new ways to make the absurd feel true—and the familiar feel fun.

Launched in September 2024, the campaign opened with Matthew McConaughey explaining to Christian McCaffrey that he’s hungry because “you’re watching football. The whole game is basically an elaborate scheme to make you buy more food—and it’s working.” The theory clearly landed. Even the cynical Reddit crowd seemed to enjoy the lunacy.

Uber Eats doubled down with its 2025 Super Bowl commercial, “Century of Cravings,” a time-traveling, celebrity-packed exploration of how football may, in fact, have been invented to make us crave food. The spot ranked number 8 on the USA Today Ad Meter—proof enough that the audience was in on the joke.

Most brands would have celebrated the win and moved on. I’m glad Uber Eats didn’t. Passing the conspiracy ball to Bradley Cooper for the latest chapter keeps the story alive—and that’s the real creative courage.

Too often in this business we walk away from ideas just as they start to stick, right when they’re beginning to build the kind of economic value brands dream of. I can hear the chorus already: enough with the refrigerator jokes and turnover puns. Move on.

I say, don’t.

Take a cue from Chuck Jones and Michael Maltese, who built the Road Runner cartoons on a structure so tight it became liberating. They didn’t just embrace tropes; they invented them—and then mastered the art of parodying their own inventions. Once you’ve built a distinctive world with recognizable beats, you don’t run from repetition; you play with it. You let the audience in on the joke. You acknowledge the formula and then twist it. That’s how repetition becomes anticipation instead of fatigue.

I learned this lesson firsthand with Allstate’s “Mayhem.” The campaign was meant to run just three months when it launched in the summer of 2010. But clients like Lisa Cochrane saw the power of a tight, repeatable format and encouraged the agency to keep creating. Fourteen years later, “Mayhem” is still running—a testament to its value as a brand asset.

In today’s fragmented, noisy media landscape, ideas need longer lives more than ever.

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