



Prakash Patel: The Chef Who Seasons the Mustang Recipe

As the program manager for the all-new sixth-generation Ford Mustang, Prakash Patel is like the master chef who knows all the ingredients in the pantry, and knows how to blend them to get just the right taste for any dish.

The basic recipe for producing a car has been well known for more than 125 years. However, like macaroni and cheese or spaghetti and meatballs, if you just follow that recipe verbatim, everything will taste the same, and that just wouldn't do for Mustang.

Patel has been part of the team developing the new Mustang longer than almost anyone. He started as the product planner in February 2009, just as the 2010 Mustang was going into production. The highly disciplined and methodical Patel earned his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering in his native India before attending the University of Michigan, where he earned a master's in industrial and operations engineering.

"I came to the Mustang with a unique perspective from many members of the team after having worked mainly on a series of SUV programs during my career at Ford," said Patel. "I began this assignment by immersing myself in Mustang and learning what has made the car special over its first five decades and in the process becoming a fan of Mustang."

On the wall in Patel's office is a chart showing every powertrain and other major option that has ever been available on Mustang. After helping to define what the next Mustang would be as a product planner, he took the lead of the program management team.

As program manager, Patel's task is to ensure the project is always moving forward while balancing often-competing priorities to bring customers a new Mustang with best performance, design, quality and value.

Even when following the recipe to the letter, the best chefs always taste the dish as it's cooking and make adjustments. Similarly, the program manager works with the teams creating a new car to provide the combination of attributes that will matter most to the customer.

"I like to think as program management as the fuel that keeps the whole program moving forward," added Patel. "A new product program has many moving parts, and by having a 30,000-foot view of what is going on in design, engineering, manufacturing and finance we help to make sure that no one goes off on a tangent."

While Patel's approach to his job is analytical, he understands that even a perfectly cooked meal won't be appealing if the flavor is too bland.

When he's not seasoning the recipe that will be the next Mustang and making sure that it doesn't boil over, Patel spends time with his wife and two sons.

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