

fresh ideas

| MENU INNOVATION |

The Ch'King fried chicken sandwich is now available at Burger King stores nationwide. That might not sound remarkable, but when you consider the chain launched it nationwide in June, on the heels of a new line of chicken sandwiches from McDonald's in February, following introduction from other rivals, the story heats up.

Let's take a step back. The "chicken sandwich wars" really ignited in August 2019 when Popeyes launched its version, a product three years in the making. A social media battle then flared with Chick-fil-A, which claims to have invented the chicken sandwich. And the rush was on. Since then, CKE Restaurants, KFC, Shake Shack, Taco Bell, and countless others, have jumped into



the fray hoping to capitalize on the heightened attention.

Rallying the troops

Restaurant concepts are not launching chicken sandwiches quietly. Restaurants, says Arlene Spiegel, a restaurant consultant in New York City, "have really stepped up on social media and influencer marketing over the past few years. They now talk about ingredients, preparation, and have very compelling food photography in their marketing efforts. The fried chicken product was asleep and positioned as the low man on the totem pole, but now has respect."

Future victory

It's hard to know what the future holds, but it wouldn't be surprising if the Signature Sandwich becomes a permanent menu fixture for certain restaurants.

This sandwich is not just a sandwich but a platform and it can do great things from sauces and flavors to add-ons. Spiegel thinks fried chicken sandwiches will become more exotic "as chefs try to differentiate the core chicken product; batters and breading; flavor profiles; and buns. The fried chicken sandwich will be elevated and eventually create an 'award' category in upcoming food shows," she says.