



No more extra pickles? Subway's new menu offerings downplay the ability to customize sandwiches

The chain says its Subway Series sandwiches are 'expertly crafted.' But will customers be OK with the fact they're allowed only 'select substitutions'?

Have we reached peak customization? Subway is rolling out a new menu of sandwiches that are created to be served in a set way. That's right, this is coming from the same chain famous for letting you pile on all the veggies you want or letting you put Buffalo sauce and guacamole on your tuna sub if that's your thing. To be clear, Subway is still letting you go the customization route, but you can now also opt for a streamlined slate of 12 sandwiches, cleverly dubbed the Subway Series. The offerings are identified by both a number and name, as in #3 (or The Monster, a cheesesteak sub) or #6 (The Boss, a meatball sub).

It's an idea that couldn't be timelier, restaurant-industry analysts and observers say. Like many businesses, dining spots are burdened these days by labor shortages and supply-chain issues, so they are looking to streamline operations as much as possible. As New York-based restaurant consultant Arlene Spiegel explains, customization adds time to the equation of preparing an order — and time is money. It can even require restaurants to have bigger kitchens to accommodate extra ingredients, she notes. The key, she says, is for a restaurant to "create a system where the guest thinks they are getting it their way but it's really the operator's way." ●