

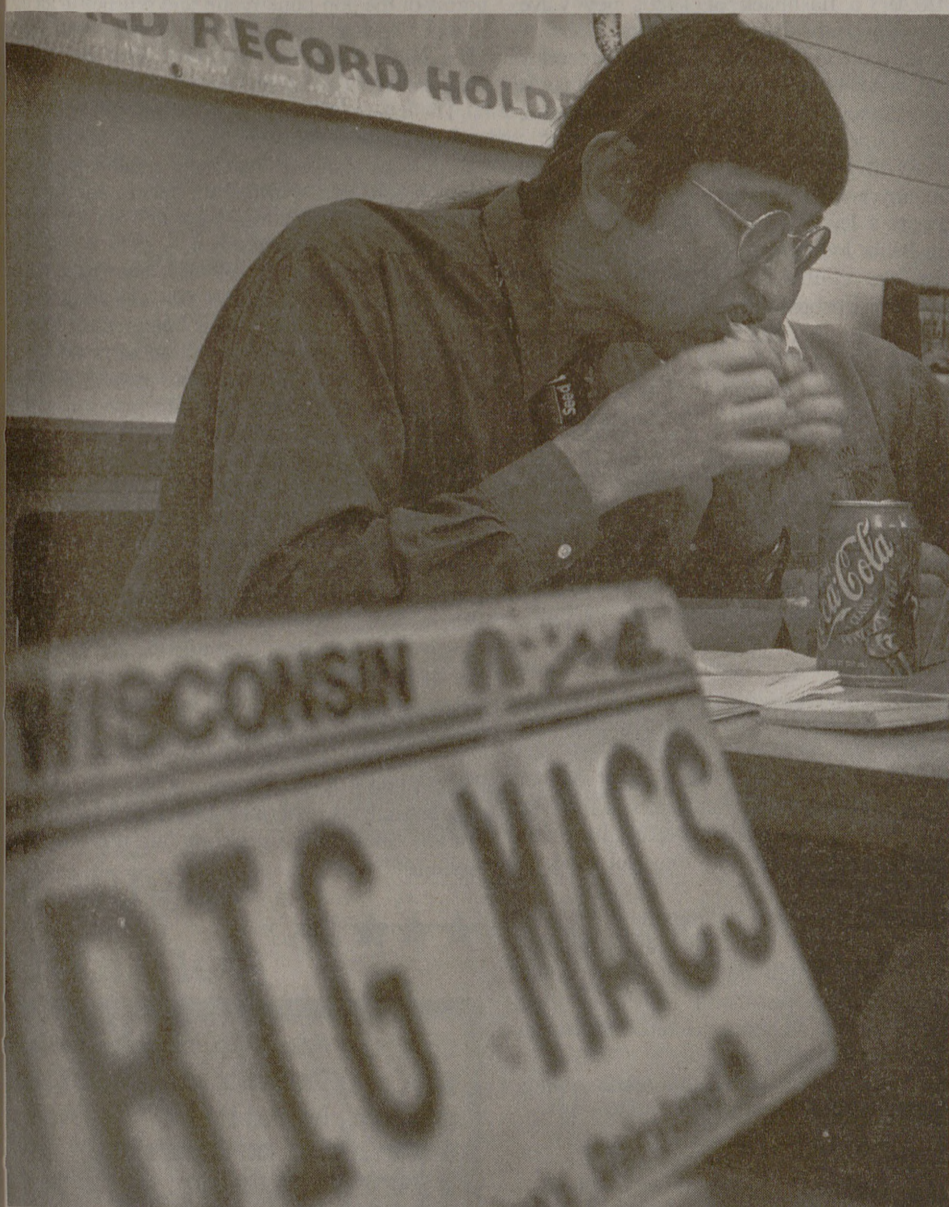
# AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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## The Great Chain of Health

Fast-food chains across the U.S. add healthy selections to their menus



GARY PORTER • KRT CAMPUS

Many fast-food chains across America are vying for attention from the health-conscious demographic. Despite the failure of the "McLean Deluxe" sandwich in 1991, McDonald's (above) is among the chains trying to create healthier menus for their consumers.

By Karen Uhlenhuth  
KRT CAMPUS

The fast-food industry is making it harder for overweight Americans to blame the ubiquitous drive-through food vendors for the national epidemic of excess pounds.

In the last couple of months, several of the major fast-food corporations have introduced products that promise less saturated fat and fewer calories than the old standbys. They include:

Taco Bell's "fresco-style," an option that serves up entrees with a fresh salsa of tomatoes, onions and cilantro instead of cheese and sauce.

For example, a traditional grilled steak taco has 290 calories and 17 grams of fat. Ordered fresco style, those counts tumble to 170 calories and 5 grams of fat.

Three "fire-grilled chicken baguette" sandwiches are available at Burger King restaurants.

They have fewer than 360 calories and 5 grams of fat apiece. They're available in three flavors: the Santa Fe, savory mustard and the smoky BBQ.

The "Fit 'N' Delicious" pizza introduced by Pizza Hut. It has half the cheese of the chain's other pizzas and an extra dollop of tomato sauce. Fit 'N' Delicious pizza, which comes on a thin crust with a choice of chicken or ham and a couple of vegetables, has 25 percent less fat than a standard thin-crust pizza with the same toppings.

The calorie count is 155 versus 185 per slice, and the fat grams are 4 versus 6.5.

The "Del Rio" salad is now being tested at 150 McDonald's restaurants in Indiana. Depending on the outcome, it could be served nationwide. Earlier this year the company introduced three "premium salads" nationwide. This would be the fourth.

The Del Rio has 450 calories and 12 grams of fat if ordered with sour cream.

It comes with a bottle of water or medium fountain drink and, naturally, a pedometer.

A new Subway meal deal known as a Kids' Pak that's aimed at getting the younger set to cut down on fat and calories.

The Pak contains a fresh deli-style sandwich, a Minute Maid 100 percent fruit juice and a General Mills Fruit Roll-Up snack. The Kids' Pak contains 370 calories and 1.5 grams of saturated fat. Paks come with a toy that promotes physical activities like football, Frisbee or golf.

The Kids' Pak price range is \$2.99 to \$3.49. In addition, Jared Fogle, their media spokesperson, will be featured on in-store information cards titled "Jared's Steps to Healthier Kids" and on their Web site, [www.subwaykids.com](http://www.subwaykids.com).

Nelda Mercer, a registered dietitian in Ann Arbor, Mich., who speaks for the American Dietetic Association, suspects that Americans may finally be heeding the oft-repeated advice to eat less fat and fewer calories.

"With all this hype about obesity and diabetes in kids and it's good hype. I think people are starting to listen. It's coming from all directions. People are getting more conscious of portion size. Supersizing is no longer the thing to do."

The fast-food industry has been experimenting for decades with healthier options, she said. Some, such as salads and grilled-chicken sandwiches, have stuck. Others, most notably the 91 percent fat-free McLean Deluxe sandwich that McDonald's introduced in 1991, flopped.

While some of the industry's early attempts at healthful fare fell short on taste, Mercer thinks fast-food makers are getting better at combining good flavor with lower fat and caloric content.

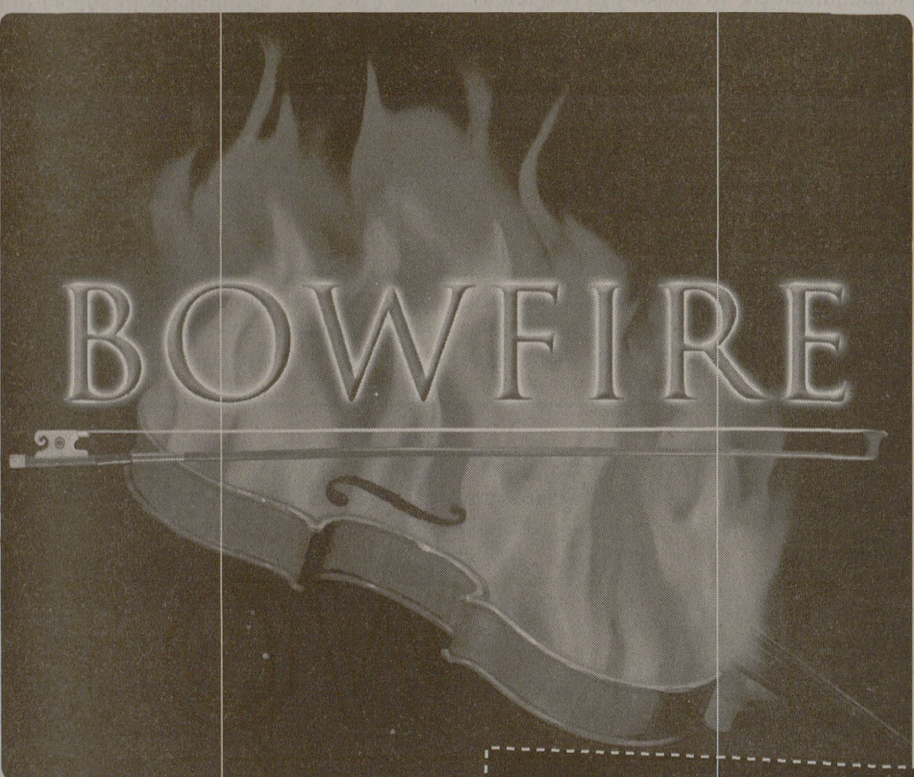
"I'm going by what other people tell me," she said. "I don't stop at those places."

Bonnie Liebman also calls the recent menu additions "clearly a step in the right direction." Liebman is the director of nutrition at the Center for Science in the Public Interest in Washington D.C., which often assesses the nation's eating habits. Liebman applauds the chains for bundling sandwiches or other entrees with bottled water or a modestly sized soda, bypassing the french fries. A supersized order of french fries at McDonald's is way more than a mere side dish, when evaluated on the basis of calories, Liebman noted. A Big Mac weighs in at 600 calories, a supersized serving of fries at 610.

She, too, applauds the fast food-makers for offering better taste along with better nutrition. Burger King "has dressed up these new sandwiches," she said. "They're interesting."

Liebman hastily added that there's still room for improvement at most fast-food chains. Burger King's new chicken sandwiches, for example, "are quite high in sodium," she said. "And you're getting white bread. I'm not saying these are perfect. They're just better than what's out there."

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