



Arthur Treacher's Goes Fishing for New Menu Items

By Joe Giesy, Tuesday, April 17, 2012

AUSTINTOWN, Ohio -- Arthur Treacher's Fish and Chips has been revamping its menu, adding seafood options that reflect changing tastes – and chicken.

The expanded menu is paying off.

Denise Fletcher, manager of the Arthur Treacher's in Austintown, reports her store had its best Lenten seasons in three years, selling almost twice as many meals as it did last year.

"We've had a very good Lent season, I'd say about a 25 to 40% increase," Fletcher reported last week. "Maybe because the economy is picking up, maybe because of the good weather, but it has been very good for us for the past couple of weeks."

In her three years at Arthur Treacher's, foot traffic increased all three, even outside of Lent. It starts just before Christmas Eve and doesn't slow, even after Easter.

"We have a lot of return customers, a lot of new customers, and sales have been really good," Fletcher said.

The increase could be the result of a new marketing strategy aimed at converting more first-time customers to repeat customers.

While Nathan's Famous, maker of Nathan's Famous Hot Dogs, retains the intellectual property rights to Arthur Treacher's, TruFoods LLC acquired the franchising rights to the Ohio Arthur Treacher's in 2007. TruFoods immediately focused in on Treacher's operations, making franchises more affordable and began a new marketing strategy to attract younger customers.

The 19 stores in Ohio that TruFoods oversees, growth has been modest because the company has just started working with them, says Fred Kirvan, chief operating officer of TruFoods.

"Part of what we've been trying to do is relaunch and reposition the brand in our Ohio stores," Kirvan says.

One of the first steps TruFoods took was co-brand Arthur Treacher's and Pudge's Famous Chicken, and a New York company under its management, allowing Treacher's to sell chicken.

Workers at the Austintown Treacher's are often surprised by how much chicken they sell in a day, Fletcher says, for two reasons. First, Most consumers identify Arthur Treacher's with fish. Second, a KFC sits opposite their restaurant on Mahoning Avenue.

Treachers' introduced fish tacos to its menu and has added a variety of new items, breaded shrimp, scallops and lobster bites. The latest are shrimp wraps and chicken wraps.

The next item customers will see on a Treacher's menu is a shrimp po' boys, as Southerners call heroes or submarine sandwiches.

"For us, we know moving this forward, we need to create larger appeal. Can't be just fish and chips," Kirvan says. "There're so many options that so few brands really ever get in to."

The larger number of choices in menus surprises customers who haven't been inside a Treacher's in years, Fletcher says.

Also unexpected to first-time customers – certainly at the Treacher's in Austintown – are the ribs, which have proved popular with returning customers.

The manager of the Austintown restaurant said customers enjoy trying the new items, but those who keep coming back remain partial to the dish that started it all, fish and chips.

<http://businessjournaldaily.com/company-news/arthur-treachers-goes-fishing-new-menu-items-2012-4-17>

