

Titans of Taste: Fast Food

There's no denying it, Americans love fast food. It's a love affair that stems from our passion for cars. As the automobile became more affordable, people became more mobile; as we moved about, our food needed to learn how to move with us. Inevitably, the fast food industry was born, and delicious meals were wrapped and ready to go. Who are those fast food industry kings that have fed our appetites for good food and fast service? Whose logos and products have become both popular brands and immediately identifiable pop icons? In this Food Network special, students will climb behind the wheel and head cross-country to uncover all there is to know about our fast food favorites. They'll learn the story of the visionaries behind Kentucky Fried Chicken, Wendy's and McDonald's. They'll meet the people closest to them--family, friends and employees-- and reveal the passion and circumstances that drove them to succeed. On the way, students will take a look at how their ingenuity completely changed the way Americans eat.

Vocabulary

- adhere
- franchise
- industry
- innovator
- mogul
- prospect
- regional
- restaurateur
- scientist
- titan

Discussion Questions

- Ask students to define the term, "fast food." What features make a fast food restaurant? What are the benefits of eating fast food? What are the negatives, if any?
- Explain that, although fast food has been around during all of their lives, fast food is a relatively new dining concept. Have students predict when fast food was born.
- Ask students to name their favorite fast food restaurants. What features/foods do they particularly like? Which restaurants are among the class favorites?
- With which fast food restaurants do students associate these famous names: Colonel Sanders, Ray Croc and Dave Thomas?

Suggested Activities

Do You Have What It Takes? (Language Arts)

Each of the men featured in the episode is a titan, innovator and entrepreneur. Have students define each of these words. Then have them make three columns on a piece of paper with the words, "titan," "innovator" and "entrepreneur" at the top of each column. Have them select one of the fast food kings from the episode and write examples in each corresponding column of how he was a titan, an innovator and an entrepreneur. Have students share their examples with the class. Then have them share examples of other titans, innovators and entrepreneurs in the news or from history. Using all of their examples, have the class compile a list of qualities they believe it takes to be successful as an entrepreneur. Examples include patience, fortitude, determination creativity and bravery. Finally, have students check off the qualities from their list that they believe they possess. Given their personal list, do students believe they have what it takes to be successful as an entrepreneur?

Where's the Slogan? (Language Arts, Marketing)

In the episode, students are introduced to current and former slogans of some of their favorite fast food restaurants. These include, "Where's the Beef? (Wendy's)," "Finger Lickin' Good (KFC)"

and “Have it Your Way (Burger King). Other slogans that might be familiar to students include, “You Deserve a Break Today (McDonald’s),” “I’m Lovin’ It (McDonald’s),” “Eat Fresh (Subway),” and “Make a Run for the Border (Taco Bell).” Have students define the term “slogan.” (A slogan is a short, often memorable phrase used in advertising campaigns. They are claimed to be the most effective means of drawing attention to one or more aspects of a product. To be successful, a slogan should be memorable.) Have students list other slogans of favorite products. Then have student groups imagine that they have been asked to create a new slogan for a favorite fast food restaurant. Their slogan must be short and memorable. It must be targeted to a specific demographic such as children, Moms, college students, retirees, families, etc. It must also connect in some way to a benefit or feature of their restaurant such as quality food, efficiency, innovation, family friendliness, etc. Have students test slogan ideas to people within their demographic to help them determine the most effective or memorable. Finally, have students present and justify their slogans to a panel of judges. The panel could include students, staff, community members or even franchisees themselves.

What’s for Dinner? (Health, Nutrition, Marketing, Science)

Dave Thomas was committed to serving healthy, quality food in an efficient way. However, fast food is not always described as nutritional. Talk with students about what makes a meal nutritional, in their opinion. What do (or should) students consider when making healthy nutritional choices? Do they think that nutritional choices are available at fast food restaurants? Do they make healthy, nutritional choices when eating at fast food restaurants? Challenge student groups to select a fast food restaurant and identify a meal from that restaurant that they would consider healthy and nutritional. They can go online to <http://www.foodfacts.info/> for nutritional information about specific fast food selections. You may want to agree upon a set of criteria before the exercise such as calorie count, fat content or different groups from the food pyramid. (More information can be found at www.mypyramid.com). If students can not identify a healthy meal, have them design one that would fit into the restaurant’s menu while remaining efficient. Have students present their meals to the rest of the class.

Extensions

In the episode, students learn that Colonel Harlan Sanders, the founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken, used his mother’s family recipe for fried chicken as the basis for his famous Kentucky Fried Chicken. Have students imagine that their family has been asked to select a famous family recipe to sell at a restaurant. Which recipe would they choose and why? What would they name their dish? To whom might it appeal? Have students compile all recipes into a class cookbook called, “Our Family’s Favorite Dishes.”