

## **A whole new way to eat at McDonald's: menu to receive ingredients overhaul**

By Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff

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NEW YORK, N.Y. — In an attempt to convince people it does not serve processed junk food, McDonald's is removing some unpopular ingredients from its food.

That includes making Chicken McNuggets and other items without artificial preservatives, and removing high-fructose corn syrup from its burger buns. The preservatives are chemicals, which makes food last longer, and health experts say that the corn syrup is not healthy. McDonald's did not immediately respond when asked about which specific preservatives are being removed.

### **Customer Cravings Changing**

The changes come as the world's biggest burger chain fights to win back customers. For the third straight year, McDonald's has experienced declining guest counts at its established U.S. locations. In general, major restaurant chains are scrambling to improve the image of their food as they face more competition from smaller rivals promising healthier alternatives.

"Why go to the position of trying to defend them, if the consumer is saying, 'I prefer not to have that particular ingredient in my food?'" said Mike Andres. He is president of McDonald's U.S.

How meaningful the changes are to customers remains to be seen.

Michael Jacobson is the executive director for the Center for Science in the Public Interest, an organization that promotes safer and healthier food. He said that McDonald's isn't seeming to address the big-picture problem with restaurant food — too many calories.

For instance, he said swapping out high-fructose corn syrup for sugar doesn't make burger buns any healthier.

In the past year and a half, McDonald's has also switched from margarine to butter for its Egg McMuffins, and added kale and spinach to its salads. Its rivals have made changes as well.

### **Competitors Concerned About Cleaner Foods, Too**

Dunkin' Donuts, for instance, has promised to put more egg in its egg patty. Currently, the patty looks like a fried egg, but its ingredients include egg whites, water, egg yolks and modified corn starch, which is treated with chemicals or enzymes to change its texture.

Taco Bell is also removing artificial ingredients and said it would switch to actual black pepper rather than "black pepper flavor." Meanwhile, it continues trying to lure new diners with caloric concoctions and frozen, neon-colored drinks.

Subway has introduced a "rotisserie chicken" and "carved turkey" that look and feel more natural than its regular chicken strips and turkey. It's keeping both versions to avoid alienating fans who might not want any changes.

But convincing people it serves wholesome food is particularly important for McDonald's, which attracts families with its Happy Meals.

### **Building A Better Business Model**

The company's sales in its U.S. market are getting better. It has been helped by the fanfare over the introduction of an all-day breakfast menu in October. In the most recent quarter, though, McDonald's said sales rose just 1.8 percent at its locations. This may mean that any excitement from all-day Egg McMuffins could already be losing steam.

McDonald's had signaled that tweaks to its menu were in store. It told investors during a presentation in late 2014, that it was evaluating its cooking procedures and ingredients as part of its push to fix its struggling businesses.

"We need to think about our ingredient labels as being much smaller," Andres said at the time.

The company also said Monday it has phased out chicken raised with antibiotics important to human medicine. Scientists say that use of antibiotics on farms to raise larger, healthier animals also contributes to the rise of antibiotic-resistant "superbugs," which can cause infections that are hard to treat in humans.

Reporters Monday also posted images of new items like "breakfast bowls" the company is testing. And a McDonald's chef demonstrated making Egg McMuffins with freshly cracked eggs. The company is trying to emphasize the message that it serves real food.

**Why are fast food chains willing to change some of their ingredients?**

**Based on the evidence in this text, what is the real problem with fast food?**

**Are the fast food chains really addressing consumer concerns with their products?**

**Write one new question you now have about this topic:**