



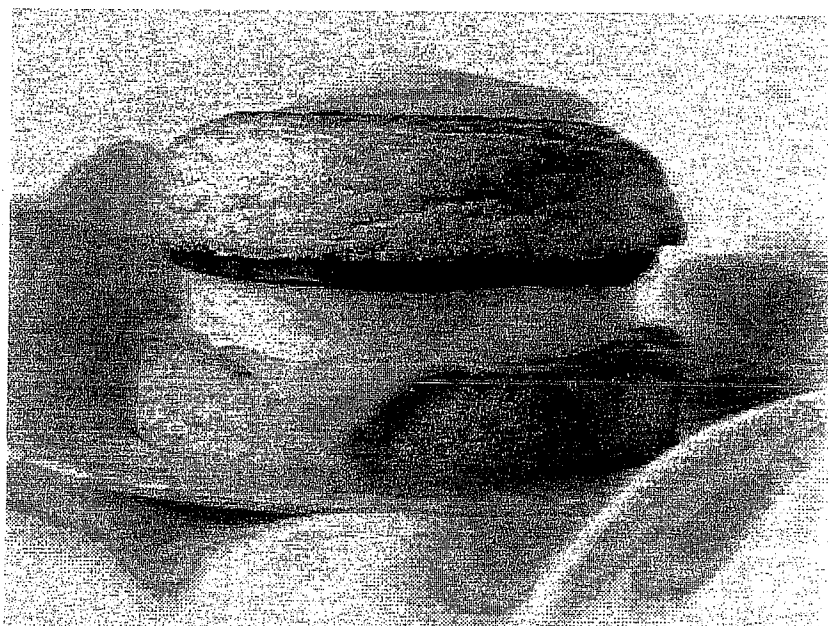
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Nothing Ventured, Muffin Gained

Despite low breakfast sales, restaurants push new menus

By MATT BARTOSIK

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There's an egg war going on. But it's not between raucous teenagers. Perhaps worse yet, it's between fast-food giants.

Oak Brook-based McDonald's is king when it comes to breakfast fast food, according to Gary Stibel, founder-CEO of New England Consulting Group (via *Crain's Chicago Business*).

But Burger King is looking to knock the Golden Arches off its breakfast throne.

The "Home of the Whopper" recently began an ad campaign to promote their new \$1 BK Breakfast Muffin Sandwich, which they fully admit is just like McDonald's Sausage McMuffin with Egg, but cheaper.

"It's not that original, but it's super affordable. Egg, sausage, and cheese on a toasted English muffin," says the voice-over in a new commercial.

But McDonald's, who once sued a teen girl's charity because it used "Mc" in the name, is surprisingly

not up in arms about Burger King's obvious copycat move.

"Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery," a spokesperson told *Crain's Chicago Business*, quoting a popular turn of phrase.

This breakfast war isn't a two-party deal either. McDonald's is pulling a similar tactic with its new oatmeal, being tested in Baltimore and Washington. Oatmeal is currently one of the best-selling items on the menu at Starbucks, who also recently overhauled its menu in June 2009.

Subway, the largest single-brand restaurant chain globally, isn't going to be left behind either. It plans to debut a new breakfast menu this coming Monday, reports the AP. The menu will offer customizable "omelet sandwiches" served on English muffins, flatbread, or Subway's sub rolls.

What seems most surprising about all this is the fact that there is a war at all. Fast-food breakfast sales, for all chains, declined by 4 percent in late 2009, coinciding with the high percentages of unemployment, according to the Washington Post.

"Typically, if you're unemployed, you're not getting up at 6 and not going through the drive-thru," Jeffrey Bernstein, an analyst at Barclays Capital, told the Washington Post. "There is a direct correlation between unemployment and breakfast sales."

But it looks like that isn't stopping the fast-food giants from trying to get you in the door. Even if they have to copy off each other to do it.

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