

## Creating the Original Chick-fil-A Sandwich

In 1961, Jim and Hall Goode, owners of Atlanta-based Goode Brothers Poultry, came to local restaurateur Truett Cathy in a quandary. An airline had asked them to provide a boneless, skinless chicken breast that would fit in the plastic trays they used to serve meals on planes. The Goodes met the request, but their process left boneless breast pieces that didn't meet the airline's size requirements. They asked Cathy if he could do anything with them.

Cathy had been considering adding chicken to the menu at his Dwarf Grill restaurant, but traditional methods for cooking chicken were too time-consuming to meet the needs of his customers (mostly shift workers from the nearby Ford Plant and Delta Airlines headquarters in Hapeville, Ga.). Determined not to let this opportunity pass him by, Cathy accepted the Goode's shipment and began experimenting with cooking techniques.

Cathy thought back to his mother's method of cooking chicken by covering the pan with a heavy top, creating something of a pressure cooker. He tried this method and found that the chicken cooked faster and remained moist and tender. During this time of initial experimentation, he discovered the recently introduced Henry Penny commercial cooker, a pressure cooker that used oil and could cook a boneless chicken breast – from start to finish – in four minutes.

Still looking for the best way to serve the chicken, Cathy put it on a buttered bun instead of on a plate all by itself. But it still wasn't exactly right. For months, he experimented with different seasonings and breading for the chicken. Soon, he was up to more than 20 ingredients – nearly twice as many as Colonel Sanders had in his secret recipe.

Each time Cathy changed the formula, he tested it with his customers. He surprised them with the addition of two dill pickle slices, which they said added just the right touch.

Finally, after four years of experimentation and testing, customers said: "We like it. Don't change it again."

He folded up the recipe and put it in his pocket. The boneless chicken sandwich was born.

Cathy initially called the result a chicken steak sandwich, but he began thinking of a more clever name after learning the name was too general to trademark.

He began to reflect on the product, made from what was widely considered to be the best part of the chicken – a boneless breast. It occurred to him that the best cut of beef is a fillet; why not call it a chicken fillet? Or chick fillet? Or Chick-fil-A? (Cathy later noted that the capital "A" on the end was meant to symbolize top quality.)

The Chick-fil-A name was registered in 1963, and four years later, the popularity of Cathy's sandwich recipe spawned the opening of the first Chick-fil-A restaurant in Atlanta's Greenbriar Mall.

As of February 2010, Chick-fil-A has more than 1,480 restaurants in 38 states and Washington, D.C. and posted sales of more than \$3.2 billion in 2009. The flagship menu item, though, remains the original Chick-fil-A<sup>®</sup> Chicken Sandwich, which is made following the same recipe that Cathy folded up and put into his pocket nearly five decades ago.

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