

KFC tries Kentucky fried fish

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Chain hopes sandwich will reel in business during Lenten season

After building a fast-food empire on a secret chicken recipe, Louisville-based KFC Corp. is hoping to cash in on the Lenten season with its first national fish menu item.

The 99-cent KFC Fish Snacker was rolled out at the chain's domestic restaurants Monday, and will be promoted through Easter Sunday.

Rick Maynard, a KFC spokesman, said the company conducted a trial run of the Fish Snacker in June 2005 in the Columbus, Ohio, market, followed by another trial that reached about three-fourths of all stores during Lent last year.

KFC's parent company, Yum! Brands Inc., has been looking for ways to boost U.S. restaurant sales, which have been slow compared with those in its overseas markets.

Ron Paul, president of Technomic, a restaurant consultancy in Chicago, said the fish campaign makes sense for KFC, even if it temporarily cuts into sales at Yum's seafood chain, Long John Silver's.

"You don't want anybody to not come to your place because you don't have something for them to eat," Paul said in an interview. "I don't think it's going to be a huge deal, but given how complex and competitive the industry is right now ... trying to get some oomph out of KFC probably makes a lot of sense."

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