



Shift Leader Meghan Reitz prepares Chick-fil-A® Coffee at Oxford Valley FSR.

WAKING UP to EXCELLENCE

When served with a side of Operational Excellence, the new Chick-fil-A® Coffee won't just wake up tired customers—it can also jumpstart sluggish sales.

OPERATOR DAVE HEFFERNAN drinks his coffee black. No cream. No sugar. When he fills his cup, his taste buds can instantly tell the difference between a good brew and a bad one.

"I drink about five cups of coffee every day—a combination between regular and decaf," says Dave, who operates Oxford Valley Road FSR in Langhorne, Pennsylvania. "I don't put anything in it, so if something's off, I taste it right away."

Thanks to new Chick-fil-A® Coffee, he looks forward to his cups at the Restaurant when he wakes up each morning. "The quality of our new product is awesome," says Dave, who began serving the new Chick-fil-A® Coffee, sourced by THRIVE Farmers, in late 2013

as part of the new coffee test. "The taste is absolutely amazing. It's very smooth."

Guests seem to agree, as year-to-date breakfast sales at Oxford Valley Road FSR were up 7 percent through July 2014. "I think the new coffee definitely has something to do with it," Dave says. "After all, what's breakfast without a good cup of coffee?"

If a good cup of coffee is the key to activating breakfast growth, a consistent cup is the key to sustaining it, suggests a March 2014 study from global management consulting firm McKinsey & Company. Based on a survey of approximately 27,000 U.S. consumers across 14 different industries, the firm found customer satisfaction results from a series of positive encounters rather

than a single interaction.

Here, Dave and two other Operators who participated in the coffee test share their tips for consistently executing Hot and Iced Coffee across multiple days and dayparts.

Planning for Excellence

Along with new opportunities, Hot and Iced Coffee present new challenges, Dave says, such as a revised hold time for coffee—one hour, down from four. "Our biggest issue, which we battle every day, is figuring out how to keep the products fresh and available so we can have a high-quality product that's served quickly," he says.

No matter the time of day, Dave has found that hot, fresh coffee hinges on

thorough planning and preparation. To achieve optimal taste and cleanliness, coffee servers must be rinsed every time a new batch is brewed. Because the process can be time consuming, Dave's team keeps an extra server on hand during peak periods. When the coffee in one server is 55 minutes old, Team Members begin brewing fresh coffee in another server.

"Having an extra decanter has been key," says Dave, whose Restaurant currently has three decanters: one each for decaf and regular, and a third that's kept clean and at the ready. "Early on, we put the third decanter away because we figured that we didn't need all three. The problem is, if you wait for a container to go totally empty before you start brewing another batch, you have to wait for that container to be totally rinsed before you can serve coffee to the next guest who orders it."

Preparation is even more important during non-peak periods, such as between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., when keeping fresh coffee on hand is especially difficult. During those times, Team Members have to choose between making a fresh batch and potentially wasting most of it or making the coffee to order and asking a guest to wait.

To help them decide, Team Leaders constantly review historical and real-time sales data by day and daypart. If it's Friday afternoon, for example, and coffee sales tend to be higher on Fridays than other days, leaders will likely brew a fresh decanter in preparation for orders. If it's raining, however, and coffee sales historically lag during storms, they probably won't brew a fresh batch ahead of time, in which case they'll offer the next guest who orders coffee a Coffee Digital Offer Card (DOC) in exchange for waiting.

"So far, it's working well," Dave says. "Ninety-nine percent of people are happy to wait—they enjoy knowing that they are getting a hot, fresh cup of coffee."

Training Sets the Tone

Operator Ben Prine agrees that preparation should be a top priority, adding that the most important thing to prepare is people.

"When you roll out a new product, the biggest thing is making sure your Team Members are trained on it," says Prine, who operates Cookeville FSR in Cookeville, Tennessee. "There's typically a learning curve, so you have to make sure Team Members know and understand the new procedures, and that leaders are monitoring them."

Instead of a traditional training session, Ben prepared his leaders and Team Members for the new coffee test by hosting a Sunday afternoon "tasting party."



**Director of Operations
Caleb Childs at
Oxford Valley FSR.**

"We try to make training as fun as it can be, and 'tasting party' sounds a lot more attractive to Team Members than 'training,'" Ben says. "When you have everyone's undivided attention, you can introduce them to the new product and walk them through the process of preparing it. They can watch one of our leaders do it, and then they can do it themselves."

During the tasting party, Team Members learned what the new products tasted like and which procedures ensured consistent flavor. Days, weeks, and even months later, they can recall their experience and use it to determine whether they're executing new coffee with excellence.

To Ben, proper staffing is just as important as training. During lunch, he typically schedules an extra Team

Member whose sole job is to make Milkshakes and, now, Iced Coffee. "I don't like to pull people off the register during busy times," he says. "Having an extra person who's designated to make Iced Coffee means you can take care of guests without leaving the Front Counter."

Molding a Coffee Master

Operator Phil Kelley is counting on new coffee to help kickstart breakfast business at his Cumberland FSR in Vineland, New Jersey. "If you ask any Operator in the Northeast what their

biggest sales-growth obstacle is, it's almost always breakfast," Phil says.

Coffee could be a "game changer" for breakfast sales, he adds, but only if it's executed correctly. To ensure his Restaurant's coffee is crave-able, he's tasked a front-of-the-house trainer, Ally Alonardo, with taking charge of the product.

During the new coffee test, Ally trained Team Members on coffee preparation, hold times and cleaning. Now, months later, she's the "coffee guru" who monitors coffee performance, execution and equipment.

"It's all about accountability," Phil says. "When a new product comes into the business, you need someone you can hold accountable for that menu item and someone who can hold others accountable to them."

He believes the right person makes all the difference. "You want somebody who's going to champion this product—someone who's passionate and someone who believes in it," Phil continues. "Our front-of-the-house trainer is a coffee drinker. She likes the new coffee and believes it's better than our competitors' coffee by far."

With the right procedures, training and leadership in place, Operators like Dave, Ben and Phil are confident new Chick-fil-A® Coffee will take their businesses to a whole new level—starting with breakfast, but extending well beyond it.

"We are not a coffee shop," Dave concludes. "But if we have a dynamic brew—which we now have—that's served hot, fresh and fast, along with the other products we have, that is going to really set us apart." **CRF**

BREWING EXCELLENCE

As Operators in the new coffee test market, Dave Heffernan and Ben Prine got a headstart on serving Chick-fil-A's new Hot and Iced Coffee, and on developing best practices for executing them with Operational Excellence. *Create* asked them to share how they brew the best possible cup.

Create: One of the biggest changes with the new coffee rollout has been adding sweeteners and creamers directly to guests' coffee in the drive-thru. How has this gone so far?

Dave: When we started this test and said, "Guys, we are now going to be putting the condiments in the coffee in the drive-thru," my Team Members weren't very happy. But I asked them to just give it a try. I said, "Think about it. When you're in your car and you have to stop and put cream and sugar in your coffee cup, it's not easy. If we do that for the guest, what will that say about customer experience and Operational Excellence?" Once I brought it around to OE and the guest experience, they understood. We allowed them to shift around some equipment in the drive-thru to make things more efficient, and now it's just normal operating procedure.

Ben: If guests wanted creamers in the past, we'd just say, "Here are two packs." Now we do it for them. People like that. When you're in the car, it's a lot easier to have the cream already in there—you don't have to take the lid off or figure out what to do with the empty containers. There have definitely been regular customers who have come through and thanked us for this.

Create: The new procedures require a shorter hold time for coffee (one hour) than past procedures did. When coffee sales are slow, how do you balance the desire to reduce waste with the need to serve guests quickly?

Dave: Fortunately, there are two different sizes of brew you can do: one packet at a time or two. One packet yields you half a gallon of coffee. If you need more, like at breakfast, you can brew two packets and get the same quality product.

It's a great idea, and it allows you to cut down production during low-volume times.

Ben: Some days we sell more coffee than others, and my leaders do a good job of monitoring that. Sometimes they'll wait to brew a fresh batch of coffee until somebody actually orders a cup, and that's been OK. It's like cooking Waffle Potato Fries at night. There are some nights near closing

time when we're not very busy, so we don't drop fries until somebody orders them. Most of the time, people are fine when you tell them, "Hey, we're cooking you some fresh fries, so it's going to be a couple minutes." They're excited to get a fresh product, so they're willing to wait. In my experience, the same is true with coffee.

Create: How did you ensure consistency during the new coffee test?

Dave: Empowering my Team Members. Whenever we get something new, I make sure they give input about how we integrate it into our operations. They are the ones who serve coffee all the time, not me, so I asked them, "Where should we put the new coffee cups? Where should we put the new sweeteners? Where do you think we should put the new packets of coffee?" ... It's not changing the procedures—it's maximizing efficiency by allowing them to decide where things are located, which ensures their buy-in and improves Operational Excellence.

Ben: Accountability. My Team Leaders constantly monitor quality by making sure we're using the right hold times. If somebody is up front making Iced Tea, for example, we expect him or her to also look at the coffee urn to make sure the coffee is within the hold time. Whenever something new comes down the pike, I put a couple of leaders in charge of it. They hold Team Members accountable for its quality, and I hold them accountable.



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