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Chains Ramp Up the Healthy Options

INDUSTRY HEADLINES [1] // JANUARY 15, 2014



Roasted Butternut Squash Quinoa Bowl First Watch

Consumers are craving healthier fare, whether it is dining on entrées that incorporate one or more Super Foods, such as kale or quinoa, eating locally grown and seasonal produce, or wanting dishes that are cooked with fresh ingredients.

Savvy dining chains are taking note, including in their menus healthier options. First Watch, the breakfast, brunch, and lunch concept, announced three new seasonal winter menu offerings, available beginning mid-January until March 2nd, that ramp up the health quotient and use fresh and flavorful ingredients. The items include:

- **Frittata Rustica**, described as a classic Italian-style omelet with sautéed kale, house-roasted crimini mushrooms, onions, and tomatoes, and topped with mozzarella and Parmesan cheeses, served with a side of fresh greens dressed with lemon

vinaigrette and a ciabatta crisp.

- **Resolution Hash** furnishes two eggs any style atop a hash of fresh seasoned potatoes with turkey sausage, house-roasted crimini mushrooms, onions, and tomatoes topped with hollandaise sauce and herbed goat cheese. It is served with a side of fresh greens dressed with lemon vinaigrette.
- **Superfood Kale Salad** offers vitamin-rich baby kale and mixed greens with house-made maple roasted carrots, warm grilled chicken breast, dried cranberries, slivered almonds, and shredded Parmesan cheese tossed in a refreshing maple-lemon vinaigrette dressing and served with a ciabatta crisp.

The restaurant's traditional favorites remain available, including pancakes, omelets, salads, and sandwiches, as well as signature specialties such as the Chickichanga, Healthy Turkey Omelet, and Fresh Fruit Crepes.

First Watch is among several restaurant chains that are offering lighter options for the New Year.

TGI Fridays [3] announced two additional lighter choice entrées, Sizzling Chicken & Spinach and Sizzling Sirloin & Spinach, each fewer than 500 calories. There are now a total of seven lower-calorie options. Along with the newest two, diners can order Garlic & Basil Bruschetta, Ahi Tuna Crisps, Thai Pork Tacos, Hibachi Chicken Skewers, and Hibachi Sirloin Skewers. As a complement to these new lighter-choice menu options, Fridays is also launching lower-calorie adult beverages made with Skinnygirl Bare Naked Vodka.

Applebee's [4] restaurants have announced a completely redesigned kids' menu with 10 meals that meet the National Restaurant Association's Kids LiveWell nutrition criteria and more than 650 combinations of entrées, sides, and beverages. The brand reports that french fry orders declined from 73 to 39 percent during a three-month testing period of the new Applebee's kids' menu, and fry selection as a side has decreased 30 percent since the menu was introduced at all Applebee's restaurants.

Announcing the HALO Awards

To honor these initiatives by restaurant chains, Food News Media, publisher of *FSR* and *QSR* magazines, is launching the HALO [5] Awards. HALO, which stands for Healthy, Active Lifestyle Objective, aims to give chain restaurants the widespread recognition they deserve for encouraging health and activity, while spurring further innovations in the area. Sponsored by Tyson Food Service, nominations are ongoing. For more information, contact halo@foodnewsmedia.com [6].

By Joann Witcher

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