



A CONVERSATION WITH KRISPY KRUNCHY CHICKEN

The brand's leaders
reveal the key to the
concept's success

Krispy Krunchy Chicken is bringing an elevated level of foodservice to the convenience store industry.

As one of the fastest-growing foodservice brands in the U.S., Krispy Krunchy Chicken offers freshly made, never-frozen, Louisiana-style products that meet the demands of today's consumers. The company recently refreshed the brand with a new look and a new brand descriptor: "Freshly Made. Perfectly Cajun."

CSP spoke with Neal Onebane, founder of Krispy Krunchy Chicken, and Dan Shapiro, executive VP, about the rebranding initiative and what makes the concept successful.

Following are highlights from the interview.

CSP: What are the key elements of the rebranding initiative?

Onebane: We needed to update and modernize, and we also realized that when you get outside of Louisiana, people sometimes misinterpret what Cajun really means. So, we softened it up. Instead of saying "Cajun Recipe," which people think means "hot," we shifted to "Perfectly Cajun." Which reflects the mild, but flavorful taste

And we also wanted to make sure that people understood that all of our bone-in chicken is made fresh, so we added "Freshly Made" to our identifier.

Shapiro: We had the “barn and sun” logo for a very long time, and it became very recognizable, but we wanted to update it. The rebranding signals that we’re here to stay.

We did customer focus groups, and we really learned a lot. It was a relatively scientific way to do it, and we’re very happy with the way it turned out.

CSP: How do you see this benefiting your c-store partners?

Shapiro: This will allow us to touch every one of our operators. We will make sure that everybody’s modernized with the new, fresh look for their customers.

Onebane: We’ll also make changes with the strategic placement of food photography and other graphics. The photography will be much simpler and much more direct, with a focus on certain products that we want to put under the spotlight.

CSP: What have been the keys to the brand’s 30 years of success?

Shapiro: Neal and I both have run convenience stores, so we know what operators deal with. We understand the convenience store business.

The second thing is, it’s as good as or better than anything else out there, we believe.

Thirdly, we make sure it looks like a franchise, which makes the customer feel comfortable eating there—it’s not somebody’s brother-in-law in the back room—and then they trust it.

The final thing is that we focus a lot on training. We have trainers in the store when they open, and as they churn through employees, which many convenience stores do, we have a video library that employees can watch. Then we go back to retrain as needed.

We’re also hiring brand managers whose sole job is to go into existing locations to help them. We really try to stay very close with our convenience store partners.

CSP: What programs are you planning for 2019?

Shapiro: Our newest product is a boneless wing, which is marinated, and it is delicious. It’s like popcorn chicken, and it’s easy to eat in the car.

Onebane: We will offer a free case to get it started, with a trainer, a lot of instructions and marketing materials. We feel like it’s going to get off the ground really quickly.

Shapiro: We’ve also been evaluating all of the various delivery services, mostly for our urban locations.

Onebane: We find that the delivery services are best when the convenience store is at its worst, like on rainy days, Sundays—which is the slowest day of the week for many convenience stores—and in the evenings. We think delivery is going to be a big deal



We think
delivery is
going to
be a big
deal down
the road
as people
get more
familiar
with how to
manage it.



down the road as people get more familiar with how to manage it.

Shapiro: We have partnered with Uber Eats, and we’re in the process of partnering with Grubhub. Our operators are getting a good deal. As competition intensifies in food delivery, the deals are getting better.

CSP: What about your expansion plans?

Shapiro: We opened 470 stores last year. There are 156,000 convenience stores in the U.S., and a little over 100,000 of them are independent. We’re in almost 2,500 locations, so there’s still a lot of opportunity.

Onebane: We really make it very, very simple for an operator to get involved with us. We have, however, intensified our vetting process, to make sure that we’re bringing on the right players. Now it’s not so much that we are chasing them as it is they are chasing us.

We’re on the radar of many of the big chains, and we are talking with some of the chains. According to NACS’ first day tweet at the convention, we were the most visited booth at the NACS Show.

We’re getting a lot of attention for our product. Thrillist named us “the best fried chicken you never heard of” and we were told that one of Atlanta’s magazines named Krispy Krunchy the best fried chicken in Atlanta. A lot of critics have been giving us good reviews on their websites and social media.

At the end of the day, you had better have a good product, because that’s what ends up making you. You can market it all day long, but if it’s not good, people aren’t going to come.

