



SUPERSONIC® BACON DOUBLE CHEESEBURGER



FOOTLONG QUARTER POUND CONEY



BUFFALO SAUCED JUMBO POPCORN CHICKEN®

SONIC DRIVE-IN

BY DANNY FAIRCHILD

Remember the opening of *It's A Wonderful Life* when the whole town was praying for George Bailey? That was exactly like the citizens of Dubuque praying for a Sonic. We all wanted a Sonic for our own reasons beyond the food. For me, it offered a hearken to the drive-in A&W across the street from my grandparents' house. My grandpa liked to have ice cream before bed so they would send me across the street for a quart each of ice cream and root beer when I would stay with them.

And now Sonic is here. Rejoice.

Maybe...just maybe...out of this horrible mess we're in with the pandemic, a resurgence of drive-ins in general could emerge. I'd show up for that. A way to go out for a meal or a movie while socially distancing? I'd show up for that the following week, too. Not out of some nostalgia for a time I view as a simpler time because I was a kid so of course things were simpler. I'm not that old. Maybe I just want to go to a movie again.

Anyway.

Judging by all your prayers, I'm guessing that most of you esteemed readers have had Sonic before. But for you heathens, here's the skinny: slushes...with Nerds candy in them.

Sure, I'll get to the food eventually, but I want to talk about em slushes...with Nerds candy in them. I don't think that was a thing last time I tried Sonic, which was at least a decade ago. Had I known such a thing existed, I'd have prayed harder.

Some of you are saying "So damn what?" right now, and you're not my friends anymore. Because here's what: love bubble tea? You'll love slushes with Nerds in them. Hate bubble tea? You'll almost certainly still love slushes with Nerds in them. Why? Imagine sipping on a slushie when you feel a small chunk of ice on your tongue. So you press it against the roof of your mouth to melt it. Like you do. Yes, you do. Now imagine that it doesn't melt. Because it's not ice. It's a tiny tart candy that bursts and further flavors your slushie. You like that?

How about this: imagine sticking your straw straight down into your slushie, taking little slushie core samples and depositing them on your tongue, counting how many Nerds you captured with your straw.

Imagine avoid-ing brain freeze while

drinking your slushie because the Nerds act as a way to kind of pace yourself. Sip, chew. Sip, chew.

Imagine Nerds...in a slushie.

And here's the thing: It's the middle of January. You think now is not the time for a slushie? You're right. It's a time for a slushie... with Nerds in it. Just trust me and shut up.

Now the food.

Perhaps out of some Mellencampian impulse, the first time I ate at the Dubuque Sonic I found myself suckin' on a chili dog. The Footlong Quarter Pound Coney. Damn... the poetic meter of those four words alone is delicious. Now I'm not saying it's the best frank I've ever had. And I won't say it's the best chili I've ever had. But I will say that it is among the best frank and chili combinations I've had. That's no B.S., and if I can paraphrase Colonel John "Hannibal" Smith for a moment: "I love it when a chili dog comes together." Make sure you keep hold of the plastic-ware they give you. A footlong can be managed with just your hands, but once chili comes into the mix, there's no hope. You're knife-and-forking it. I mention it in case you have any delusions of eating it while driving. You will die horribly. Just sit in the drive-in. That's why it's a drive-in.

The tots. Can I just say how gutsy it is to feature friggin' tater tots right up there on the menu alongside French fries? I thought we, as a society, had relegated tater tots to school lunches? It's like...if you can have fries...why oh why would you order tater tots? But you should. School lunches have done us a great disservice in terms of tots. These are good. Throw chili and cheese on top of there and you'll go full Tony the Tiger. They're good enough that I'm featuring them above the burger.

The burger. I tangled with the bacon double cheeseburger. I was slightly thrown off when the person taking my order asked if I wanted mustard, ketchup, and mayo. I'm used to those being things you request be taken off, not added on. Maybe this is just the world we live in now, you know? And that's fine. Didn't cost extra or nothing.

It's a good burger for the price to be sure. Fast food prices, but step above fast food quality. The lettuce was a whole leaf and not a shredded mess. The tomato was pretty good, considering the season. Get you one.

The chicken. I got me some of that jumbo popcorn chicken with buffalo sauce. I actually loved the presentation of these little love nuggets. The transparent lid was completely coated in sauce on the inside, I suspect because they tossed them in the sauce right in the container. Just like you would sauce wings. They have a nice, crispy crust with juicy, yummy chicken within. Pretty much what the words "popcorn chicken" draw to mind.

The onion rings. They're interesting. They might break the laws of onion ring physics. So many times you get an onion ring where you take a bite and you accidentally

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CHILI CHEESE TOTS



HAND MADE ONION RINGS



BLUE RASPBERRY SLUSH WITH NERDS

thread the whole onion slice out of the ring and onto your scalding chin. It doesn't happen with Sonic onion rings. I suspect their onion ring batter contains a little or a lot of corn meal. And that creates a texture the onion is less likely to be pulled out of. Kinda brilliant. And tasty. I don't know if it was just mine, but I had to make use of the salt packet they give you. I like being able to control my own seasoning.

Speaking of segues, another thing I'd like to mention is the service. Almost every restaurant at



every price point has some kinks to work out upon opening. Sonic seems to have it down already. Fast, friendly, and good. Otherwise, why even drive in, right?

I didn't physically go into the restaurant so I haven't checked out any restroom situation, but it's a new building, right? Probably pretty clean. Safe bet.

So get you some Sonic. And remember: every time a bell rings, a carhop gets their wings. ■



HARPER AND CHARLEY HOERNER AND CLARENCE TRUMM ENJOY SONIC FOR THE FIRST TIME

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DANNY FAIRCHILD

DANNY DOESN'T TAKE CRAP FROM NOBODY, BUT HE'LL TAKE FOOD FROM ALMOST ANYBODY. IF YOU WANT TO FIGHT DANNY, OR FEED HIM NOM-NOMS, EMAIL HIM AT DINING@DUBUQUE365.COM.



WHO HAS TIME TO EAT HEALTHY IN 2021? YOU DO!

BY HY-VEE NUTRITIONISTS MEGAN HORSTMAN (ASBURY) AND AMY CORDINGLEY (LOCUST)

As the world is adapting to doing things differently, so is your Hy-Vee dietitian staff to accommodate our customers. Hy-Vee's top priority continues to be the health and safety of its employees and customers. Which is why Hy-Vee's dietitian team is excited to announce that we are now able to provide virtual nutrition services to all of our customers. These virtual services are available through a new telehealth platform.

What are virtual nutrition services? Virtual nutrition services are being offered through our telehealth platform connecting Hy-Vee customers with their Hy-Vee registered dietitian. It makes it easy for customers to stay connected with their dietitian to achieve their health goals. It is a free cloud-based technology platform, so it is accessible from all of your devices: desktops, laptops, tablets, and smartphones. Customers can make phone or virtual video appointments. Eventually we will be able to host live classes through this platform too.

Are virtual nutrition services secure? Our telehealth platform is a safe and secure way to connect with your Hy-Vee dietitian without having to leave your home! It is compliant with U.S. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations. That includes the Privacy, Security, and Breach Notification Rules and the Administrative and Physical Safeguards.

Do I actually meet with a Hy-Vee dietitian? Yes! You will have the opportunity to choose your Hy-Vee dietitian and meet with them virtually or over the telephone. This platform really allows your Hy-Vee dietitian to provide individualized support for you to achieve your health and wellness goals. And it's just a click away!

What services are available?

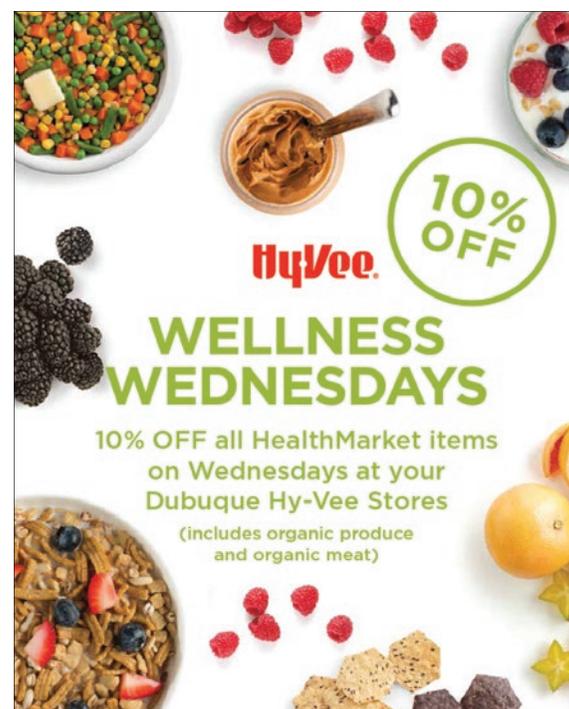
- Schedule individual appointments (ie: consultations for weight loss, diabetes education, heart disease, Celiac disease and more)
- Send messages to your Hy-Vee dietitian via the chat feature
- Participate in a free virtual nutrition store tour
- Share photos of your food for feedback from your Hy-Vee dietitian through our free virtual telehealth platform app.

Do you offer menu planning services? Yes! Healthy

Habits is a menu program designed for customers seeking an easy-to-follow eating plan. The program includes 1:1 nutrition support from our dietitians along the way as well as simple recipes and a convenient grocery list that corresponds to your menu and store layout. Prior to your initial appointment your Hy-Vee dietitian will review your goals and help determine a menu that best fits your needs. Each week you meet the dietitian will go over that week's menu and highlight products, their nutritional benefits, and where they are located in the store so you can build those healthy habits and shop with more confidence.

Is there a cost to seeing a Hy-Vee dietitian? We

currently are offering a FREE Dietitian Discovery Session to get you started. In this session, you and your Hy-Vee dietitian will determine what package will work best for your health and wellness goals. We offer a variety of packages at different price points to best meet your needs and budget.



How do I get started? Go to Hy-Vee.com today and click on "Health & Pharmacy" and then "Dietitians" to find your Hy-Vee dietitian and connect with them virtually. There you'll see the option to schedule a complimentary discovery session with your Hy-Vee dietitian. ■

The information is not intended as medical advice. Please consult a medical professional for individual advice.