

Reincarnated McDonald's Opens Amid Excitement, Concerns Over Taste

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When Vadim and Fyodor waited outside the first McDonald's to open in the Soviet Union, they stood in line with an estimated 30,000 other people for more than three and a half hours.

Thirty-two years later, the pair were again in line on Sunday as McDonald's reopened in Russia after a lightning sale and hurried rebranding as *Vkusno-i Tochka* (Tasty-Period). The U.S. multinational [decided](#) to pull out of Russia after the country's invasion of Ukraine, [selling the business](#) in May to Siberian businessman and former franchisee Alexander Govor.

The crowd on central Moscow's Pushkin Square for the opening of *Vkusno-i Tochka's* flagship store fell short in both size and party atmosphere compared to 1990, Vadim and Fyodor, who didn't give their surnames, told *The Moscow Times*.

But anticipation still bubbled, with many apparently excited to see the chain bounce back despite the stringent economic sanctions imposed on Russia amid the Ukraine war.

The date of *Vkusno-i Tochka's* launch was chosen to coincide with Russia Day, a public holiday, and the surrounding streets fluttered with Russian tricolors.

For some waiting in line, there was a sense of pride that McDonald's in Russia was breaking free of Western control.

"I am very glad that this is now a Russian product, that we are now independent, let's say, from foreign curators," said Sergei, who refused to give his surname, and was waiting in the crowd with a Russian flag painted on his cheek.

Others were more concerned about the food.

"We've been really looking forward to it," said Ariana, who also didn't give her surname, and traveled into central Moscow for the opening, running through flower beds to cut the line.

"We haven't eaten McDonald's in 3 months. We didn't even go to Burger King during that time. We were waiting for McDonald's," she said.

Vkusno-i Tochka is keen to stress that little has changed, apart from the branding.

Employees Sunday all wore badges with the inscription, "the same taste" and many items on the menu were the same – albeit with slightly different names. While Big Macs have disappeared, chicken McNuggets were "nuggets" and Filet-o-Fish named "Fish Burgers."

McDonald's temporarily closed most of its 850 Russian restaurants shortly after the invasion of Ukraine as hundreds of Western companies exited the country or froze their operations. The deal with Govor, who already owned 25 McDonald's outlets in Siberia, ensured the company's 62,000 Russian employees would keep their jobs for at least two years.

As part of the sale, Govor took responsibility for the chain's supply networks and all of its outlets.

Diners at the opening in Moscow appeared to have some concerns about the taste.

"The nuggets are delicious, the cheeseburger is delicious, the rest I'm still not sure about," one diner, Alexander, who requested anonymity, told The Moscow Times. "For now, this is the same McDonald's, even if there is no Big Tasty."

Fries and cherry pie ordered by a Moscow Times reporter were indistinguishable from their predecessors, although a cheeseburger was slightly saltier, fattier, and more flavorful.

While the golden arches have been removed from the restaurant's packaging, there was no time to create new boxes with the brand's recently [unveiled logo](#) – two orange lines and a red circle on a dark green background – said to symbolize a burger and fries.

Instead, the food was served in plain white wraps and cartons.

Prices were also noticeably lower. When McDonald's ceased operations in Russia, a double cheeseburger meal cost as much as 400 rubles (\$7). Now, the price is about 175 rubles (\$3).

It remains to be seen if Vkusno-i Tochka can keep to the same international standards as it reopens hundreds of former McDonald's stores across Russia.

Speaking at a [press conference](#) Sunday, Vkusno- I Tochka chief executive Oleg Paroyev said 65 restaurants would reopen on Sunday and Monday – and another 200 by the end of June.

For the moment, restaurants are still using some old McDonald's stock.

Diners in Moscow on Sunday were served McDonald's sauces — except the golden arches logo had been crossed out with a black marker.

McDonald's customers will be watching closely to ensure there is no decline in quality as old stock runs out and substitutes have to be sourced amid Western sanctions.

“I expect quality food — that's the most important thing,” one customer, Vladislav, who didn't give his surname, told The Moscow Times. “I don't want this to be some typical sandwich shop, because this is supposed to be McDonald's.”

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