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Church's Chicken® Rallies in Q2 – Sets Sights on Continued Growth and Positive Momentum *Multi-layer strategy leads to positive sales and the return of fan favorite Smokehouse Chicken*

ATLANTA, GA – Just six months ago, [Church's Chicken®](#) turned in its best performance in ten years for comparable same-store sales, and made 2020 the launch date for the brand's five-year strategic plan. Then, like all restaurants and businesses, plans were set back due to COVID-19 and the brand enacted a refocused action plan in response. Overall, the COVID-19 sales challenges were only temporary for *Church's*, as it reports that domestic sales have returned to pre-pandemic positive trends the past two months.

“Without question, our ability to weather this crisis is due to our entire franchise community, corporate and restaurant team members coming together to quickly and effectively adapt to a changing market and continue to provide the down-home flavor of a home-cooked comfort meals to our guests that only *Church's* can deliver,” explains CEO for *Church's*, [Joe Christina](#). “In a time of rapid change, our commitment remains the same - to prioritize our focus on providing an abundance of delicious food, quickly and conveniently, at the best possible value to our loyal and new guests. We emphasized our digital tools as a solution to provide the easiest access to our food. Most importantly, we will continue to do all that we can to put people first in terms of safety, convenience, and satisfaction.”

The refocused plan and keys to the sales restoration during the pandemic were three-fold:

- 1) People First, Safety Always Focus
- 2) Double-Down on Digital
- 3) Being “There” for Guests with Drive-Thru and Delivery

People First, Safety Always Focus

The *Church's* team's immediate response to COVID-19 was to prepare for all possible scenarios. That meant protecting and securing their workforce first. The Operations and Human Resources teams created a situational operations guide that outlined safety procedures for internal restaurant teams, guest safety protocols, and quality benchmarks the brand expects to be met before re-opening (which in many cases exceed local standards). The plan also provides latitude for franchisees and operators to respond to their own communities by extending dining room closures or working with a streamlined menu to accommodate COVID-19 conditions in a specific area.

“Quality and safety go hand-in-hand,” adds [Pete Servold](#), Executive Vice President of Franchise & Company Operations for the brand “You can't have one without the other. Our valued team members know *Church's* prioritizes their safety, and they are able to pass that peace of mind along to guests. Being a brand that values people is how

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Church's has made it through tough times since our beginning... and it will be what gets us all through today's tough times together."

Double Down on Digital

A "consumer-first" digital approach allowed *Church's* to keep guests connected to important information while also expanding awareness of convenient and easy accessibility of food through digital ordering, which was – and remains – critical for guests' evolving needs. The marketing strategy pivoted quickly to amplify the *Church's To-Go* message to guests, made possible through new integrated platforms for managing brand content, creative development, and responsive social media engagement. Digital ordering elevated in importance as a contactless option for guests through multiple pre-existing third-party delivery partners and *Order Ahead, Pay Ahead* capabilities. In fact, digital ordering for the brand increased by 80% since the launch of COVID-19, with some restaurants driving over \$7,000 in weekly sales through digital ordering alone.

Being "There" for Guests with Drive-Thru & Delivery

Church's knew what matters most to families has always been quality, comforting food at a value for the whole family. To meet this need now, when it is even more in demand, Drive-Thru and delivery meal deals such as \$20 Family Meals and Free Handheld Chicken Pot Pies with every Family Meal purchase, were launched in the early phase of COVID-19. The shift in sales to *Church's* family meals, primarily from restaurant Drive-Thru, increased between 15 – 20% during the first two months of the pandemic.

"Our goal was to provide comfort to our guests and neighbors when we knew they needed it most," says Chief Marketing Officer, Brian Gies. "People know us for our commitment to high-quality, hand-prepared comfort food, and providing abundant portions at an accessible price; adjusting to the right media channels and service modes to reinforce that helped steer the business through." Deftly intersecting *Church's* historical strengths with the consumer need for great-tasting food, that travels well, and serve families over multiple occasions accelerated *Church's* business recovery faster than most competitors in the QSR category.

The Return of Smokehouse Season – NEW Campfire Smokehouse Chicken

And now, as *Church's* progresses with their recovery, they'll launch "Smokehouse Season" a signature summer food event over the last four years and an annual fan favorite. Smokehouse Chicken will deliver a little extra comfort to families everywhere with the new Campfire Smokehouse Chicken, starting on June 25th. Many families may not have the chance to sit by a real campfire this summer, though with this new flavor, they can bring that familiar feeling home – how and when they want it.

The Smokehouse Chicken platform has been a key to the brand's summer success with its one-of-a-kind recipe, combined with a whole lot of food. A juicy half-chicken, weighing in at nearly a full pound, is marinated in a savory campfire seasoning, cooked up crisp and tender without any batter or breading, then brushed with a rich, smoky molasses glaze. Both the Smokehouse preparation and the campfire flavor can only be found at *Church's*.

A Campfire Smokehouse meal includes a hearty Smokehouse half chicken, creamy mashed potatoes and gravy, plus a signature *Honey-Butter Biscuit*[™], all for just \$5. Guests can round out their meals with new summer favorites Wild Berry Splash Tea and Lemonade and Wild Berry Cobbler, made from sweet berry cobbler filling layered with a scratch-made *Honey-Butter Biscuit*[™].

In continuing to adapt to changing consumer needs, Campfire Smokehouse Chicken will now be available in a family meal for the first time. A family of four can bring home a Smokehouse feast with something for everyone: two half smokehouse chickens, six chicken tenders, large mashed potatoes and gravy, large coleslaw and four honey-butter biscuits, starting at just \$20. Pricing and availability may vary by location. Gies added that in response to the massive growth in off-premise sales, *Church's* will be offering its famous Campfire Smokehouse Chicken for delivery as well as directly through restaurants. "Fans request Smokehouse Chicken all year long and we didn't want COVID-19 to stand in the way of people enjoying the ultimate comfort food of the summer."

About Church's Chicken®

Founded in San Antonio, Texas, in 1952 by George W. Church, *Church's Chicken*® is one of the largest quick-service restaurant chicken chains in the world. *Church's*® specializes in Original and Spicy Chicken freshly prepared throughout the day in small batches that are hand-battered and double-breaded, Tender Strips®, Honey-Butter Biscuits™ made from scratch and freshly baked, and classic, homestyle sides all for a great value. *Church's*® (along with its sister brand Texas Chicken® outside the Americas) has more than 1,500 locations in 25 countries and international territories. With system-wide sales of more than \$1 billion, the system had a recording-breaking year in 2019. During two national media windows the brand drove sales performance that outpaced the broader QSR category. For more information, visit www.churchs.com. Follow *Church's*® on Facebook at www.facebook.com/churchschicken and Twitter at www.twitter.com/churchschicken.

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