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The sons. *also rise*

Building on the legacy of their late father, Mark, and his forebears, **Ross and Seth Shuket** are exploring new growth opportunities for Old World Provisions

Greasy spoon

Mixed reviews for Don Lee's shredded chicken crispy tacos



PRODUCT

Don Lee Farms Crisp Ups Shredded Chicken Crispy Tacos

PRICE

\$6.86/6 tacos

PLUS

Crispiness

PROBLEM

Greasiness

We are always

on the hunt for new products, and we stopped short when we read “Handmade Family-owned” on a bag of Don Lee Farms Crisp Ups Shredded Chicken Crispy Tacos. Popular street food flavors — like those found in tacos — have been making their way into several categories this past year.

Don Lee Farms new frozen line of “handmade crispy tacos” features four authentic-sounding taco varieties, including green chili carnitas, al pastor

chicken, chicken birria, and the shredded chicken that we selected for this taste test. We also learned that Don Lee Farms is a multigenerational family-run food company with the goal of “creating easy-to-prepare foods at an affordable price.” Let’s see what our diverse group of tasters had to say.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Participants of this in-home taste test were aged 13 and up, and all said they would be intrigued to try a taco product.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS AND APPEARANCE

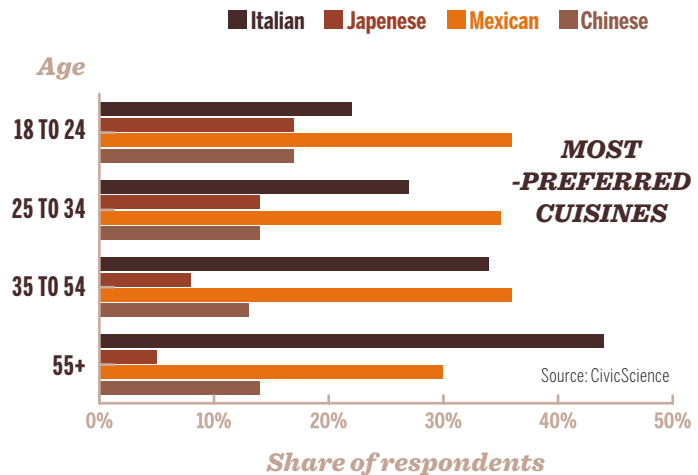
Before opening the package, three different tasters noticed that the directions were difficult to find. “They were hidden on the back,” one wrote. “I was scared to open this because I thought they could be raw. Another taster thought the packaging worked well. “The packaging was attention-grabbing, and I liked that it pointed out it was made with dark meat,” they wrote. A third taster had a mixed review: “Package does stand

up and is resealable, but overall bag is flimsy.” And a fourth liked both the look and smell of the package: “Looks good for the price. Smells like a tortilla.”

Upon opening the package, a slight majority of reviewers had a positive first impression of the product. “When I opened the bag, they were bigger than I was expecting, which was a nice surprise,” one said. Other comments included: “They look hand-folded and imperfect, which I

YOUTHFUL PREFERENCE

By a clear margin, Mexican cuisine is the most favored by Gen Z and millennial consumers, according to a 2023 survey. Italian cuisine, meanwhile, is preferred by older Americans, especially those aged 55 and above.



like,” “The appearance was exactly as what appeared on the package,” and, “Looks like ‘real’ food; simple ingredients.”

But not everyone liked the appearance. “Looking at the bag and then the taco after cooking, the cooked ones did not look appetizing,” one reviewer wrote. Another said their taco had opened inside their air fryer, and “It was scary looking – like a slice of cheese on top.”

Finally, a third taster noted that while the front package image shows open tacos, in reality, “They are closed – glued shut from the

melted cheese. I could put toppings on them if they were open.”

TASTE, TEXTURE AND MORE

Upon tucking in to the Shredded Chicken Crispy Tacos, several tasters had negative to mixed experiences, with the downside mostly revolving around either the greasiness of the product or the quality of the cheese.

“I made them in my toaster oven that has an air-fryer mode,” one reviewer wrote. “I had to cook them another 3-4 minutes, but they never got crispy – more golden/brown. I saw some oil coming off the tacos,

and they were soft.” A couple of others felt the need to shout about the oiliness. “WAY too oily,” one taster wrote. “They were dripping when I took them out of the air fryer.” And the other said succinctly: “One word for these – GREASY! The amount of grease on these was crazy, but overall, the taste wasn’t bad.”

The cheese was problematic in one way or another for a couple additional reviewers. “I liked seeing the cheese pull, but the cheese was yellow, like a slice of American cheese, which threw me off. I expected a

‘Mexican’ cheese,” one wrote. The other opined, “They smelled good while cooking (in toaster oven), but there was some cheese leakage. One taco had a good amount of filling, and another was sparse.”

Other lukewarm reviewers said things like: “The taste wasn’t bad; it reminded me of something I might get from Taco Bell”; “Almost too crunchy. The ends had burnt slightly. But I ended up liking the crunch”; and, “It’s definitely crispy, but eats like it was fried, because it’s somewhat oily.”

On the more positive side, several reviewers noted the crispiness

as a definite plus. “They were crispy, the chicken was shredded, and definitely enough cheese,” one taster wrote. “They were a little soggy in the middle, but the overall taste was good.” Another said, “They crisped up nicely. A little bit of oil, but not too bad. Good flavor – like a taquito. I didn’t expect them to taste ‘crazy good.’” And a third shared, “The shell is crispy as promised; the chicken tastes good, and has a kick.”

A few others made positive comments on the taste. “The chicken did look shredded, and the flavor was very authentic and balanced,” one taster

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wrote. “I would like to see more chicken. Good spice level.” Another said: “Chicken and cheese were very good — tasted like nachos. Had it with Greek yogurt.” And a third reviewer said the shredded crispy chicken tacos brought back a long-ago memory: “It totally smelled and tasted like when I

made cheese enchiladas in a metal TV dinner tray in 1981, but in the best way possible.”

UPSHOT

The mixed overall reviews produced a similarly divided response when tasters considered their likelihood of buying the shredded crispy

chicken tacos in the future. “Flavor-wise, quality-wise and ingredient-wise, this isn’t something I’d purchase,” one said. “They weren’t crispy, [although called]‘Crisp Ups’; maybe I’d try another cooking method. I’d rather make tacos on my own.” A second reviewer wrote, “I

feel like taquitos are easier, and you get like thirty of them. Not sold on this.”

Some reviewers might buy them again, but only if they were in the right frame of mind or at the right price. “Shredded chicken tacos take a while to make because of the chicken part, so having that done is worth-

while,” one wrote.

“I’d only buy if I had a craving for a shredded chicken taco — otherwise, I’d just make fresh ground beef tacos that I can enjoy with lots of toppings.”

Another expressed nostalgia for childhood memories — but also for something lower cost. “It was true to what my mom

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made us as kids — but with chicken instead of beef. A definite memory jogger and was pleasant. I would buy it again for the right price. A fairer price would be \$5.”

A couple other tasters would purchase them again without

hesitation. “Will definitely buy them for the price and the amount of food you get,” one taster said. “Can easily toss in the oven and add some toppings after.”

And another taster wrote: “I would buy them again. I thought

it was a good after-school snack or for the kids when they’re hanging out.”

CONCLUSION

For some tasters, these Crisp Ups seemed very oily, and this “greasiness” hindered their eating

experience. Most found the flavor to be very good, and the overall quality of the chicken acceptable. No one commented on the call-out “chicken raised without antibiotics” on the package front, or that each serving deliv-

ered 14 grams of protein. Perhaps health claims don’t matter in a product like this? For at least some, there is an appeal to keeping a package of frozen, already-made tacos in your freezer for a snack, appetizer or meal.

by **Jacqueline Beckley, The Understanding & Insight Group, and Anna Marie Cesario and Jennifer Vahalik, U&I Collaboration LLC**

Food product development and consumer research veterans, Jacqueline Beckley, Anna Marie Cesario and Jennifer Vahalik, join Meatingplace Magazine as regular contributors to MeatingTaste, a consumer sampling of new products featured in our monthly Taste Test column. Here’s how the program works: The meat item is distributed to consumers, including the core demographic, for preparation in their own houses. No instructions are provided to the consumer, other than to write their overall impressions of the product, as well as to evaluate the flavor, texture, packaging and ease of use. Beckley, Cesario and Vahalik look for common threads by using Getting It!®, a system developed to listen to consumers about products. The sample of people is not intended to be a ‘taste test’ in a controlled setting, nor is it intended to simulate a focus group. Others are doing both. Rather, the intent is to interpret the response of the people who might purchase a product like this and use it, simply based on their encounters with the product in their individual, unique home environment. That is how U&I has been developing cutting-edge product and people understanding since 1999.



Temperature Control



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