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Maxim.com Reviews the KFC Double Down

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Last week, I tasted a part of American mythology.

A gastronomical monstrosity that most believed was an elaborate practical joke last year became an actual product as KFC's new **Double Down** sandwich debuted to much media buzz. With a simple, almost childlike concept of a sandwich that replaces the bread with two pieces of fried chicken, it stands as a monument to decadence on par with Roman emperors, but for a fast food culture. Oh, and it's delicious.

Ever since its test marketing last summer in Providence and Omaha, the Double Down has held an urban legend status. Eating one was like seeing Big Foot or meeting someone claiming to have been the shooter on the grassy knoll—you know it should be impossible, but it's still an unquestionable piece of contemporary Americana. Ads touting KFC's national rollout even acknowledged the sandwich's mythic qualities, declaring "It's real!" over a picture of the sandwich.

In my mind, I have this scene where some genius/madman is giving a presentation about the Double Down to a roomful of executives at KFC headquarters. "Bread is so twentieth century!", he would have exclaimed. "We use chicken for the bread, and bacon for the meat!" After a moment of silence to let the concept sink in, an exec asks which cheese they would use, monterey Jack or pepper jack, to which my imaginary Double Down inventor would answer, "Both," in a quiet, serial killer/madman utterance.



KFC DOUBLE DOWN (CRISPY)
Calories: 540
Total Fat: 32 grams
Sodium: 1380 milligrams
Carbohydrates: 11 grams
Protein: 53 grams

Alas, according to **KFC spokesman Rick Maynard**, the sandwich's origin story was nothing like what I envisaged.

"The concept for the Double Down came from focus groups where sandwich eaters complained about going to other fast food restaurants and getting puny chicken sandwiches," he explained. "Some talked about having to order two to satisfy their appetites. The Double Down is designed to take care of those appetites."

Part of the reason the Double Down is so unbelievable is that while the country is in the midst of an obesity epidemic, it's an obvious example of our outright gluttony. According to nutritionist and dietitian, **Maye Musk, MS RD**, the sandwich's 540 calories (at least according to KFC) actually isn't that bad, but she was concerned about the listed amount of fat and salt.

"At 32 grams fat, you have half your fat intake for the day which is 65 grams," she explained. "The amount of saturated (bad) fat is not listed yet but it is sure to be high, with the bacon and cheese filling...Salt intake is 2300 mg per day so [at 1,380 mg in just one sandwich] you are past half your daily intake. If you're at risk for heart disease, the recommendation is under 2000 mg. In just one food item, you will be close to your limit!"

KFC does offer a slightly healthier grilled version of the Double Down, but Musk pointed out that it has higher amounts of salt. Either way, she wasn't impressed.

"This sandwich is not for anyone who wants to be healthy," she said.

Maynard countered such criticisms by pointing out that KFC's menu does offer low calorie items, but added that if someone is looking for the occasional indulgent sandwich, the Double Down is going to be an appealing choice.

Despite all its negative aspects, I still wanted to try the Double Down. It appealed to my daredevil nature. Even the name, a play on the blackjack term "doubling down," connotes danger and risk taking. High cholesterol and high blood pressure? Let me try and beat the dealer!

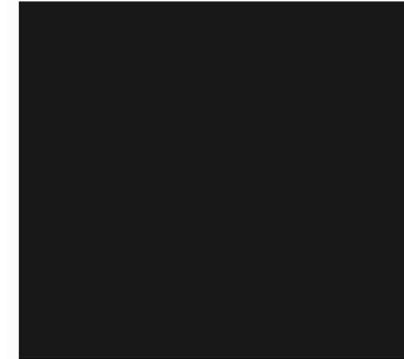


When I entered the KFC that I'd chosen in Midtown Manhattan, I was a little surprised that, aside from a few signs proclaiming "It's here," there wasn't much fanfare. There were no crowds or lines. The cashier even seemed bored with my order, and I'm pretty sure I was the first, if not one of the first five customers to order one.

Hello? Is this America?

Quickly, I rushed back to my office to enjoy the fattening chicken, bacon, cheese goodness. At my desk, I snapped a few pics to post on Facebook—

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Warning: It's got teeth! Warm, melted, delicious cheesy teeth.

because really what's the point of eating something like the Double Down and not post proof for your friends?—and, tepidly, I took my first bite. The warm gooey taste registered on my tongue. I then devoured, like a rabid animal, the rest of the sandwich within a few moments.

KFC's Double Down tastes just like you would expect: It's fried chicken, cheese and bacon. *Of course* it's delicious! But as I gorged myself like a man who hadn't eaten in days, I realized how important bread really is to a sandwich, not only for holding all the contents together, but balancing the taste. The Double Down just takes a bunch of food and mashes them all together. And while the paper wrapper does a decent job of hiding it, as well keeping the

incredible amount of grease off your fingers, you're essentially eating stuck-together slop.

As soon as I was done, I wanted another. Then, within ten minutes of finishing the sandwich, I crashed. I suspect it's the same sensation I'd get if I smoked crack.

I felt the Double Down sitting like a weight inside me as every ounce of energy was sapped out my body. Musk later explained that it takes a lot of energy to digest a large amount of fat.

"The energy needed for metabolism and daily working of the body is concentrated in the stomach for digestion," she said. "This makes you lose your energy and crash."

So was the Double Down worth it? I personally recommend eating one simply for bragging rights, but I wouldn't do so on a regular basis. Thankfully, KFC agrees with me.

According to Maynard, the Double Down will only be **available until May 23**.

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As I read this article I think, why would you even want to try this? I must say you are brave. My stomach churns at the idea of how much fat is in one of those Double Downs. This seems like a new low for America with the "lose weight" kick that's going around. Didn't the movie "Super Size Me" teach any of the fast food restaurants a lesson? If they found a way to remove some of the fats or salt it would be a bit more appealing. And now I know why people get tired from eating fat, thank you for that. This article was actually quite interesting. Thank you.

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