

# + FRIED CHICKEN FRENZY

*Fuku—part of David Chang’s Momofuku Group—has opened its doors in Santa Monica, where fried chicken enthusiasts can enjoy its simple, but delicious fried chicken offered three ways: in a sandwich, as fingers and bone-in.*

BY DEYVANSI MASRANI

MOMOFUKU QUICKLY ROSE AS A CULT FAVORITE among foodies and non-foodies alike; with David Chang’s leadership, the group has solidified its placement as one of the most famous restaurant groups in the world, with its unique flavor combinations, Southeast Asian and American-inspired cuisine and its more approachable concept in restaurants like Noodle Bar, Ko and of course, Momofuku. As the great American debate of where to find the best fried chicken continues, Momofuku Group’s latest outpost—Fuku in Santa Monica, California—has deservedly become a valiant candidate, offering fried chicken three ways: fried chicken sandwiches, fried chicken fingers and bone-in fried chicken. Here, we sit down with Fuku’s CEO, Alex Muñoz-Suarez, who discusses the new restaurant, the keys to its success and what makes that fried chicken just so special.

**Haute Living: Tell us about Fuku, in your own words.**

**Alex Muñoz-Suarez:** Fuku is a restaurant born out of Momofuku’s love of fried chicken. We’re constantly trying out new things like our Rippin’ Hot Fried Chicken at our Santa Monica restaurant. Overall, we aim to serve simple, delicious fried chicken prepared in a variety of different ways.

**HL: Why did you decide to open in Santa Monica?**

**AMS:** Los Angeles is an amazing food city and has such a great culture of fried chicken that we’re excited to be a part of. We had a great time serving at Coachella the past two years, and we wanted to build and deepen our connection to the Los Angeles community.

**HL: What makes the fried chicken sandwich so special?**

**AMS:** We use a dark meat thigh for our spicy fried chicken sandwich that we marinate in habanero purée before breading and frying. It stays juicy and crispy and provides the right amount of heat with each bite.

**HL: The menu is very simple and straightforward. Why did you decide to provide a limited number of choices for diners?**

**AMS:** We offer fried chicken three ways: sandwiches, fingers, and bone-in with a variety of seasonal sides and snacks. The Fuku team enjoys the simplicity of the menu, while also offering a variety of secret menu options.

**HL: Which menu item (including sides, etc.) is your favorite and why?**

**AMS:** [The] bone-in fried chicken is my favorite menu item. It reminds me of eating fried chicken growing up as a kid in Miami. I also like that we offer a variety of spice blends with the bone-in chicken; I prefer the Rippin’ Hot version. It’s incredibly spicy—we serve it with gloves and milk—yet addictive.

**HL: You’ve been with the Momofuku Group for quite some time. What is it about the group that keeps you so loyal?**

**AMS:** The team and our constant strive for innovation are key reasons why I’m so happy to work at Fuku. I’m lucky and honored to work alongside incredibly intelligent and passionate people at Momofuku and Fuku.

**HL: What are some of the key elements that have been so pivotal in Fuku’s success?**

**AMS:** Delicious food always wins. Our Fuku culinary team led by Chef Stephanie Abrams ensures continued menu development and innovation. We’re always looking to make the most delicious food while looking to improve all our food offerings. The Fuku storefront teams led by store General Managers and Fuku Corporate work hard to provide our guests with the best experience possible.

**HL: With so many fried chicken dishes/sandwiches that claim to be the best, what differentiates Fuku’s fried chicken from the others?**

**AMS:** Our original spicy fried chicken sandwich uses dark meat, which makes us unique, but we also have a variety of delicious augments customers can request when ordering. My favorite is the knockout fried chicken sandwich, which is our classic spicy dark meat fried chicken topped with our knockout sauce and seasoned cabbage.

**HL: What’s next for Fuku and what can we expect from it, moving forward?**

**AMS:** Fuku will continue to grow in existing markets and enter new markets in 2020 and beyond. You can always expect menu development and introduction of new items as we continue to evolve our menu. We have a few new menu items being introduced in the coming months that we are very excited about. ■



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