

Sure...

1. How did you come up with the idea for declaring a statewide (or was it national) Chicken Fried Steak day?

I was sitting at Mary's Café in Strawn Texas thinking how good the meal tasted and said if Mangos can have a holiday why doesn't Chicken Fried Steak? This dish is so good and is part of the culture in Texas we should all honor it at least one day a year. Café and restaurants across Texas consider this a staple on the menu. We eat CFS for breakfast with eggs and sometimes even put chili on it. I wanted this holiday to be something the majority of Texas restaurateurs could participate in regardless of the size of the place or if they had a famous chef or came from a town of 450 people.

2. How did you approach the Texas legislature and what were the steps to enacting the "day?"

I approached several commodity and government agencies and did not have any luck getting someone to take on the task of making this holiday happen. With budgets and jobs being cut I continued getting the Nice Idea, but we don't have the time or budget to do it. Out of frustration I called a restaurateur turned politician House Representative Ralph Sheffield in Temple TX and told him my idea and the challenges I was running up against. He looked at me and said Podner I think I can do that for you. It would be a great thing for our state and I will also put it on as a special in my restaurant Las Casas. A few weeks later I received a signed House Resolution proclaiming our day.

3. How many restaurants participated, approx?

over 50 officially participated and estimate hundreds more, since it was the first year and there was no cost. many places celebrated it but did not tell us they were doing it. We had places all over the state of Texas calling and saying Thanks it was one of there biggest days.

4. What were the benefits to their participation? (Can you give me one example of a restaurant and what it gained from the "day?"...inc. in traffic, building a stronger customer base, PR for the restaurant, etc.)

The benefits are the get on the website and listed in our press release we send out all over the state. They are allowed to promote this however they like. As of today there is also no cost to them. I pay for this out of my own pocket. I would love to get this to a place where there are additional opportunities and services for restaurateurs that may not have the savvy or resources to fully take advantage of this type event.

All over Texas from small towns to big cities, TV stations and newspaper reporters wanted to know about the day. Matt Martinez of Matt's Rancho in Dallas was on the local TV station with

his recipe. Tom Perini of Buffalo Gap near Abilene TX is a steak house and only serves CFS on this day. His guests love the fact that he is doing something special. Gilly's Jack Daniels saloon had a record non concert day with this promotion. They saw new guest and old regulars all coming out to participate in the day. \$10.00 all you can eat buffet. Also he added in singer songwriter on a small stage to entertain the guest as they ate. The owner John Gilbert announced on stage to a café full of guest he would now be doing a weekly CFS special and it continues to be one of the most profitable and popular days.

5. What day is National Chicken Fried Steak day? October 26

6. How can other states create similar "days" by working with their legislatures?

Look at the natural resources, if your state is big on Fish Tacos or Cheese Steaks go and declare a special date. I would start with someone in the legislature that is a supporter of our industry and possibly a fan of you're your restaurant. Look at the calendar and see if there is a natural time to celebrate or go fill in an off date that would normally be a slow time of the year.

7. What is (was) your position with the Texas Restaurant Association?

I am the past president of the Texas Restaurant Association and currently sit on the Board of Directors

Thanks so much Jeffrey!
Pat