

KFC x Liuzhou river snails rice noodle—A New Track of Localization

By Jieru Shen

Everyone knows KFC, an international fast-food restaurant chain that sells fried chicken. But can you imagine KFC selling Luosifen, a local dish from Liuzhou, China, which is made up of boiled snail rice noodles and placed in spicy soup?

On Oct. 13, KFC announced on Weibo, a Chinese microblogging platform, the launch of the new fast-cooking and pre-packaged food items entitled “KaiFengCai.”



肯德基 

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原来你是这样的KAIFENGCAI!

全新快煮预包装食品，在家随时开煮，
简单几分钟，享受宅家一人食。

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鸡胸肉、鸡汤、鸡肉螺蛳粉...陆续上新ing，前往肯德基APP，立刻尝新!



The screenshot of KFC announcing the new series of “KaiFengCai” on Weibo, a Chinese microblogging platform

KFC said that, in terms of product selection, the “KaiFengCai” series of products start from the tastes of young people and draw creativity from the extensive and profound traditional Chinese cuisine. The first season’s products include chicken breast, chicken soup, and chicken snails rice noodles, which are all related to the chicken products that KFC excels at.

Snails rice noodles, or Luosifen in Chinese, have been a signature dish of Liuzhou, a city in Western China’s Guangxi Autonomous Region, since the 1970s. Known for its unique stinky smell, snails

rice noodles combine pickled bamboo shoots with rice noodles and slow-boiled river snails. In 2008, the hand-made skills of Liuzhou river snails rice noodles were included in the second batch of the intangible cultural heritage list of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. In 2019, officials in Liuzhou applied for a national and world-class intangible cultural heritage list for this dish. It became a huge hit in recent years, in particular among young Chinese urbanites who flocked to eCommerce sites to buy pre-packaged versions amid the COVID-19 lockdowns.



The poster of KFC's snails rice noodles on its official Weibo account, a Chinese microblogging platform



KAIFENGCAI

KAIFENGCAI螺蛳粉系列自2020年10月起陆续上市。仅限北京、上海、天津、深圳、成都、重庆、杭州、武汉、西安、天津、苏州、南京、郑州、长沙、东莞、沈阳、青岛、佛山、无锡、厦门、宁波、哈尔滨等全国主要城市及部分海外地区。具体上市城市以线下门店公告为准。KAIFENGCAI螺蛳粉系列(两个装)每盒130000份。在包装上,仅露出产品部分,不露出品牌,且包装上印有“KaiFengCai”字样,不露出品牌。KAIFENGCAI螺蛳粉系列(两个装)每盒130000份。在包装上,仅露出产品部分,不露出品牌,且包装上印有“KaiFengCai”字样,不露出品牌。KAIFENGCAI螺蛳粉系列(两个装)每盒130000份。在包装上,仅露出产品部分,不露出品牌,且包装上印有“KaiFengCai”字样,不露出品牌。

After hearing the news, many netizens expressed their opposition to KFC's announcement because they would be bothered by the strong aroma of pickled bamboo shoots in KFC stores.

However, the launch of a series of fast-cooked and pre-packaged food, including snails rice noodles, is not aimed at dine-in meals. Instead, it focuses on the promotion of a lazy economy, a new type of consumption demand that accelerates the pace of life, to introduce fast-cooked products for busy people to eat at home. According to KFC, the “KaiFengCai” series of products are easy to make and will also allow young people to enjoy the fun of hands-on preparation and the processes of cooking.

Consumers can order food through KFC's mobile app, WeChat's official account and applet, and in-store ordering machine or counter. Other sales channels will be added in the future.

During the past years, to adapt to the local Chinese market, KFC introduced soy milk, fried dough sticks, sesame cakes, seafood porridge, old Beijing chicken rolls, crayfish buns, and other Chinese local food to attract consumers. Now, with snail rice noodles as an option in this popular line of food, KFC's rapid follow-up and innovation will undoubtedly bring surprises to consumers.

The "KaiFengCai" series is a new path for Yum China, an American Fortune 500 fast-food restaurant company incorporated in the United States with operational headquarters in China, to localize in the wave of retail catering. The fast-food market, which is prevalent among young consumers, faces challenges in generating customer loyalty. While people often select their preferred brands and services, variety-seeking is more common in the fast-food industry. If "KaiFengCai" successfully enters the new retail industry, Yum China may also be able to win the rights to define the Chinese fast food market.

The birth of "KaiFengCai" relies on KFC, but it represents Yum China's determination to gradually reduce its dependence on KFC. It also implies the possibility of Yum China's true sinicization. The Chinese catering market develops rapidly. Currently, young people no longer blindly consider consuming the fast-food chain restaurants such as KFC, McDonald's, Popeyes, and Pizza Hut as a superior status symbol. Compared to the high-calorie happiness, they are more willing to choose healthy meals, comfortable dining environments, and will consider the social attributes and cultural heritage behind the food. Undeniably, the attractiveness of KFC is declining. Rather than spending huge sums of money to invite traffic stars to endorse the flow, perhaps it is better to make fast-cooked food to conquer the young people who stay at home this year.

On Oct. 26, the "KaiFengCai" series of snail rice noodles will go on sale. It is too soon to tell whether it is a rising star in the fast food market or a bubble in the context of Internet celebrities, as it is still waiting for the most honest feedback from the market. It is an interesting step for such a large company to make a strong statement towards local cuisine.