

McDonald's, Tim Hortons emerge as favourite restaurants in Canada: study



Cups of coffee sit on a counter in a Tim Hortons outlet in Oakville, Ontario on Monday September 16, 2013. (THE CANADIAN PRESS/Chris Young)

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When hungry Canadians need a quick and dirty burger fix, they hit up McDonald's. But when the occasion calls for a sit-down meal with all the fixins', their favourite eatery is steakhouse restaurant chain The Keg.

Those are among the findings in a large survey that asked 6,000 Canadians to name their favourite restaurants and menu items in BrandSpark International's Best Restaurant Awards 2014.

According to the poll results, it also appears that Canadians hold a steep, one-sided allegiance to McDonald's, as the survey is conspicuously absent of another major fast food player: Burger King.

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In fact, McDonald's dominated the survey, taking the top spot in 14 categories including favourite quick service restaurant; best tasting food overall; best fries; best chicken burgers and sandwiches; and breakfast menus.

Not surprisingly, Canadians are also loyal to their iconic Canadian coffee brand, Tim Hortons, which took the top spot in categories like best tasting coffee; best desserts; and best breakfast.

In fact, according to the survey results, the biggest fast food rivalry in Canada doesn't pair off burger giants against one another, but bisects what used to be two traditionally distinct markets: burgers and coffee.

While more than half of Canadians named Tim Hortons the best tasting coffee, McDonald's -- not Starbucks -- came in second with 29 percent of the Canadian vote.

"Tim Horton's winning Canada's best tasting coffee was no surprise, but McDonald's coming in a very strong second place versus more established coffee brands like Starbucks is impressive," said Denis Hancock of BrandSpark.

"This clearly demonstrates what a great job McDonald's has done to improve and market their coffee over the last few years."

Likewise, the two chains tied for first place in the category of favourite breakfast menu.

And while McDonald's emerged the overall favourite fast food chain, when it comes to burgers, Canadians said the best tasting burger can be found at smaller player A&W.

In other categories, Pizza Pizza tied with Pizza Hut for best tasting pizza while Wendy's and Subway tied for best tasting healthy items in the fast casual category.

The Keg took top honours in five categories including favourite full service restaurant, best tasting food and best for dinner.

Swiss Chalet was voted best tasting healthy menu, best fries and best lunch in the category of full service restaurants.

Here are some other highlights:

- Best salad: Wendy's
- Best desserts: Tim Hortons, Dairy Queen
- Best tasting hot and spicy menu items: Wendy's
- Best tasting veggie burgers: Harvey's

Full service restaurants:

- Best tasting pizza: Boston Pizza
 - Best tasting Italian: East Side Mario's
 - Best for breakfast: Cora's
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