

# Time Out

## New York



### Product placement

**Eat Out**

New York City restaurants are capitalizing on their brands with mass-market versions of the foods that made them famous. But how do they measure up? Our panel compares notes. By **Sara Peipitone**

The Offering	The Claim	The Restaurant	The Retail	The Verdict
<p>Restaurant: <b>Rosa Mexicano</b> (1063 First Ave at 58th St, 212-753-7407; 61 Columbus Ave at 62nd St, 212-977-7700; 9 E 18th St between Fifth Ave and Broadway, 212-533-3350)</p> <p><b>Menu item:</b> Enchiladas suizas with pulled roasted chicken, rice and beans; \$13.75 at lunch, \$18.75 at dinner</p> <p><b>Retail product:</b> Vegetarian Enchiladas with Suiza Sauce from FreshDirect, \$8.99</p>	<p>The website states: "Bold, vibrant Rosa Mexicano dishes at your casa."</p>	<p>"There's attention to detail here," says restaurant consultant Steven Goldstein, as he surveys the eatery's creamy tomatillo sauce, the vibrant yellow rice and black beans. Everyone mopped it up—this was the only set of dishes that ended with clean plates.</p>	<p>The biggest success and favorite of the tasting—despite the chicken-vegetable disparity—the enchiladas "were a restaurant-quality experience," says Goldstein. Rod Brogan, a prepared foods junky, takes it a step further: "The similarity of the excellent sauces is impressive," he says.</p>	
<p>Restaurant: <b>Sylvia's</b> (328 Malcolm X Blvd [Lenox Ave] between 126th and 127th Sts, 212-996-0660)</p> <p><b>Menu item:</b> Collard greens, \$3</p> <p><b>Retail product:</b> Around \$1.49 at major supermarkets</p>	<p>"The retail line was created based on recipes in the restaurant," says Sylvia's spokesperson Tren'ness Woods-Black. "We tasted and tasted until the products were as close as possible."</p>	<p>"The restaurant's collard greens are full, clean, vinegary, salty and sugary," murmurs Brogan, savoring the balance of flavors. "The collards look plump and fresh," he adds. "A healthy plate of green."</p>	<p>Though they're nothing like her grandmother's (or Sylvia's) collards, Kanlea Clark, a cashier at Gristedes, enjoyed what she called the canned greens' "artificial flavor." Brogan notes, "The restaurant greens have a much cleaner taste."</p>	
<p>Bakery: <b>Cake Man Raven Confectionery</b> (708A Fulton St at South Oxford St, Fort Greene, Brooklyn; 718-694-2253)</p> <p><b>Menu item:</b> Red velvet cake, \$6</p> <p><b>Retail product:</b> Red velvet cake, \$6.49 at participating Applebee's in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Sheepshead Bay and Downtown Brooklyn</p>	<p>"Applebee's slices are about half the size of the slices in the store," says Tara Brown, a Cake Man spokesperson. "But the cakes themselves are the same."</p>	<p>You can get the moist, airy slice with pecans on the cream cheese frosting's edge, or not (we chose yes). Besides being gargantuan (the slices are about 1/4 a cake), the wedge was deceptively light. "It's a fresh piece of cake," says Goldstein.</p>	<p>Applebee's denser, smaller slice had an odd strawberry flavor, first detected by Clark. A call to Applebee's confirms that flavoring (and pecans, for that matter) can be added upon request—guess we got someone else's slice. Goldstein figures the syrup was added to combat the "mealy, old taste."</p>	
<p>Restaurant: <b>White Castle</b> (various locations; see <a href="http://whitecastle.com">whitecastle.com</a>)</p> <p><b>Menu item:</b> Hamburgers, six for \$4.49</p> <p><b>Retail product:</b> White Castle Microwavable Hamburgers, around \$3.99 for a box of six at major supermarkets</p>	<p>"When you can't get one hot off the grill, this is a close substitute," says Kelly Collins, marketing supervisor at White Castle.</p>	<p>The Post-it note-size sliders come steamed, with the gratis garnish of ketchup, pickles and onions. "The pickle is all I taste," says Brogan. Clark, a former White Castle employee, agrees: "These burgers are no good without toppings."</p>	<p>Nuking made the frozen patty just as moist, but that's where the similarities end. "The bread gets rock hard in the microwave," says Clark, who notes that there's no pickle. Brogan spoke for the panel when he deemed the hamburgers equally bland: "What was I thinking in college?"</p>	

For opinions on Tabla for FreshDirect and Junior's cheesecake, visit [timeoutnewyork.com/eatout](http://timeoutnewyork.com/eatout).

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