

# Lay's Taste-Tests Fan-Nominated Flavors

JOSEPH PISANI, AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The next Lay's potato chip will taste like chicken and waffles. Or cheesy garlic bread. Or Sriracha, a hot sauce often used in Thai dishes.

Lay's is letting potato chip lovers decide which one of the three will be its newest flavor. All of them will be sold at retailers nationwide starting next week. After trying them, fans have until May to vote for their favorites. The flavor with the most votes will stay on store shelves.

But if the other two flavors sell well, they may remain in stores, too, said Ann Mukherjee, chief marketing officer at Frito-Lay. "Who knows, we don't know what's going to happen," she said. "Our intent is to keep the one that people vote for."

It's the latest promotional stunt that tries to engage customers through social media and direct interaction, much as Hasbro's Monopoly did with its recent contest that ended with the addition of a cat game token and the demise of the iron.

Lay's Chicken & Waffles, Cheesy Garlic Bread and Sriracha were suggested by three people through the company's "Do Us a Flavor" campaign. A panel of chefs and flavor experts looked through about 3.8 million submissions and selected about 20 flavors to prototype. From there, the judges picked the three finalists. Mukherjee said that each dish was cooked in the test kitchen and compared with the flavored chip.

Fans will have three ways to vote for their favorites. They can do it through Lay's Facebook page, by texting "VOTE" to 24477 or through Twitter using the hashtags (hash)SaveChickenWaffles, (hash)SaveGarlicBread or (hash)SaveSriracha.

The person who submitted the winning flavor will win \$1 million, or one percent of the chip's 2013 sales, whichever is more. The runners-up will win \$50,000.

Although the new flavors are not supposed to hit stores until next Tuesday, some stores have started selling them. Fans have been posting images of the bags to social networks such as Instagram and Twitter. "We started shipping them," said Mukherjee. "I think some of our retailers got excited and put it out on the floor earlier."

Lay's adds about one new potato chip flavor every year, said Mukherjee. Last year it launched the Lay's Classic BLT, made to taste like the sandwich.

This is the first time in Lay's 75-year history that it has let U.S. consumers choose the company's next flavor. Lay's, which is a unit of PepsiCo Inc.'s Frito-Lay snack business, has held similar contests in other countries.

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Frito-Lay first tried such a contest in the United Kingdom for its Walkers brand in 2008. Fans came up with Walkers Chilli & Chocolate and Walkers Cajun Squirrel. Builder's Breakfast, which tasted like a full bacon, sausage and eggs breakfast, won. But the flavor has since been discontinued.

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