



WEB EXCLUSIVE

Barbecue, the Cat Cora Way

Iron Chef winner set to launch fast-casual concept in California. By [Amanda Baltazar](#)

Cat Cora is determined to do fast-casual barbecue better than anyone else.

In December, the *Iron Chef* winner will launch CCQ (Cat Cora's 'Que) inside the Macy's (NYSE:M) at South Coast Plaza in Costa Mesa, California. The concept will be aimed toward families and mall shoppers and feature global barbecue with sauces from all over the world, including Asian, Caribbean jerk, and Argentinean chimichurri.

"This is not your average rib joint," Cora says. "The twist is incorporating global flavors and presentation."

To attract families, menu items are expected to be priced at \$12 and under. "We really want to keep it as a value," Cora says, adding that the per-person check average is expected to run around \$9.

CCQ will share its Macy's home with two other concepts, La Brea Bakery and celebrity chef Marcus Samuelsson's Marc Burger.

The three brands will also share staff, seating (estimated at 80), and a kitchen. If an employee is chopping tomatoes, for example, he or she will chop them for all three concepts, Cora explains.

CCQ's menu will be limited, but varied. Meat is the focal point—slow smoked beef brisket, pulled pork, and smoked chicken. Customers can choose from platters, salads, or wraps, which Cora calls "the barbecue version of a burrito." Vegetarian choices will include fire-roasted vegetables, a signature chopped salad, and sides of beans. Rounding out the menu will be seafood dishes such as skewered shrimp with a Basque rub, chili or lemon zest, garlic, and olive oil.

"I started out with a huge menu, but for fast-casual it has to be formulated and pretty tight," Cora says.

Consumer health also played a role in Cora's menu design. CCQ's meats will be all-natural and cooked with minimal oil. "Smoking and grilling are great options for lots of flavor with not much fat," she says.

Local sourcing will be the standard at CCQ. Cora is already working with a Los Angeles smoker for all her meats. "If you try to ship meat every single day, it's more cost-effective to have someone locally, and it's easier to tweak or make changes [to your menu]."

CCQ will also be as green as possible. All take-out products, from the plates to the boxes, will be eco-friendly and utensils and napkins are likely to be bamboo. Tabletops and flooring will also be environmentally-friendly.

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The restaurant will be manned by Macy's staff and overseen by Tim Scott, Macy's corporate executive chef, who played an integral part in developing the recipes for the three concepts.

Macy's will also be responsible for marketing the tri-branded concept. "They'll do a big push when we open, but I think it's going to speak for itself," Cora says. "Our team will also be working with Macy's to advertise [the restaurant], and I'll be talking about it when I do appearances."

Cora expects to expand CCQ, although whether future restaurants will be aligned with Macy's remains to be seen. "It can go anywhere and can fit into resorts, walking cities, and we're also considering airports. I travel a lot, and I know how hard it is to find healthy and good quality cuisine."

And Cora isn't opposed to growing her concept as a tri-brand along with La Brea and "I don't have a problem doing more, so long as they're all different concepts and we all do our own cuisine so we're not competing. It's always good to bring in business by having different chefs."

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