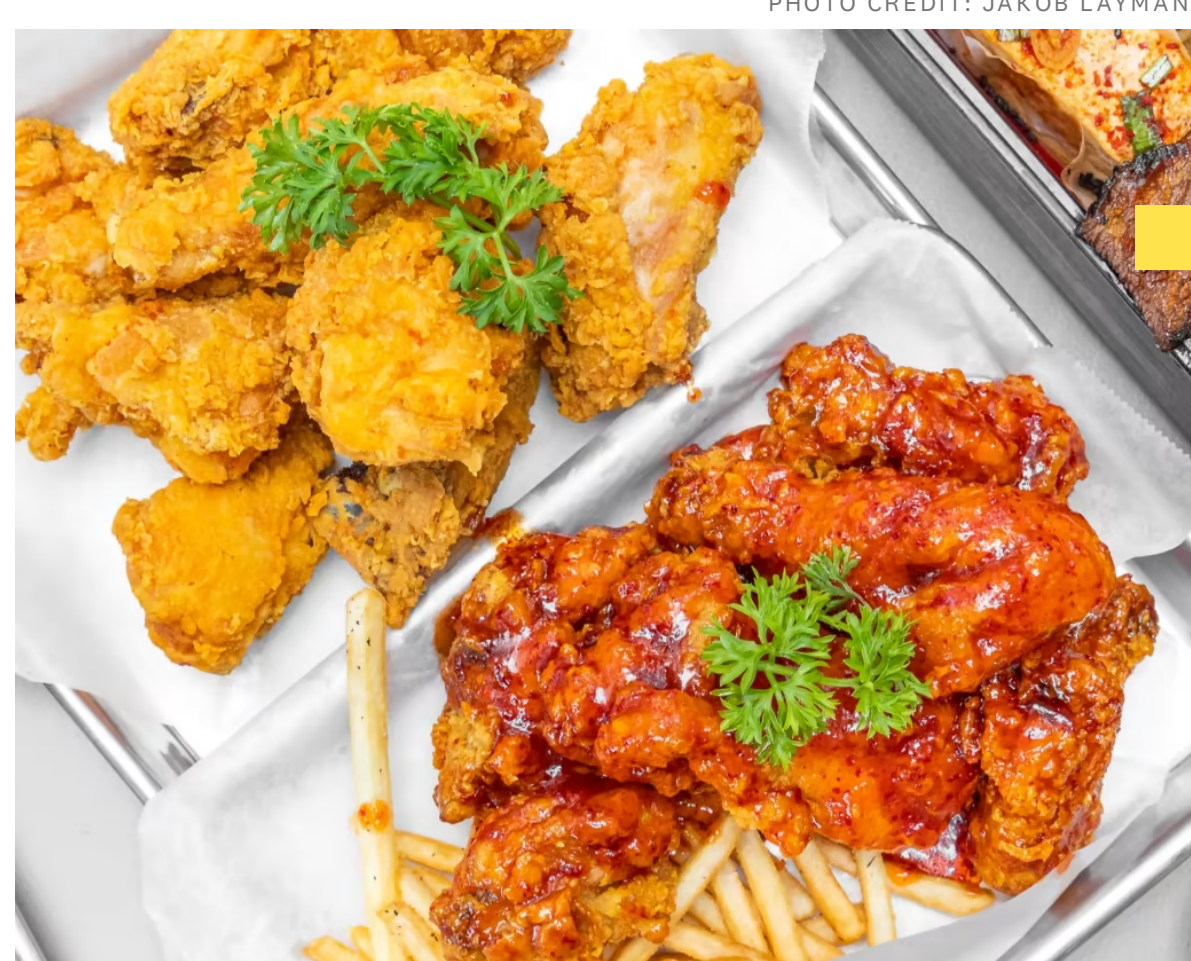


PHOTO CREDIT: JAKOB LAYMAN



LA FEATURE

In Order To Survive, Koreatown's Bulgogi Hut Bets On Fried Chicken

Bulgogi Hut has survived COVID regulations, closed dining rooms, and fluctuating meat prices. Now, it's forced to reboot as a brand-new restaurant.

KAT HONG
AUGUST 20, 2020

SAVE

When LA's shelter-in-place order went into effect in March, Bulgogi Hut was ready. Determined to tackle the challenge head-on, the Koreatown restaurant spent thousands on plexiglass partitions, face shields and masks, sanitizing stations, touchless sinks, toilets, and more, all to keep up with the city's strict [COVID-19 health regulations](#).

"It's hard to say how much we spent in total," said Michelle Kang, the general manager of Bulgogi Hut. "But we have 20 servers on staff, and one face shield costs \$5. I bought a touchless thermometer that scans your body, and that cost \$1,200. So with just those one or two things, our costs are already up."

Still, Kang was determined to keep her doors open, and her staff on the payroll.

"We still needed to provide work for the people who trusted us," she said. "Even though we were losing money just by being open, we didn't want to let them down."

But as the months wore on, between [fluctuating meat costs](#), a lack of support from state and local government, and [rising COVID cases](#), by the time dining rooms were [ordered to close on July 1st](#), Kang knew her family's restaurant was going to have to adapt yet again - and fast.

So Bulgogi Hut was closed, and Chicken Hut was born. ("It was my mom's idea," Kang laughed.) Complete with partitions, a sea of tents, and string lights (for ambience, of course), it's a new outdoor pop-up that features much of Bulgogi Hut's original menu - brisket, pork belly, and bulgogi - plus new items like bento boxes and to-go KBBQ kits, and an entirely new dish: Korean fried chicken, available in sweet chili, soy garlic, and original flavors.



PHOTO CREDIT: JAKOB LAYMAN

In addition to giving Kang's family their best shot at survival, Chicken Hut has also provided a new way for her to connect with the community. After a Facebook post of hers [bemoaning the restaurant's struggles](#) went viral, Kang noticed a distinct increase in business. "The response has been amazing," she said. "We were doing maybe \$200 in sales a day, and now I feel like every day I have at least one customer that says, 'I saw your post and I just wanted to come support.' And that's been really nice."

But the fight is far from over, especially as more and more Koreatown restaurants continue to shut down. In the last two weeks alone, [Jun Won Restaurant](#), [Dong Il Jang](#), and [Here's Looking At You](#) have all closed their doors, citing higher operating costs and lower foot traffic. Many of these smaller, immigrant-owned businesses never had the means to create social media presences, and Kang worries that that might mark the difference between life or death.

"Most of these restaurants don't have a young daughter to do all of this stuff for them," she said. "But if you don't automatically update your Google listing, or your Yelp listing, or sign up for all of these delivery apps and get really creative, you won't survive."

Chicken Hut is available for takeout, delivery, and offers limited outdoor dining. For a full list of Koreatown's takeout and delivery options, [check out our guide](#).



PHOTO CREDIT: JAKOB LAYMAN



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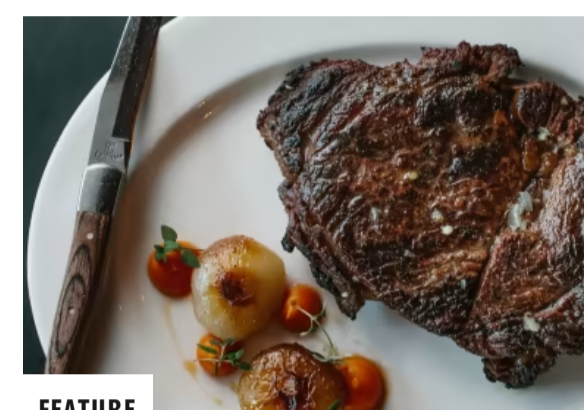
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FEATURE

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Our favorite playlists, plates, hot sauces, and more - all made by LA restaurants - that will hopefully make eating at home suck a little less.



GUIDE

The Koreatown Takeout & Delivery Guide

KOREATOWN

39 great options for takeout and delivery in Koreatown.



REVIEW

Ichijiku

SUSHI · HIGHLAND PARK

Ichijiku is a neighborhood sushi bar in Highland Park and a great spot for all levels of sushi eaters.

INFATUATION

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