

BUSINESS

# Chipotle is getting into the burger game — but is it too late?

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Photo: AP

Diners will soon find out whether Chipotle Mexican Grill can make a decent burger.

The burrito chain said Thursday it will open its first Tasty Made this fall in Lancaster, Ohio, after announcing its intent last year [to get into the burger business](#).

“Making only burgers, fries and shakes with really great ingredients, we think we can appeal to people’s timeless love of burgers, but in a way that is consistent with our long-term vision,” Chipotle founder Steve Ells said in a statement.

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The focused Tasty Made menu is strikingly similar to the one Shake Shack offered when it first opened a dozen years ago. Only In-N-Out Burger, a California-based chain, offers such a limited menu today.

But Chipotle is late to the burger game, according to John Gordon, principal of Pacific Management Consulting Group.

“There are so many others — that’s the problem,” Gordon said, “but more importantly [Tasty Made] is a diversion from the core tasks of fixing Chipotle.”

Chipotle has **struggled to recover from a string of food scares**, including massive E. coli and norovirus outbreaks last year in nine states.

Ohio was a logical choice for the first Tasty Made as it is Chipotle’s “best market in the country,” Chief Financial Officer John Hartung said last week on an earnings call.

Same-store sales fell just 12 percent during the second quarter in Ohio, Hartung said, compared with 26 percent on the coasts and 23.6 percent across its 2,000 eateries.

Tasty Made is Chipotle’s fourth restaurant concept. It owns 14 ShopHouse Southeast Asian Kitchen restaurants and is an investor in an entity that owns four Pizzeria Locale stores.

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