

McDonald's Forced to Scrap Salads Over Russia's Food Import Ban

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Customers visit a McDonald's restaurant in Moscow, Aug. 21, 2014.

Following inspections by Russia's food safety watchdog, McDonald's has said it will temporarily close 22 restaurants for 'modernization,' adding it has scrapped two salads from its menu in light of a ban on Western food imports.

The ban — introduced in response to the Western sanctions against Russia over its policies in Ukraine — has forced McDonald's to suspend serving its vegetable and Caesar salads while it searches for new suppliers, spokeswoman Oksana Belaychuk said, TASS news agency reported Tuesday.

"The quality of products used in salads does not meet the requirements which used to satisfy us and our suppliers [before the ban was enacted] and we decided to remove salads from the menu until we find an alternative," Belaychuk was quoted as saying.

The move is unrelated to inspections conducted by the food safety watchdog, Rospotrebnadzor, which has accused McDonald's of serving substandard produce, Belaychuk added.

Rospotrebnadzor said late August that its inspectors had found E. coli and other dangerous bacteria in a range of McDonald's foods, and named the two salad dishes among the offending items, Russian media reported.

In the wake of the inspections, McDonald's also said Tuesday that it would be temporarily shutting 22 of its Russian restaurants for "modernization."

In Moscow, St. Petersburg and other cities, 18 restaurants will be closed for a few days in September, while four more, including two in the Moscow region, will undergo larger renovations that are likely to take longer, the company said in an online statement.

"These restaurants will resume their work as soon as they are ready, from September to November 2014," the statement said.

Rospotrebnadzor has initiated administrative proceedings against 80 individuals and companies following its nationwide inspections of McDonald's branches, Izvestia reported Wednesday, citing a report that the agency has submitted to a State Duma lawmaker who had requested information about the probe.

"I am pleased that Rospotrebnadzor has taken an interest in this important problem," the lawmaker, Roman Khudyakov, was quoted as saying.

"In the future, we similarly will not allow our citizens to be poisoned. I am sure that future inspections will also be effective, and we will not stop until we bring order to this sphere."

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