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Noodles & Co. makes a star of asparagus

AS THE FOOD industry and the government try to get Americans to eat more vegetables, Noodles & Co. has gotten consumers to solve the problem—at least for one green veggie.

On May 19, the noodle shop crowned Brookfield, Wis.-native Allison Doyle its national Asparagus Queen as part of the company's first sweepstakes promoting its seasonal asparagus menu. The online promotion at asparagusqueen.com drew 7,500 entrants, 420,000 votes and 103,000 unique visitors during the contest that ran Apr. 13 through May 10.

Prevailing over nine state finalists, Ms. Doyle won two tickets anywhere Frontier Airlines flies and a year of eating free at the chain. State finalists dine free for one month at the chain. Many of the contestants were men.

Noodles used an e-mail push from its own mailing list and in-store and online promotions. One Denver drag queen named Nuclia Waste won the People's Choice Award and was a state finalist.

The crowning victory for the 10-state, 100-unit chain was in sales.

After five weeks, the limited-time-offer asparagus dish was a No. 7 top-seller of all dishes on their menu.

—KATE MACARTHUR

GREENIE:
Asparagus
Queen

