

NBC's *Today*

10/14/26

7:21:54 a.m. [TEASE]

10 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Coming Up; 8:12 AM; Chick-fil-A CEO on *Today*]

LAURA JARRETT: Coming up for you, rare access behind the scenes at Chick-fil-A, and Craig, you sat down with the CEO.

CRAIG MELVIN: I did. It's his first broadcast interview. It's his first broadcast interview. We look at his chain's past, its growth, and the fast-food price wars as well.

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8:01:00 a.m. [TEASE]

19 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ruling the Roost]

MELVIN: And ruling the roost. Just ahead, our exclusive sit-down with the CEO of Chick-fil-A. [TO CATHY] That recipe, it's still the same recipe?

ANDREW CATHY: Yep, it's the same recipe that we've had since 1967.

MELVIN: The story behind the family-owned business, those fast-food wars, and more in his first-ever broadcast interview.

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8:08:23 a.m. [TEASE]

17 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: 8:12 AM; Chick-fil-A CEO on *Today*]

MELVIN: But first, our one-on-one with the CEO of Chick-fil-A. His very first broadcast interview. We talked about the rapid rise of his very large family business, the fast food wars, and the direction of prices and portion size. We'll do that, right after this.

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8:11:34 a.m.

5 minutes and 54 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Chick-fil-A CEO One-on-One]

JARRETT: We are back now at 8:11 with our ongoing series, Business in America. And Craig, you sat down with the CEO of Chick-fil-A for his first-ever broadcast interview.

MELVIN: Yeah. It's his first. Chick-fil-A has grown from a regional favorite to the third-largest fast-food chain in this country. And what sets it apart is that it remains privately owned by the family that started it, 48-year-old Andrew Cathy, now a third-generation chief executive, literally raised to take Chick-fil-A into the future. One chain rules the roost in the growing fast food chicken wars. Chick-fil-A is the third largest chain in America, just behind McDonald's and Starbucks. Their restaurants boast nearly \$24 billion in sales every year, and consistently strong customer satisfaction scores, thanks in part to a fanatical following.

TIKTOK USER @NOELLELOVESSLOTHS: Hallelujah!

TIKTOK USER @BLONDESWHOEAT: How can something be this good?

TIKTOK USER @MACYFIT: Mmmmm!

CATHY: The big thing is just focus on one customer at a time, and that was one of the things my grandfather did.

MELVIN: It all started in Georgia, when Andrew Cathy's grandfather, Truett Cathy, and his brother opened a diner in 1946.

CATHY: My grandfather grew up in extreme poverty. He lived in the first government housing in the state of Georgia, and after the war, he decided to start a business with his brother, Ben.

MELVIN: A deal to buy chicken breasts too large for Delta Airlines's in-flight menu, it led Truett to develop the sandwich that would eventually become the first signature item of the first Chick-fil-A in 1967. [TO CATHY] That recipe — it's still the same recipe?

CATHY: It's the same recipe since 1967.

MELVIN [TO CATHY]: What's in it? What's the recipe?

CATHY: It's a lot of good things. [MELVIN LAUGHS] I can't tell you the details.

MELVIN: Even amid a recent global expansion, the company has remained a privately-held, family-owned business. Andrew Cathy became CEO in 2021, following in his father and grandfather's footsteps. As Southern Baptists, their faith has long been a guiding force for how they operate. [TO CATHY] Since you started, you've never been open on Sunday.

CATHY: Yeah.

MELVIN: [TO CATHY]: Why?

CATHY: My grandfather, his brother Ben, when they started that little restaurant back in Atlanta, it was very common back in the 1940s that a lot of places were closed on Sunday, and so, they had to do that. They wanted to have a chance to take a break, go to church, and for others to take a rest.

MELVIN [TO CATHY]: It's a company that was sort of built — built on God, if you will, and that still seems to be very much a part of the DNA of Chick-fil-A.

CATHY: It is our anchor, in the sense of what our corporate purpose states, that we're in business to glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that's entrusted to us, to have a positive influence on all that come into contact with Chick-fil-A.

MELVIN: That corporate purpose came under fire in 2012, when Andrew's father, Dan, publicly stated the company was opposed to gay marriage. Public documents revealed Chick-fil-A had donated millions to conservative Christian organizations opposed to LGBTQ rights.

PROTESTERS: Chicken's good, chicken's great, why we do we not discriminate?

MELVIN: The comments and financial disclosures unleashed a culture war, with protests, boycotts, and political pushback on both sides. Dan Cathy never changed his stance on gay marriage, but he did express regret for involving the company in the debate. [TO CATHY] They are folks who were — they were protesting, they were boycotting Chick-fil-A. They said, at Chick-fil-A, they don't — they don't stand with the LGBTQ+ community. What would you say to those folks?

CATHY: Well, for anybody that hasn't tried us, we would love for you to come try us and have our great-tasting food and the hospitality that we're known for. I think that everybody that's willing to walk in the door, they're welcome to come eat with us. We'd love to give them a great-tasting sandwich and give them great hospitality.

MELVIN [TO CATHY]: You don't want to talk about that chapter in — in Chick-fil-A's history. You don't.

CATHY: We're focusing on serving everybody that comes and eats with us.

MELVIN [TO CATHY]: The company's official position on equal rights is?

CATHY: We're focused on hospitality, serving great-tasting food, and great service.

MELVIN: In 2019, Chick-fil-A announced it would focus its charitable giving on education, homelessness, and hunger. That new mission? Evident in their Shared Tables program.

CATHY: Since 2020, we've been able to donate enough food to contribute over 200 million meals for those in need.

CHICK-FIL-A EXECUTIVE #1 [in social media post]: Chick-fil-A wants to honor Waste Not, Want Not.

CHICK-FIL-A EXECUTIVE #2 [in social media post]: We're hoping to put smiles on people's faces.

CHICK-FIL-A EXECUTIVE #2 [in social media post]: Two million hunger-released meals.

MELVIN: Philanthropic work remains front and center, even as Chick-fil-A navigates the challenges of the future. [TO CATHY] What would you say to consumers right now, especially who are price-conscious?

CATHY: We're very, very cautious about pricing and look at it, and know that, even though our costs are going up, we've got to be careful knowing that consumers are making that trade-off. What we want more than anything, if customers do choose to eat with us, they want to feel like, man, I got a great value for what I paid for this experience.

MELVIN [TO CATHY]: Shrinkflation. Are you guys — have you participated in — in smaller — smaller portions yet?

CATHY: We're not going to do that. We're not going to shrink product, and those sort of things.

MELVIN [TO CATHY]: Why not?

CATHY: These are the portions and experiences that people are used to. We'll continue to provide that great — great product.

MELVIN [TO CATHY]: What was your specialty in the kitchen? What were you best at?

CATHY: I love behind the kitchen — or behind the counter.

MELVIN: Consumers have more options than ever when it comes to fast food, but Cathy doesn't seem too concerned. [TO CATHY] Do you take credit for chicken sandwiches becoming omnipresent at fast food restaurants?

CATHY: Well, I love the fact that chicken is in such demand. I love competition, so I love the fact that it just makes us better.

MELVIN: It was — it was a fascinating conversation.

JARRETT: Quite revealing.

MELVIN: It's been one of my favorite brands for a long time, since high school. The competition to get one of those franchises? Very — it's very competitive.

JARRETT: Mmm.

MELVIN: Cathy says for the 150 locations they open every year, they get 150,000 applications.

DYLAN DREYER: Wow.

MELVIN: Said he's not sure if any of his four children will actually take over the company someday, but he did tell me that the family have no plans to take the company public.

JARRETT: Keep it in the family.

MELVIN: Still privately-held.