

WINGS

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Considered scrap meat that sold for pennies a pound, they either were tossed out with the trash or used for soup and stock. Then, the story goes, Anchor Bar in Buffalo came up with the idea to cut their wings in half to produce a “drumette” and a “flat,” deep-fry them and douse them in hot sauce. “Buffalo wings” quickly caught on, and by the 1970s and 80s wings were a popular bar food and appetizer in American restaurants.

And now, when so many people are eating out of their refrigerators and pantries instead of at restaurants? Maybe it's time to give the humble wing some homestyle love.

One reason home cooks shy away from wings, aside from the mess, is that wings themselves are full of skin and fat. That makes the half-dozen or so it takes to fill you up feel not so much like an actual meal but a guilty cheat. But if you bake instead of fry them, or use the meat to make soup, you can cut the amount of fat and calories in half.

Wings are a little more expensive at the retail level than wholesale, but still very affordable: A 3-pound bag of frozen wings currently costs \$10.99 at Giant Eagle, while a value pack of 2 or more pounds of fresh wings is running \$2.99 a pound at Target. And they're extremely versatile when it comes to flavors and accompaniments. Wing sauce made with Frank's Red Hot is a favorite, but you also can dip the wings in a soy-ginger sauce for an Asian flair. Or go Greek by marinating the wings in lemon, garlic and oregano before roasting and serving them with crumbled feta and lemon slices.

“If they're made right, they're definitely worth it,” said Matt Cercone, owner of The Original Big Shot Bob's House of Wings in Avalon and Kennedy Township. Even with consumers cooking more at home, he's among the lucky small businesses that have been able to stay open in a food service industry that's all but shut down.

Wings, he said, are comfort food, and so he's still preparing thousands of wings a week, as well as experimenting with new flavors. And with wholesale prices down for shops like his, every penny saved helps keep them afloat.

“We're holding our head above water,” he said.

CRISPY WINGS WITH TWO SAUCES

You need a really hot oven to make crispy wings without frying. If using frozen wings, make sure they're completely thawed before baking and also be sure to spread them out in a single layer.

Both of these sauces can be made up to five days in advance; let cool completely; cover and chill. Rewarm before using.

For Buffalo sauce

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ cup hot pepper sauce (such as Frank's)

For ginger-soy glaze

- 1 (2-inch) piece of ginger, peeled, sliced
- 3 large garlic cloves, crushed
- ¼ cup honey
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce

For wings

- 3 pounds chicken wings, tips removed, drumettes and flats separated
- 1½ tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Prepare Buffalo sauce: Mix butter, cayenne pepper, black pepper and salt in a medium



Gretchen McKay / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette-TNS

Greek-style wings are marinated in lemon, garlic and oregano and served with crumbled feta and tzatziki sauce.

bowl; let stand 5 minutes. Whisk in hot sauce; keep warm.

Prepare ginger-soy glaze: Bring ginger, garlic, honey, soy sauce and ¼ cup of water to a boil in a small saucepan, stirring to dissolve honey. Reduce heat to low; simmer, stirring occasionally, until reduced to ¼ cup, 7 to 8 minutes. Strain into a medium bowl. Let sit 15 minutes to thicken slightly.

Prepare wings: Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Set a wire rack inside 2 large rimmed baking sheets. Toss chicken wings, vegetable oil, salt and pepper in a large bowl to coat. Divide wings between prepared racks and spread out in a single layer.

Bake wings until cooked through and skin is crispy, 45 to 50 minutes.

Line another rimmed baking sheet with foil; top with a wire rack. Add half of wings to ginger-soy glaze and toss to evenly coat. Place wings in a single layer on prepared rack and bake until glaze is glossy and lightly caramelized, 8 to 10 minutes.

Toss remaining half of wings in Buffalo sauce. Serve immediately (no need to bake them).

— Adapted from Bonappetit.com

- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 (10 ounce) can Rotel diced tomatoes with green chilies, undrained
- ¼ cup Buffalo wing sauce (like Franks)
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1½ cups shredded cheddar cheese
- Optional toppings: blue cheese crumbles, chopped scallion, crumbled bacon
- Chopped parsley, for garnish
- Tortilla chips, for serving

Wash wings and pat dry.

Place in a 6- to 8-quart pot and add 10 cups water, along with 1 teaspoon of salt and a good grind of black pepper. Bring to a boil and cook for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and skim off any scum that has appeared on the surface. Cover pan and simmer 1 hour.

Remove from heat and take out chicken wings. Set chicken aside to cool completely.

Heat vegetable oil in a heavy frying pan over moderate heat. Sauté onions, celery, carrots and garlic for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Skim fat from top of chicken broth. Stir in onions, celery, carrots and garlic. Taste and adjust seasonings. Place back on medium-low heat.

Remove chicken meat from bones, discarding skin. Return meat pieces to the pot. Stir in diced tomatoes, Buffalo wing sauce, garlic powder and onion powder. Stir until com-

bined. Add more hot sauce, if desired. Add the cream cheese and cook broth, whisking, until cheese is incorporated and smooth.

Reduce heat to low. Stir in the cheddar cheese and simmer until it's melted. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve hot in warmed bowls with a handful of tortilla chips.

Garnish with blue cheese crumbles, bacon and/or chopped parsley, if desired. Serves 6 to 8.

— Gretchen McKay

GREEK STYLE WINGS WITH TZATZIKI SAUCE

These zesty wings taste like the Greek Isles, with plenty of lemon, oregano and garlic. They're served with an easy-to-make tzatziki sauce.

For marinade

- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 large lemons, zested and juiced (about ½ cup lemon juice)
- 6 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
- 1½ tablespoons dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon black pepper Salt
- 1 teaspoon sweet paprika
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional)

For wings

- 3 pounds chicken wings
- Crumbled feta cheese, for garnish
- Sliced lemons, for garnish
- Fresh chopped parsley, for garnish
- Tzatziki sauce, for serving (recipe follows)

Make the marinade a couple of hours and up to one day ahead of time. Whisk together the extra-virgin olive oil, lemon juice and zest, garlic, oregano, black pepper, salt and sweet paprika. (Add cayenne pepper only if you want spicy wings.)

Add the chicken wings and toss to coat the wings evenly. Cover and refrigerate for a couple of hours or overnight.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Spread chicken wings on a large baking sheet and bake for 45 to 50 minutes or until internal temperature registers at least 165 degrees.

Move chicken wings to the top rack and broil briefly until the skin turns golden brown and crispy. Remove from heat and let sit 5 minutes or so.

Make the tzatziki sauce while chicken wings are baking. Transfer the sauce to a dish and cover the sauce. Refrigerate until ready for use. Give the sauce a little stir just before serving.

Transfer chicken wings to a serving bowl or platter. Garnish with feta cheese, lemon slices, and a generous sprinkle of fresh parsley. Serve with the

tzatziki sauce.

— Adapted from themediterraneandish.com

TZATZIKI SAUCE

- 1 cup Greek whole milk yogurt
- 1 English cucumber, seeded, finely grated and drained
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest plus 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- Kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper

In a medium bowl, whisk together yogurt, cucumber, garlic, lemon zest, lemon juice and dill. Season with salt and pepper. Chill.

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BUFFALO CHICKEN SOUP

- 2 pounds chicken wings
- Salt, divided
- Several grinds fresh pepper, divided
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 cup chopped onion

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