

Winging

Erie-S

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Early this semester, in a Love Rob column, I mentioned that Erie is perhaps the chicken wing capital of the world. After the column was published I was inundated with people asking me where they might obtain these mythical wings.

Let me first explain that Buffalo-style chicken wings are a relatively new product. This is not a term paper and I will not bore you with the history and evolution of this most perfect of finger foods. I will, however, mention that there are perhaps thousands of significantly different ways of making chicken wings. Many of these ways are put under the heading of Buffalo-Style or Erie-Style. This basically means hot wings as opposed to BBQ or butter and garlic or mild or Cajun or screamers or sweet and sour or southern fried.

Buffalo style wings are usually deep-fat fried and then covered with a sauce that is generally made of some tomato base, lots of margarine, some Tabasco or other pepper-based sauce and that all important miscellaneous stuff.

There are probably as many as 200 restaurants and bars in the Erie area that serve some form of chicken wings. In this review, I will concentrate on just a few and my reasons for doing this are simple. I have tried wings from at least half of these 200 establishments and most of them are nothing more than deep fried wings covered in some commercial BBQ sauce. I also depend on other people's advice when going to new places to try, so if I don't know the place sells wings and no one suggests it to me then I can't very well try the wings. I'm sure that there are some fantastic chicken appendages out there that have slipped through my greasy fingers. If I've missed any of your favorites, please send me a note here at *The Collegian*.

You will notice that my list consists mostly of bars, taverns and lounges. This is because for some strange reason bars seem to make a better wing product. I have a few theories on this. One is that bars want people to drink and if they make wings hot enough and sell the wings cheap enough.... Well, you get the picture. My other theory is that pizza places have yet to take wings seriously. In Buffalo it is almost difficult to buy wings and pizza separately. They are quite often mentioned in the same breath as in "let's go get wings'n'pizza." This will not happen in Erie until more places like Lucky Man's and Alfee's open.

The taste of the wing itself is important, but there are other aspects to winging it. Eating fine wings is a whole body experience for any true connoisseur. Therefore I think it is important to rate the entire establishment as well as the wing itself.

Alfee's Pizza - 4516 Peach is a fine example of a pizza shop that takes wings personally. Their sign says "Best wings in town" and although I wouldn't say that exactly, their wings are good and affordable and they have a fine selection. They have BBQ, mild, medium, hot, suicide, and butter and garlic and the wings come with celery and an abundant supply of ranch dip. Because Alfee's is a pizza shop, the decor is nothing to speak of, but the hot wings have an honest hot taste to them and they are cooked well. You wouldn't believe how hard it is to cook wings well. Both the type and the temperature of the oil has to be close to perfect and Alfee's wings come close to perfect. You can get 25 of them for \$6.50. Not cheap.

The Best Western Open Hearth Lounge 6467 Sterrettania Rd. (just off of I90 on the Presque Isle exit). The Open Hearth offers live country music and no cover charge. They also offer a truly amazing deal on Thursday nights starting at 10 pm: all the wings you can eat for \$2. Expect to pay \$5 a pitcher for Coors, though. They offer BBQ, B&G, and Cajun as well as hot. The hot can be good or okay depending on the night. For \$1 extra you can purchase veggies and dip. The sauce is sweet and spicy and loaded on.

The Brookside Inn is close to campus on 3431 Station. They make Buffalo/Erie style in hot, medium and mild as well as B&G. The price is very reasonable at \$2.25/dozen including veggies and dip. They have two specials: 10 cent wings from 7-10 on Monday's and any night you can get 24 wings and a pitcher of beer for \$4.50. The only problem is that the beer is Meisterbrau. That special comes with a ton of veggies and gallons of dip and the wings are really quite tasty.

Fee's Tavern at 2202 E. Lake Rd. serves wings on Wednesdays and Saturdays between 11 am and 10 pm. They serve BBQ, B&G and hots. Take outs are \$4.50 but all-you-can-scarf in the bar will only set you back \$4 plus \$1 for veggies and dip. The wings aren't terrific, but the beer is inexpensive. One word of advice, the B&Gs aren't really worth trying because the last few times I've been there they have used almost no garlic. The BBQs are pleasantly sticky and woody tasting and the hots are hot and have some BBQ influence.



Top 5 Best Tasting

- 1 Stack's Erie-Style
- 2 Warsaw hots
- 3 Lucky Man's hots
- 4 Best Western hots
- 5 Alfee's hots

Top 5 Best Wing Estab

Note: this includes wing quality, price and atmosphere

- 1 The Best Western
- 2 Warsaw Cafe
- 3 Lefty's
- 4 Plymouth Tavern
- 5 The King's Rook

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