

## V101 - Best Chicken Wings Transcript

[00:00:05] **Thomas France** For a lot of sports enthusiasts, there's one thing that's synonymous with game day wings. I can't tell you the last time I attended a watch party that didn't include a big basket of chicken wings slathered in various levels of spicy sauces. So with the Super Bowl coming to the metro area this year, I thought it might be a good idea to take a look at some of the favorite places around Phoenix to stock up on Super Bowl-worthy wings.

[00:00:41] **Thomas France** Welcome to Valley 101, a podcast by the Arizona Republic and AZCentral.com. I'm audio producer Thomas France. And today we're touring around the valley to find out just what goes into a good wing and where you can go to find them.

[00:01:05] **Thomas France** This episode was inspired by one of our listeners who asked about golden wings. They hadn't seen them on a menu before moving to Arizona. They're called "golden" because of the sweeter tangier sauce they're tossed in. Think like a buffalo sauce, but not as hot. And the main ingredient, honey mustard, gives them their golden color.

[00:01:29] **Thomas France** But that left me with a spicy question. Pun intended. What makes a good wing? Looking around at what different food experts have to say.

[00:01:40] There are three criteria for grading chicken wings. First we look at the outside and the crunchiness of the skin. Too much crunch is not pleasant, but too little can be a problem too. Next. Is the meat cooked properly over or undercooked? Chicken does not a good wing make. Finally the source. This is arguably the most subjective because everyone's tastes and heat sensitivity is different.

[00:02:13] But when determining for yourself, ask if the sauce tastes like it's advertised. Is it savory but supposed to be sweet? Do the hot sauces actually pack heat?

[00:02:33] Armed with my three criteria, I sought out my spots. Zipps in downtown Tempe, Crazy Mike's Wings in Glendale and Long Wongs in Phoenix. First on the list zipps I'd read online. Their golden wings are a must have. I went to their downtown Tempe location and ordered myself some at the mild level.

[00:03:03] I'm not afraid to admit I'm a big old wimp when it comes to spicy food. And I got on the phone with Tiffany Doby, director of marketing and public relations for Zipps Sports Grill's and Goldie's Sports Cafe. She told me that there's a very good reason why their golden wings are so popular.

[00:03:24] **Tiffany Doby** Though our golden path is unique, it's one of a kind. It's not like any other restaurant, at least different from any other wing sources out there. We have a great recipe that we share. Our golden hit originates here in Arizona, and if you won't get it at any other restaurant.

[00:03:42] **Thomas France** While the inspiration behind Golden Wings sauce comes from the Carolinas and their tangy barbecue styles, the golden wings at zipps are 100% authentic. Arizona. And she's not wrong. The Golden Wings have a sweet and tangy sauce that is strikingly different than a typical wing sauce. It's not as punchy as a buffalo sauce, which for me was a plus. The outside was super crunchy without being too much

and the meat fell off the bone super easily while I munched happily on my wings. I talked with Tiffani about the history of Zipps.

[00:04:24] **Tiffany Doby** We started off with Goldie Cafe in 1993 and that's located in Scottsdale off of Via Linda and Mountain View across the park. And then our owners opened up Zipps and we started with locations and fell. And then we expanded and now we have 14 Valley. They are the company founded by a family who are also located here, and we're only located in Arizona.

[00:04:55] **Thomas France** 2023 marks 30 years of Goldie's and Zipps in business, an impressive feat for any business, but especially one in the food industry. For them, the focus has always been on being active in the communities they're located in, and everything else flows from their. And so I visited the place. The critics said I had to go.

[00:05:26] But where did our listeners like? Turns out people have opinions about chicken wings. I couldn't have tried them all. But some that won't make this episode are wings from Jimmy Jack's Hamburgers, Angel Wings from Taco Guild and even vegan ones from Jupiter Rings.

[00:05:53] I decided on Crazy Mike's Wings in Glendale. It's a hole in the wall place tucked away in a strip mall. It's fairly new, but crazy. Mike must know what he's doing. Luz Cruz the manager in Glendale sat down with me in Crazy Mike's dining room to talk chicken.

[00:06:12] **Luz Cruz** Crazy Mike, the owner. He originally was in California. He had a sushi place called Crazy Mike's Sushi, and then he decided to move to Arizona. And this used to be called the wing counter. He bought it and then changed the name. So we've been here, I would say, a good five, six years now. He just opened another one at the Goodyear location.

[00:06:33] **Thomas France** Luz told me that they treat their customers like family and people come back for that service. Well, that and their signature.

[00:06:41] **Luz Cruz** Rub our dry rub the crazy maestro rub. It's hard to describe how it is, but usually when it's someone's first time coming here, we always do just that one and they always fall in love and come back for that. That specific seating that went in our Korean hot sweet chili.

[00:06:58] **Thomas France** Well, if the dry rub is king. I just had to try it. I got a small basket with some blue cheese to dip them in and a little side cup of that Korean chili sauce for fun. I have to admit, for being wings without sauce. They tasted great. Luz was right. It really is hard to describe, but the wings are so different from other wings I've had in a good way. Good enough to bring me back one day. We'll see. The last time Arizona hosted a sporting event as big as the Super Bowl was 2015 before Crazy Mike's existed in Glendale. I wanted to know what expectations they had for the big day.

[00:07:51] **Luz Cruz** I feel like that whole week we might be busy, so I am definitely going to be scheduling more people for that time. And I'm excited because we're going to be getting people from all over the country. I'm excited for them to try it. I know there's some people who actually travel from far away.

[00:08:12] **Thomas France** Finally, I couldn't do an episode on chicken wings in Arizona without going to the top suggested spot, the interestingly named Long Wongs. Following

advice from people on Twitter, I made sure to go to the location on 28th Street and Thomas there. I met with Ron Goldstein, Long Wongs owner since the beginning. This is a man whose restaurants have been in business 45 years, a man originally from the birthplace of chicken wings itself.

[00:08:48] **Ron Goldstein** You watch what you do. You hear day and night, your marriage, your business, and you have the right recipes. Were from Buffalo, New York. So we brought our recipes to the right way of doing it. Nowadays, it's every other flavor in the world. Indian food and chicken. When I first started four flavors.

[00:09:05] **Thomas France** From the minute you pull into the driveway, you know you're in for an experience. The front of the building is crammed to the gills with dinosaur, cow, and chicken statues. This is a place designed to leave an impression. And that's not just me saying that Ron admitted it was intentional.

[00:09:28] **Ron Goldstein** Everybody's got good food, but you got to have that pizzazz and want to make people want to try it, and drive by and wonder what is Long Wongs? Is he Chinese or what is it?

[00:09:38] **Thomas France** Inside the walls are covered with so much memorabilia and vintage items, you can hardly see the walls themselves and so many flamingos. My thought walking in was that even if the food wasn't to my taste, I'd remember this place. But I didn't have to worry. I got an order of the medium spiced golden sauce wings. These wings were smoky and crispy. The sauce to meat ratio was spot on. No drowning them, nor feeling like they weren't properly coated. I understood why we had several people suggesting that the food is only half the equation at long ones.

[00:10:26] **Ron Goldstein** I have good people. My people I work with don't like family. I mean, we're not blood related, but we're soul related. Well, I don't know what they. 20 years. That's the difference. Snap me. I'm in the office cause I'm a cripple now. But it's the ones that they're. You know, they've got my back, and they. They do the right thing for us. That's very important.

[00:10:47] **Thomas France** And it's not just the people working in the restaurant. Ron's been getting his meat from the same people for nearly his entire time in business.

[00:10:56] **Ron Goldstein** Same meat man for 35 years. My chicken man, I served. The grandfather went to the son. Went to the grandson. I got another one there. So four generations working the same people. A lot of the people that come here are two or three generations. I know when they're babies and I know when they got three kids. So our neighborhood thing.

[00:11:18] **Thomas France** Now, Ron told me that Long Wongs will actually be closing for Super Bowl Sunday. According to him, if he can't do it right, he won't do it. And since they take time to craft their wings and other food, he doesn't want to risk making anyone mad with potentially huge lines and wait times. He also said he didn't want to put his staff through the struggle of trying to keep up with orders. But any other game day you can swing by and grab some truly great wings. Be sure to ask why Ron decided to call it long longs. Thank you for listening to today's episode of Valley One on One and a special thanks to all the people who suggested places for me to feature. I honestly wish I could have included them all. But too many chicken wings. Not enough time. Didn't get a chance to tell us your favorite wing place. Reach out and let us know on Twitter at A-Z. C

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