

Just about everybody loves chicken wings. Simple, tasty wings for sports viewing, along with a trio of winning dipping sauces, seem like an apt way to ring in autumn. And unlike most restaurant wings, these are oven baked, making them just as crisp as but healthier than deep-fried ones.

Crispy Marinated Oven-Roasted Chicken Wings with:

Pipián Rápido Sauce

Spicy Hoisin-Garlic Sauce

Sweet-and-Sour Sauce

Cooking Tip: For crisp-skinned, oven-roasted wings, you need roast them at a relatively high temperature. Meaty as wings are, they'll still need a little help to stay as moist beneath their crispy skin as possible, so you'll want to marinate them before roasting--anywhere between about 2 and 24 hours works just fine.

Day 1: Crispy Marinated Oven-Roasted Chicken Wings

Makes enough for 6–8 healthy appetites

Ingredients:

- 4 pounds of raw chicken wings*, tips removed**
- 2–3 cloves of garlic, minced finely
- 1 ½ teaspoons of sugar (for deeper flavor, use brown sugar)
- ¼ teaspoon of sea salt
- ½–1 teaspoon of freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup of soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons of safflower or canola oil

* Separate into drummies and wings if you want to.

** The tips are so thin that they'll burn during the long roasting, so remove them with scissors, put them in a freezer baggie, and save them for making stock or soup.

- Combine garlic, sugar, salt, pepper, soy sauce, and oil in a big mixing bowl, then add the wings. Use your hands to smear the mixture thoroughly onto the wings. Cover the bowl and refrigerate, or scrape everything into a big baggie and refrigerate, 2–24 hours, the longer, the better.
- When the marinating time is up, preheat the oven to 400° and take the wings out of the fridge to warm up a little. Cover a half-sheet or large cookie sheet with aluminum foil, and place the wings on the sheet.
- Put the sheet on the middle rack, and roast for 15 minutes. Then turn the wings over and allow them to keep roasting until their skins are brown and crispy and a skewer easily pierces the meat and runs with clear yellow juice. You'll have all the crispy skin you want without the deep frying!
- Roast another sheet of wings, and then another, and then another . . .

Day 1: Pipían Rápido Sauce

Here's a quicky sauce with heat you can determine for yourself. Serves 6–8

Ingredients:

- 1 large can of red chile enchilada sauce, such as Frontera
- 1½ tablespoons (or more) of creamy peanut butter
- ¼ teaspoon of dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon of sea salt

Heat the chile sauce in a large skillet, reducing it until it's thick and tasty. Add the peanut butter and simmer until the two have combined thoroughly. Add the oregano and salt.

Day 2: Spicy Hoisin-Garlic Sauce

This terrific Vietnamese sauce comes from Andrea Nguyen's Into the Vietnamese Kitchen (2006). Makes enough for 6–8.

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons of creamy salted peanut butter
2 tablespoons of cold water
1 tablespoon of safflower or canola oil
1 large clove of garlic, minced finely
¼ – ½ teaspoon of dried chile pepper flakes
1 teaspoon of tomato paste
1 cup of cold water
6–8 tablespoons of hoisin sauce
1 teaspoon of fish sauce (optional)
2 tablespoons of unsalted roasted peanuts, finely chopped
1 teaspoon of sesame seeds, toasted

- Whisk peanut butter and water together.
- Combine oil, garlic, and chile flakes in a small saucepan over medium-low heat. When the oil sizzles, add the tomato paste, using a whisk or fork to break it up.
- When the oil has become a bright yellow-orange, pour in 1 cup of cold water to stop the cooking. Raise heat to medium, and whisk in the peanut butter-water mixture.
- When the sauce starts to boil, whisk in the hoisin sauce and cook for 1 minute. Taste, and add more hoisin if you wish. Then add fish sauce, if you're using it.
- Simmer the sauce until it becomes as thick as you want.
- Remove from the heat and allow to cool, uncovered, to concentrate the flavor and thicken up.
- Refrigerate until you're ready to use it, then allow it to return to room temperature before using.
- When you're ready to serve the sauce, scrape it into a bowl and sprinkle chopped peanuts and toasted sesame seeds on top.

Day 3: Sweet-and-Sour Sauce

Here's a simple and very tasty sweet-and-sour sauce that goes as well with fried tofu (a terrific vegan/vegetarian alternative to wings!) as with chicken wings. This is based on a recipe from Madhur Jaffrey's World-of-the-East Vegetarian Cooking (1981), an old book deservedly still in print. Makes enough for 6–8.

Ingredients:

1½ teaspoons of cornstarch
3 tablespoons of chicken stock or water
¾ cup of chicken or other tasty stock/broth
3 tablespoons of apple cider or rice vinegar
3 tablespoons of sugar (for deeper flavor, use brown sugar)
1 tablespoon of ketchup
2 tablespoons of soy sauce
½ teaspoon of salt
¼–½ teaspoon of dried chile pepper
Freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon of safflower or canola oil
1 clove of garlic
1 thick cross-wise slice of fresh ginger

- Mix cornstarch and stock or water in a small bowl.
- Combine ¾ c. stock, vinegar, sugar, ketchup, soy sauce, salt, pepper flakes, and black pepper in another bowl.
- Heat oil in a small saucepan over medium heat. When it becomes hot, add garlic and ginger. Stir to bathe them in the oil. When the garlic browns, immediately remove pot from heat and pour the stock-and-vinegar mixture over the saucepan's contents.
- Return pan to heat and bring to a boil. Lower heat to a gentle simmer and cook 4 minutes.
- Stir up the cornstarch mixture until so it's fluid again, and add to the pot. Stir until the sauce thickens and becomes glossy.
- Taste, and adjust seasonings as you please.

Cooking Tip: Be sure the sauce has become glossy and very thick before you remove it from the heat; nothing tastes worse than undercooked cornstarch!