



Press Release

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NATIONAL BUFFALO WING FESTIVAL RETURNS WITH BIG SURPRISES

International explosion of wings are being showcased at this year's Wingfest

BUFFALO (August 21, 2019) –The **National Buffalo Wing Festival**, one of the country's most beloved food festivals, returns to Sahlen Field in Buffalo, New York on August 31st - September 1st to celebrate its 18th year. The festival attracted 50,000+ attendees from all 50 states and 36 different countries last year. This year the **National Buffalo Wing Festival** will feature more than 25 local, regional, national, and international eateries, including 9 new eateries serving different regional sauces. Over 100 styles of chicken wings will be served as well as other festival favorite foods.

Through the insistence of **Buffalo Bills Quarterback, Josh Allen**, festival founder, "The Wing King" Drew Cerza, decided to take the former University of Wyoming football star's word for it as he guaranteed Double Dubs Wings from Laramie, WY had "some of the best wings he ever tasted and were his wing-of-choice during his college days." Trent Weitzel and Double Dubs Wings will be making their debut in Buffalo this year. Festival Favorite from 2017, Booty's Wings from Arizona, will be back after opening their third location. Booty's Managing Partner, Andy LiButti, is a native of Rochester, NY.

The Changing Consumer Demands

As festivals age, their demographics change. Since the beginning of the festival 18 years ago, Drew Cerza has seen consumer demands, lifestyles and eating habits change. "You need to evolve with time or you can age out as an event. Each year we try to make changes and additions that keep our Wingfest fresh - this year is no different," says Cerza.

Blue Cheese Dressing versus Ranch Dressing Ah, that is the question. For years, this passionate debate has split the wing community. Now the great debate will be going head-on. This will be the first time in 18 years that the National Buffalo Wing Festival has opened its doors to ranch dressing, and we're thrilled to have Hidden Valley Ranch spreading its cool and creamy flavor to wing fans in Buffalo.

Ironically, at last year's Wingfest, the "Best in Show Wing" was awarded to the Anchor Bar for its Habanero Ranch Dry Rub Wing recipe that included Hidden Valley Ranch Seasoning - this breakthrough served as the inspiration to serve up ranch dressing at this year's event. A survey conducted in 2018 with over 2,000 people by the National Chicken Council showed that 59% of

respondents preferred ranch to 35% for blue cheese. Over the years, Wingfest has drawn in attendees from all 50 states annually. For years, attendees have been asking for ranch and this year it will be available.

It didn't take Hidden Valley very long to get to know the Buffalo community, as they have announced a partnership with FeedMore WNY, to fundraise at the Wingfest. Their booth will be passing out free carrots and celery as well as ranch dressing for dipping while asking for donations from attendees to go toward feeding the hungry in WNY. Hidden Valley will also be matching all donations collected at their booth through the weekend.

Authentic Vegetarian Wings will be available for the first time at the Wingfest. The vegetarian population has doubled over the last 10 years to 7.3 million. Fifteen percent of millennials follow a plant-based diet. To adjust to these changing eating habits, the festival has invited local favorite, Root and Bloom Café to be on-hand serving their unique and popular vegetarian-style wings with both traditional medium and BBQ sauces. The product is jackfruit which has a meat-like texture in a breaded coating and goes through a double step frying process.

“Wings” or “Buffalo Wings”

The **National Buffalo Wing Festival** has become a top destination for wing lovers from the world over since its 2002 inception. Additionally, the 2019 festival will be featuring 3 restaurants that have traveled for a combined total of more than 7,600 miles. *(That's a whopping ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-ONE MILLION WINGS lined up side-by-side, in case you're wondering.)* Even though people from Buffalo NY call them “wings,” the city takes great pride when people from all over the world refer to this food favorite as “Buffalo Wings,” named after the city that created the original recipe back in 1964.

London, England will be represented for a third time as The Orange Buffalo comes to the National Buffalo Wing Festival for the first time. London has had an explosion of restaurants and food trucks featuring “Buffalo Style” chicken wings. The Orange Buffalo is the product of two friends who took a road trip across America and decided to bring a piece of it back. What started out as a drunken dream turned into the opening of UK's first dedicated Buffalo Wing food truck. They now have three locations and have won several local awards. They have caught the eye of many U.K. journalists as several will be traveling to the **National Buffalo Wing Festival** to experience the festival as well as other famous Buffalo food creations.

Wing's Army, a chain of over a dozen restaurants across Mexico will be entering their third year of competition at this year's festival. They have won several awards including the “Wingfest Spirit Award” in 2018. Their sauces feature different ingredients including local fruits that create flavor profiles not available in the U.S. The Wing's Army booth has been one of most popular for festivalgoers.

The most unique restaurant this year will be Buddha Sushi Bar from **St. Thomas, USVI**. After a first-place finish at the annual “King of the Wing” festival in St. Thomas, held this past June, Buffalo Wing King, Drew Cerza invited **Chef Taj Siwatu** to represent the Caribbean Islands. Cerza was invited to judge the event and was so impressed how Taj took his delicious sushi sauces and started using them in his chicken wing recipes, he felt that Taj had earned the privilege to show “wing fanatics”

how creativity combined with the love of wings can produce a very special version of the wing experience. He will be showcasing his award-winning “Fireworks Wing,” among others.

Home Sweet Home

The **National Buffalo Wing Festival** is the brainchild of Buffalo native Drew Cerza, affectionately named the “Wing King” in 2008 by Food Network Chef Bobby Flay. The idea came from a 2001 movie called *Osmosis Jones* featuring **legendary actor Bill Murray**. In the movie, Murray played the role of a big chicken wing fan with the goal of attending the Buffalo Wing Festival. Ironically, Buffalo didn’t have one, and Cerza decided it was time. “It was a chance for my hometown city to take ownership of the food icon that we created at the Anchor Bar in 1964.” That was 18 years ago, and an estimated 5 million wings!

“As the birthplace of the chicken wing, Buffalo pushes the celebration of the wing to greater heights every year via the National Buffalo Wing Festival. Now in its 18th year, the Wingfest has become a must-attend event for local residents and wing fans from across the U.S., North America and the world. I’m looking forward to another fantastic wing-filled weekend on August 31st and September 1st,” said Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown.

Over the years, the Wingfest has done more than put Buffalo on the map, the **National Buffalo Wing Festival** has donated over \$385,000 to local charities. This year the festival will benefit FeedMore WNY and the Alzheimer’s Association of WNY.

Sponsors

The festival is made possible thanks to major sponsors Frank’s RedHot, Marie’s Blue Cheese, Russell’s Steaks, Chops and More, Tri-Fri Oil, Hidden Valley Ranch, Atwal Eye Care, US Foods, Spectrum News, Amazon and Yuengling Beer.

Festival Features

Warrior Factory Challenge

The Wingfest welcomes The Warrior Factory, a revolutionary entertainment and fitness concept for kids and adults of all ages and skill levels. Building on NBC’s wildly popular American Ninja Warrior series, those who think they’ve got what it takes, can experience professionally fabricated obstacles seen on TV. All attendees can attempt the increasingly difficult obstacle courses. The Warrior Factory Ninja Challenge offers kids and adults a chance to practice and play on many of the obstacles seen on the hit reality TV show for as little as \$5. **American Ninja Warrior, Carl Fantauzzo** will serve as your host all weekend long.

VIP Party Deck

For those guests looking to upgrade their Buffalo Wing Festival experience, organizers are proud to present the VIP Party Deck located on Sahlen Stadium’s right field stands. “This is a great way to experience the National Buffalo Wing Festival in style,” Cerza said. “And, we’ve made it easy to become an Official Festival VIP by offering online ticketing.” For just \$30, guests can get the royal treatment with festival admission, private seating, a free beverage, free wine and spirit sampling, private VIP cash bar, a commemorative “Wingfest Great Plate” and commemorative cup, \$5 off a

festival t-shirt, and an official Wingfest VIP badge; plus chicken wing offerings right on the party deck for VIPs' convenience.

The 4th Annual Chicken Wing 5K

Now in its fourth year, the Chicken Wing 5K will take place in downtown Buffalo on September 1 starting at 11 a.m. Sponsored by Univera and WKBW TV7, the race takes runners on a scenic 3.1-mile circular route that winds through downtown Buffalo and beyond. The race route takes participants through the Inner Harbor—an area that perfectly blends the beauty of old Buffalo with the promise of the city's future.

Wings, Wings & Wings

The 2019 lineup of restaurants and eateries is shaping up to be impressive with 10 new restaurants coming from as far as Surprise, Arizona and London, England. Twenty-five food booths including 19 wing eateries will be serving over 100 different styles of wings as well as additional "Buffalo Style" favorite foods. The wing restaurants will compete in the annual National Sauce-Off Competition for bragging rights to the best wing sauces in America. The competition includes 8 different categories of wing styles including traditional medium, hot and extra-hot as well as creative, traditional BBQ, creative BBQ, creative sweet and creative spicy.

Craft Beer Corner

After last year's success, the festival will welcome back local craft beers inside the Consumer's Beverages Craft Beer Corner. Local craft brewers including Resurgence Brewing Co., Big Ditch Brewing Company, Flying Bison Brewing Company and Community Beer Works will be pouring more than 15 different styles of beer all weekend. Better yet, brewery representatives will be on hand to talk about craft beer and wing pairings.

World-Class Competitive Eating

One of the annual highlights of the festival weekend is the United States Chicken Wing Eating Championship presented by 716 Food and Sport. This popular event, sanctioned by the International Federation of Competitive Eating, happens Sunday at 5 p.m. This year, the competition takes on epic proportions as top-ranked competitive eater, Joey Chestnut, returns to defend his title for the fifth straight year. Last year, Chestnut devoured 206 wings in 12 minutes to take the title.

In addition, the pros will compete in the Amazon Buffalo Buffet Bowl on Saturday at 6 p.m. The battle challenges eaters to consume 5 pounds of some of Buffalo's favorite foods, including pizza and roast beef on weck.

Amateur wing-eating competitions during the festival include the Frank's RedHot Amateur Buffalo Wing Eating Contest, Hot Wing Eating Contest with wings from Wing's Army, and the College Wing Eating Competition.

Celebrating the Original Wing Sauce - Amateur Sauce-off Competition

The competitions aren't just limited to the professionals at the **National Buffalo Wing Festival** as the original wing sauce, Frank's RedHot, looks to crown the top amateur wing-cooks in the Traditional Wing Sauce-off and Creative Wing Sauce-off on Saturday afternoon.

Other Wing-rific Fun

In addition, the festival will present a collection of pageants including the Miss Buffalo Wing Pageant (women 16+ years) and the Baby Wing Contest (children 0-4 years).

Festivalgoers can compete in (or watch) the famous Bobbing for Wings competition in which participants dunk their heads into kiddie pools filled with Marie's Blue Cheese Dressing to retrieve as many of the 100 chicken wings as possible within three minutes using only their mouths.

This year's entertainment lineup includes master of ceremonies "Quiz Master" Dennis George, as well as one of Buffalo's favorite blues bands, The Heavenly Chillbillies, who will liven up the festival with blues music throughout the weekend.

Details

Admission is \$5, with children 8 years and younger admitted free, courtesy of Fantastic Sam's. Food and beverages are priced separately.

Festival Website

www.BuffaloWing.com

Event Dates:

Saturday, August 31st from 12 p.m. – 9 p.m.

Sunday, September 1st from 12 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Location:

Sahlen Field

275 Washington St.

Buffalo, NY 14203

MORE INFORMATION

To learn more, visit BuffaloWing.com or follow along at www.facebook.com/BuffaloWingFestival, @WingFest and by using the hashtag #WingFest19.

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