

# {Baked} Honey Garlic Sriracha Chicken Wings



The following is the best example I have of just how much I love hot wings:

I went to a small liberal arts college in the middle of Ohio called The College of Wooster. When I mean small, I mean the general population of the college was 1700 students by the time I graduated in 2002. During my Junior year of high school, my mother informed me that she refused to let me apply to an in-state (Georgia) college or university. She wanted me to get out and explore the world. So I 'explored' all the way to Amish Country, Ohio.



About 2 months into my first year of college (us Liberal Arts college attendees did not use the vulgar, gender-specific word of "Freshman". We were 'First Years'), the college hosted a Parents Weekend. I feel strongly that my mom had booked her ticket for Parents Weekend before I even started college so needless to say, she would be attending. When my mom arrived, she arrived with a small carry-on bag as well as what appeared to be a cooler. When I asked her what was in the cooler she told me to grab a few friends, find a nice spot to have a picnic and then she'll tell me.





Well, turns out what was in the cooler were more of her super special hot wings than one could shake a stick at (Southern phrase, y'all. No one's actually shaking a stick at anything). The woman had flown from Georgia to Ohio with several dozen hot wings nestled protectively in a cooler. My friends and I were beyond thrilled. We also came up with a plan to open a hot wing restaurant in Wooster, featuring my mom's famous recipe. Sadly (or not so sadly) that dream never came true. But I will NEVER forget that weekend and those wings for as long as I live.



I've booked my Parents Weekend ticket for her First Year of college already. That's normal, right?

I still make mom's hot wing recipe as often as I can. I've even started incorporating them into an annual Simchat Torah Wing Ding. A "Wing Ding" is essentially a dinner of more hot wings than, well, you can shake a stick at. Because really? What says, "YAY! We finished another cycle of reading the entire Torah" more than chicken wings!? This past Simchat Torah I made 4 different kinds of wings, everything from my mom's original recipe to a savory Italian, Sweet and Sour and these bad boys, Honey Garlic Sriracha wings. For me, wings are all about the marinade and how they're cooked. We grill a lot but I prefer baking them on a very high heat for roughly 45 minutes. They come out crispy and delicious and without that 'grill' flavor that can get in the way of the marinade and sauce. See below for the recipe and enjoy!





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**Kale & Butternut Squash  
Quesadilla? Yay! New Years?  
Meh.**



For the passed several years, New Years has been a weird time for me. It's not for the regular, semi-cliched reasons either. I don't get sad when I reflect and let it sink in that yet another year has come and gone, though I do get blown away by how quickly time truly does go by. Nope. New Years has become a weird, confusing time for me lately because, well, I already did New Years.

As observant Jews, my husband and I celebrate the new year in the Fall during Rosh Hashanah, known to the world as "Jewish New Year". That's the time of year that I get a bit more reflective and/or contemplative. That's the time of year that I seek to change negative behaviors I see in myself while maintaining the good stuff I see in myself. It's during this "New Years" that I reach out to old friends to tell them how much I miss them and to make promises to be in contact more often, though we both know it's probably not going to happen. And because we read the same portion from the Torah every Rosh Hashanah, it's so much easier to remember just where I was the year before, both spiritually and physically.

I'll never forget Rosh Hashanah from three years ago. I sat in



synagogue listening to the haftorah story of Hannah and her desperate want/pleads to have a child. I sat in that service and so identified with her. My husband and I desperately wanted to be pregnant. I don't think I ever prayed so hard as I did that new year—begging Hashem to bless us with a child and asking Gd if he/she wouldn't mind glossing over some questionable behaviors from my early 20s and maybe focusing more on my recent work to help up the blessing 'ante'. Sure enough, one year later, we brought our 6 week-old baby with us to the very same synagogue to listen to the very same Torah portion and I truly never felt more grateful (or tired. She was only 6 weeks old, after all).

So, you see, this whole December 31st/January 1st thing isn't such a big deal over here. Now, I'll take any excuse to by champagne on sale and I do love the glitter that comes with this New Years (mental note: Find way to bring more glitter into Rosh Hashanah), but we already had our New Years' time of intense reflection. We still do a little count down because we are citizens of this Earth and I do LOVE watching the ball drop from Time's Square (mental note: Find way to bring a giant ball drop in Time's Square into Rosh Hashanah) but we don't go all out for New Years. Last year we started a little tradition of making homemade sushi and setting up the air mattress on the balcony for dinner and a movie al fresco but chances are, I'll be asleep by 11.

Happy New Year.



There's no "i" in "Team", but there is kale.

Ok, I made this recipe last Tuesday and I have to say, it's one of my new favorites. The crispness of a lightly buttered and fried tortilla mingled with the soft, sweetness of butternut squash and Monterrey Jack cheese just does good things to me. You don't need a lot of spice to this recipe because the natural flavors of the veggies and cheese do it for you. Make sure your kale is chopped small so you can easily get a good bite out of it once it's in the tortilla and enjoy!





As you can see by the pan, I really do cook these here recipes.



Nerd alert: I honestly do pay close attention to what goes in which layer when I make a quesadilla.





Cheese: It's the glue that holds us (and this quesadilla) together.



When it comes to quesadillas, it really is ALL about what's inside.



# Kale and Butternut Squash Quesadilla:

(Makes 3 – 4 Quesadillas)

What:

1 Cup of kale, destemmed and chopped small  
1 Cup of roasted butternut squash (see roasting direction here)  
2 Cloves of garlic, diced  
1/2 Tbsp cumin  
Salt  
Pepper  
3 Tbsp of oil – Coconut or olive works nicely  
Flour or whole wheat tortillas  
Butter – for pan  
1/2 – 3/4 Cup shredded cheese (I recommend Monterrey Jack or white cheddar)

How:

Break out a sauté pan, turn the stove to medium, and put your oil of choice in the pan (coconut or olive are my go-to). Thrown in your kale and sauté for just 1 minute. Next, throw in the garlic and sauté for another minute or so or until kale is bright green. Remove from heat immediately, place in separate bowl and set aside.

Next, wipe the pan down with a paper towel and put a little bit of butter in it. Turn the heat to medium low and place one tortilla in the pan followed by a layer of shredded cheese. Next, add your sautéed kale/garlic mixture and top that with a heaping scoop of butternut squash. Smush the squash down a bit so it's evenly spread out in the center of the tortilla. Next, add another layer of shredded cheese and the other tortilla. Once that final tortilla top is on, give the quesadilla a nice final smush so that everything gets nicely “stuck” together.

Let tortilla sit on the heat for 2-3 minutes, checking a few times to make sure it's not burning. The secret to the perfect golden and melted quesadilla is too cook it slow and low (heat). After you've checked and the bottom tortilla looks good and golden, carefully flip quesadilla over using a wide spatula. If you feel it necessary, and I ALWAYS feel it's necessary, add a bit more butter to the pan and make sure it gets under the new bottom tortilla. Let sit another 2-3 minutes, checking for perfect golden-ness. Once done, remove and serve hot with favorite toppings (my go-to are sour cream, Sriracha and cilantro).

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## **Mommy Blogs and Meatballs: A Blogdentity Crisis**

This week was an interesting one. A rollercoaster of emotions, if you will. It was the first week back at school with the kiddos so I was up at 6ish every morning and at work by 7ish, which meant I was gone before Siona was awake. I was exhausted but running on buckets of coffee and adrenaline. Though it's my 3rd year in my job as a school counselor, this was my first time at the first week of school in my job. The first year I was still in my original position as Student Life Director and the second year I was on maternity leave. I was nervous and overwhelmed. I also took over as 'senior' school counselor in the Middle School, which didn't help my anxiety. I was trying to train our new counselor while tending to the needs of my students and colleagues. And though this past week I survived on adrenaline, iced coffee and water, I thrived on being able to be there for my students; being able to be there for one of my new 6th graders who sobbed for over an hour in my office in



fear of Middle School and my 8th graders who are already freaking out about high school and college.



One of the many ridiculous things I do for my students – dressing up as Effie from the Hunger Games for Color War back when I was pregnant.

While I was kicking a\*\* and taking names in my role as school counselor, this blog wasn't fairing so well and it was bringing me down. This summer allowed me a bit more freedom to be present for this blog, which made me really happy. I

finally was able to interview my friend, Zak the Baker. I made the fried chicken recipe that had been living in my head and I finally was able to write down my own love story. It felt wonderful to have the time to do all that. But this past week brought on the realization that, once again, my free time is extremely limited. And then, on Thursday morning, I received an email in my inbox from a blog I follow (or, now, used to follow). The blogger is an incredible writer and, in my estimation, would fall into the category of 'mommy blogger'. She writes about her adventures with her young daughters set against the back drop of Montana. Her Instagram account should be sponsored by the visitors bureau of Montana, the pictures are that incredibly beautiful. But that's besides the point. This post was about her living her dream of quitting her job so that she could be home with her girls. As beautiful and ethereal as this post was, it also enraged me a bit. I felt badly about having these feelings of anger. And, as I like to remind my students, no one can "make" a person feel anything. Instead, we allow these feelings to occur. We give them life and this post was bringing all sorts of life to some not-so-nice feelings for me that I really needed to get to the bottom of.

I don't know this woman in the slightest. I follow her on Instagram and read her posts but I don't know her. I don't know her except what she wants me and the rest of the world to know about her. And please don't misunderstand me, she seems like a lovely person. It's not necessarily her that I take/took issue with. I think this post came at the wrong time for me, personally. I had barely seen my daughter all week. I only saw her for an hour on Wednesday, between coming home from work and then having to go back for a parent night. One hour out of 24. And here I was, reading a post about how this woman got to leave her day job and now spends her days going on adventures with her daughters. So yes, bad timing.





She gets me.



I ended up writing a comment about how I thought her post was beautiful but that it was also difficult to read as I too dream of being at home with my daughter but I can't. She wrote back because that's the type of blogger she is; always wanting to be there for her readers. But what she wrote back enraged me even more. She responded with all the write buzz words/phrases, 'walking in the path of your dreams', 'walking with your heart and soul', like a new Oprah for the hipster mommy-set.

And while I appreciate the conversation, what I realized this morning, after finally getting a solid 11 hours of sleep (Gd bless Shabbat), was that not anywhere in her post or in her response did she talk about the privilege of being able to stay at home and 'live your dreams'. And then I realized that though this blog of mine is technically a food blog, I sometimes delve into the 'mommy blog' world, which, I now clearly understand, is not the place for me. My sister-in-law, Caitlin, of The Joy of Caitlin, had a very sweet post published by the Huffington Post this week. She worked really hard to get it out there—posting it all over the place, and she absolutely deserved to have it posted. So I thought, why not follow her lead and try to get more stuff out there. I tried posting the only post I could find in my blog archives that I thought would fit into the 'mommy blog' or parenting category. I took 20 minutes out of my work day on Friday to post it on various parenting/mom pages and bloggers but it just didn't fit. Hell, one of them flagged me for spam, which I thought hilarious. But with that notification that someone thought my post was 'spam' came the realization of what I was doing. I was trying to fit a pentagon into a round hole. This community is not for me. I love reading my food blogs and I am so appreciative of the community of food bloggers I've become close to via the Kosher Connection and Instagram but the circle on mommy/parent bloggers is another realm and though a lot of them speak of light and peace, the general feeling I have is that it's a competition of who has the most hipster

dressed kids and appearance of a near-perfect life. And if you're thinking I sound a little angry or frustrated, I am. In all my mommy/parenting blog reading, I have not once read the term 'privilege'. Not once has one of these bloggers spoken about the privilege of staying home; the privilege of breastfeeding; the privilege of eating organic or 'clean'. Every time one of these parent bloggers posts a meme on their Facebook page about the evils of formula or GMOs or baby cereal or the like, I wonder if they've ever thought about the countless moms and dads who don't have the privilege of buying GMO-free, or organic or whose breasts didn't quite work out as expected; much less stay at home to be with their children, and what that must feel like for that parent on the other side of their meme. Have they ever thought about privilege? Thanks to social work school, I think about it all the time. It's a privilege I have this computer so that I can write down my thoughts. It's a privilege that I have amazing friends and family who support me. It's a privilege I can afford daycare and still have enough cash to pay rent and occasionally shop at Whole Foods. People don't like thinking about privilege because they feel they have to apologize for it, but that's not how I see it. If you can acknowledge it and not take advantage of it or acknowledge it and be self-aware enough to recognize what it means for those who don't have it, well then, that's a different story. That I can support.



Late-night blogging.

And so when this particular mommy blogger's post landed in my inbox I thought if I calmly comment, maybe I'll get over my feelings of frustration. But I didn't. In fact, it got a little worse for me. When the blogger responded to my comment that she advocates for the ability to 'change our minds', I thought to myself, 'wow, what a privilege it is to even think that that's always an option'. I can change my mind until I'm blue in the face but the fact of the matter is that I can't afford to stay at home with Siona. And what would I miss if I did (besides food, shelter, health insurance and the like)? I'd miss the amazing community of people I'm surrounded by at work. I'd miss learning from them and laughing with them. I'd miss the diversity of thoughts they bring to my life. Some of these people are women with children, some of them don't have any children. Some are married and some are not. Some of these people are men. Some of these people are white, some black, some Jewish and some Catholic. Some are straight and some are gay and the majority of all these folks are humble and self-aware. And, just like in real, I crave that diversity of mind

and spirit in my online world as well. So, I'm giving up on my attempt to fit into the mommy world and instead will just be whomever it is I am . . . just like in real life. I will give time to the blog and let it develop organically (no pun intended) into whatever category it fits into, if at all. I will stop following all these other mommy's on Instagram whom I first started following way back in the depths of post-partum depression, when I needed reminding that children do eventually sleep and that parenthood can be fun. We just don't seem to have anything in common anymore. I will stick to food and family and see what comes.

And as for the recipe? Well, these are my most favorite meatballs. They are not gluten-free, but could be. I sometimes make them with veal and sometimes a mixture of veal and ground beef but usually with ground turkey. They are kind of like Thanksgiving all rolled into a delicious ball. I hope you enjoy and I thank you for reading.





For her.

## **Thanksgiving Meatballs:**

### **What**

1 package of ground turkey  
3 tbsp olive oil

1 small onion, diced

2 carrots, diced

1/2 pint of button mushrooms, diced

1 clove of garlic, diced

Dried bread crumbs, preferably challah, diced into small chunks (should be bigger than store-bought bread crumbs but not bigger than croutons)

1 egg

Thyme

Sea Salt

Pepper

Rubbed Sage

## **For the Stove Top\***

Vegetable or Coconut Oil

1/4 Cup all-purpose flour

*\*I go back and forth between frying and baking these meatballs . . . depending on my mood. If you do decide to bake rather than fry, bake on a greased baking sheet on 375 for roughly 20 minutes*



Those Colors!





Those Look Like Ping Pongs, right?

## How:

Pour the olive oil in a deep frying pan with a flat surface. Let sit on medium heat for a few seconds. Saute the onions until transparent. Add the carrots and stir, sauteeing until carrots are golden. Add the garlic and continue sauteeing for another minute. Finally, add the mushrooms and saute for another minute or two. Sprinkle the mixture with a dash of salt and pepper, stir and pour into a separate bowl and set aside.





Preparing for Frying or Baking

In a large bowl, combine ground turkey with the vegetable saute mixture, bread crumbs, egg, a dash more salt, pepper, thyme and finally, the rubbed sage. Stir mixture until well-combined (I use my hands and really get into there). Meanwhile, pour your flour into a small bowl and set on the stove near your frying pan. Also, in preparation, set out a plate with a few layers of paper towels in order to soak up some of that yummy grease after frying. After setting up, roll your meatballs into balls the size of ping pongs and set on a plate.



Post-baking



Hello little friends.

Once done shaping your meatballs, place frying pan on the stove over medium-high heat and pour in enough vegetable (or frying oil of choice) oil to cover 1/2 inch of the bottom of the pan. Roll each meatball into the bowl of the all-purpose flour so that each meatball is lightly covered in a flour dusting. Place 5 – 6 meatballs in the pan for frying, making sure to cook evenly on each side, giving about 4 -5 minutes of cooking for each ball. Once done, place on paper towel for grease-soaking.





A Shabbat staple